MEASURING THE IMPACT OF US MILITARY COUNTERTERRORISM ASSISTANCE IN MALI

A Thesis

Presented to the Faculty

of

The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy

by

ANDREA M. WALTHER-PURI

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

April 2025

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE
Richard Shultz, Chair
Shelby Cullom Davis Professor of International Security Studies

Alex de Waal
Executive Director, World Peace Foundation

James J.F. Forest
Professor, Director of Security Studies, UMASS Lowell

ABSTRACT

As part of the Global War on Terror, the United States (US) has invested hundreds of billions to build the counterterrorism capacity of partner states, underpinned by the assumption that strengthening the military capabilities of partners enhances their ability to combat terrorism and reduces the threat of terrorism to the US. Yet this assumption remains empirically underexamined, particularly in fragile states where external assistance may interact with weak institutions and fragmented security sectors in complex ways. This dissertation interrogates that assumption through a longitudinal case study of Mali—a key US counterterrorism partner in the Sahel and a central node of terrorist activity—over the past two decades.

In the immediate years after September 11, 2001, Mali became the US's principal counterterrorism partner in the Sahel, receiving the largest share of US military assistance. Despite this, Mali's armed forces were unable to defend the state against a rapid takeover of the north by separatist and jihadist groups. The collapse of state authority triggered a military coup in Bamako, plunging the country into crisis. This dissertation asks: To what extent did US military counterterrorism assistance improve Mali's ability to counter terrorism, and how has it shaped its security institutions and political stability?

Using within-case process tracing, this research draws on over 150 interviews conducted in Mali, Germany, and the US, supplemented by conflict event data, public opinion surveys, and government documents. It assesses how US training and assistance influenced Mali's security institutions and counterterrorism outcomes between 2002 and 2020. Findings show that while some US-trained units improved in specific tactical areas, the broader defense sector lacked the institutional capacity to support or sustain these gains. Moreover, assistance contributed to numerous unintended consequences, including the politicization of the military and institutional fragmentation, which undermined cohesion within the armed forces.

The study contributes to academic debate on security assistance, external intervention, and counterterrorism by demonstrating how tactical-level gains can be neutralized by weak institutions and adverse political dynamics. For policymakers, it offers a critical lesson: in fragile states, military assistance that is not embedded in governance and oversight reforms risks enabling instability rather than countering it.

PERSONAL BACKGROUND

My journey began in the spring of 2008, when Fletcher hosted a conference on countering terrorism in Africa through human security solutions. I was seated next to the keynote, Colonel Mark Rosengard, then-Commander of the Joint Special Operations Task Force-Trans Sahara (JSOTF-TS), the US military task force for countering threats in the Sahel. He invited me to visit Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR), which inspired my master's thesis on the growing terrorist threat in northern Mali.

After graduation, the JSOTF hired me to lead its civil-military relations program in the Sahel. Our team traveled across the region to foster a civil-military community, discussing local dynamics and challenges. Over three years in ten countries, I came to understand the complexities of security cooperation (SC) and US interagency dynamics within embassies. I also became deeply interested in effectiveness—how could we measure the impact of our training? I introduced a basic monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework to track outputs and results more rigorously.

I next transitioned to the State Department, where I supported the design, oversight, and evaluation of military counterterrorism (CT) programs on the continent. I proposed and oversaw the first State M&E contract for CT programs in Africa, which helped define and socialize M&E practices. In the absence of Pentagon guidance, the team played a pioneering role in developing frameworks that clarified the outcomes of State's SC programs.

In 2014, as terrorist activity in the Sahel escalated, the US responded by pouring more money into the region. At a planning conference, a Security Cooperation Officer asked why he should accept State funding—with new monitoring requirements—when Defense funds came with none. The moment crystallized how the system had unintentionally incentivized less accountability.

As the new M&E team reformed how results were tracked from 2015 onward, I stepped out of government to examine these programs retrospectively. Researching sources in French, Arabic, and English and speaking with nearly every stakeholder, has been extraordinary. I'm deeply grateful to all who contributed and take full responsibility for any shortcomings that remain.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this to my brother, Michael, who would have asked sharp questions and challenged my assumptions. I wish you could be here for this moment. And to my three children, Amari, Kian, and Maeva, who were the light at the end of my dissertation tunnel. You motivate me to be better, dream bigger, and live more fully present, every single day. May you always trust that your questions are as important as the answers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is a testament to the unwavering support of my family and close friends. To those who provided encouragement and inspiration, thank you for being a part of this journey.

I want to express my deepest appreciation to Richard Shultz, Alex de Waal, and James Forest for their encouragement and support throughout this project. Alex, thank you for your helpful critiques, kind words, and for pushing me to keep my analysis both balanced and accountable. This endeavor would not have been possible without the generous support from the Smith Richardson, Scaife, Lynne and Harry Bradley, and Eisenhower Roberts Foundations, as well as the West African Research Association, which financed my research.

I would like to thank many former government colleagues who care deeply about these issues and have tried to make a positive difference. At the JSOTF-TS, my deepest thanks to Mark Rosengard, Philip Spangler, Chris Schmitt, Max Blumenthal, Chris Call, John McGregor, Andy Cox, Joshua Burgess, Kurt Crytzer, and Kelly Alexander. From the early days at Special Operations Command Africa (SOCAF), I thank colleagues Jim Demchsak, Sean Setter, John Wishart, and Scott Beesting. At US Africa Command (AFRICOM), thanks go to Hap Harlow, Roy Weidanz, Tom Alford, Matt Eggleton, John Crowe, Mike Hartzell, and Stuart Fillmore. At Special Operations Command Forward-North/West Africa (SOCFWD-N/WA), thank you to Eric Kotouc. Finally, there were incredible Battalion and Company Commanders from 1st Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group (1/10 SFG) SFG(A) and 3rd SFG(A), who helped clarify the early, wild days of training in the Sahel: Fran Beaudette, Kelly Smith, Philip Buswell, Michael Adorjan, Sean Berg, Jason Clarke, Jimmy Grizzard, and Jeffrey Gray.

At the State Department, many supported and encouraged my decision to step away from government to dig deep and reach far back for this research. Mike Bittrick, Rachel Featherstone, Dan Epstein, Sean Setter, Peter Quaranto, Vic Nelson, and Christopher Tringale were not only incredible colleagues and mentors, but also relentless get-shit-done partners. When I burned out or got worn down by bureaucratic inertia, they lifted me and helped me stay the course, always recentering me on why we do this work. Thank you for reading my drafts, offering honest feedback, and keeping me grounded.

Countless US Embassy Bamako country team members generously dedicated their time, insights, and experience to this investigation. These include Ambassadors Gillian Milovanovic, Terence McCulley, Marybeth Leonard, and Andrew Young. My sincere thanks to former Defense Attaché, Marshall Mantiply, who provided crucial feedback and comments on every chapter and who continues the hard work of defense sector reform with our allies. Corban Spraker's input was also invaluable, as were former Security Cooperation Officers Allen Pepper, Mike Lee, Toni Greneaux, and Amanda Parker. My thanks also go to former Special Forces Liaison Elements (SOFLEs) Benjamin Bowman, Cory Bieganek, and Brice Cooper for sharing their experiences and ruminating on how Mali's capacity changed over time. And finally, other subject matter experts provided key review and constructive criticism, such as Sean McClure, Greg Arndt, Greg Joachim, and Matt Purdy. I am especially grateful to the Department of Defense colleagues who connected me with their networks: Jim Demchsak, Jeanne Giraldo, John Wishart, and Roy Weidanz. To my Trans-Sahara Security Symposium (TSS) family—Zakaria Ousman Ramadan, Boubacar N'Diaye, Julius Nyang'oro, Naomi Akpan-Ita, Pita Agbese, and Russ Howard—thank you for showing me the way. I couldn't have asked for better teachers, mentors, and colleagues. Finally, thank you to Alexander Thurston for being an academic shoulder to lean on and learn from.

Without Simon Powelson's seminal master's thesis on Mali, I would have never been able to reach such a tactical level in my analysis. Similarly, I would like to honor colleagues Michael Shurkin, Stephanie Pezard, and Rebecca Zimmerman, whose work at the RAND Corporation on Mali significantly helped my chapter on defense sector analysis.

I am deeply grateful to the many Malian officers who welcomed me into their homes, shared their stories, presented their training certificates, and connected me to voices and perspectives that might otherwise have gone unheard. They have my utmost respect and appreciation for supporting this inquiry into their country during a time of profound complexity, sensitivity, and struggle.

I will be forever bound to my beloved sisterhood of PhDames: Drs.Sophia Dawkins, Neha Ansari, Phoebe Donnelly, Roxanne Krystalli, and Torrey Taussig. These incredible classmates and cohort members, who quickly became dear friends, offered inspiration, guidance, mentorship, and moral support throughout the many years of this journey. Without their relentless encouragement and constant reinforcement in all areas of life, I would have never made it through.

I want to offer my ultimate respect and gratitude to the incredible team of librarians at Ginn, led by the fabulous Ellen McDonald, who were always there to help me track down elusive sources, often in various languages from the early days of the internet. They helped to significantly increase the Ginn Library's holdings of African military security literature and taught me the beauty, ease, and gratification of utilizing ILLIAD in what seemed like never-ending years of daily searches. Their job often gets overlooked and underappreciated, yet without their assistance, doctoral candidates could rarely manage their complicated research independently.

My deep gratitude is reserved for three incredible, glass–ceiling–shattering women who have inspired me personally and professionally: Dianna Wuagneaux, Querine Hanlon, and Sidney Jaques. Your leadership, strength, and example inspire me, and I am profoundly thankful to know and learn from you.

Last, but certainly not least, to my family and close friends—thank you for believing in me and supporting me through every step of this journey. To my father, who offered the perfect work retreat each month: I got more done in those four days than the rest of the month combined. To my mother, who was always there whenever I needed her, in whatever capacity, no questions asked. To my supportive husband, who lovingly kept me accountable, championed my monthly work escapes, and served as my in-house research assistant. To our amazing Au Pairs—Elise Bossy, Eve Courtois, and Marine Chaland—your unconditional love for and care of the kids afforded me the confidence to step away and focus on my work. And to my amazing friends, who have surrounded me with unwavering support and encouragement as I climbed to the summit, thank you. I couldn't have done this without you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ... ii
Personal Background ... iii
Dedication ... iv
Acknowledgements ... v
Table of Contents ... viii
List of Tables ... xi
List of Figures ... xii
List of Abbreviations ... xiv

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION ... **1**
Central Research Puzzle ... 1
Purpose and Objectives ... 1
Case Selection and Methodology ... 2
Key Terms and Definitions ... 3
Background and Context ... 6
US Security Policy and Assistance ... 6
Changes in the US Security Engagement Post-9/1 ... 18
Typology of Member States ... 25
How the US Government Measures Change ... 27
Outline of the Dissertation ... 31
Conclusion ... 32

Chapter 2: THEORY AND RESEARCH DESIGN ... **33**
Theoretical Convergence across Disciplines ... 33
Fragile States ... 33
Counter Terrorism ... 35
US Military Aid ... 38
The Existing Literature and Its Gaps ... 41
Arms and Influence ... 42
Counterterrorism Literature and Military Aid ... 43
Military Counterterrorism Aid and Unintended Consequences ... 46
Military Counterterrorism Training Effectiveness ... 50
Other Related Topics ... 55
Research Design and Methodology ... 58
Challenges and Caveats ... 66
Conclusion ... 71

Chapter 3: REGIONAL OUTLOOK ... **72**
Sahelian Regional Conditions and Capacity ... 72
The Regional Development Environment ... 74
The Regional Governance Environment ... 79
The Sahel's Conflict Mosaic ... 87
Powerful Outside Interests Involved in the Sahel ... 102
Conclusion ... 114

Chapter 4: REGIONAL THREAT ENVIRONMENT ANALYSIS 115
Data Constraints and Limitations.....115
Regional Security Threat Environment in 2000 117
Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat (GSPC) 120
Regional Security Threat Environment in 2018 134
Jama'at Nusrat al Islam waal Muslimeen (JNIM) 138
Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS)..... 147
Effects on the Sahelian Population 154
US Framing of the Threat in the Sahel: "Arc of Instability" 157
Conclusion 161

Chapter 5: MALI DEFENSE SECTOR ASSESSMENT.....163
Country Profile and History.....163
Mali Defense Sector Assessment.....172
Assessment Summary 172
Section I: Characteristics of the Defense Sector.....175
Military Forces.....175
Conduct of Defense Policy 194
Overall Political, Economic, and Security Environment.....198
Section II: Assessment of Defense Institutions and Processes 198
Section III: Assessment of Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency Capabilities 210
Conclusion 224

Chapter 6: THE US-MALIAN SECURITY RELATIONSHIP 225
History of US-Malian Security Cooperation 226
Overview of Mali's Tactical Counterterrorism Training Programs 241
Training and Equipping Four Counterterrorism Companies 242
The Echelon Tactique Inter-Armées (ETIAs).....243
The 33rd Régiment des Commandos Parachutistes (RCP).....244
Building a CT Training Center in Gao 246
Maintenance and Logistics 247
Communications 248
Civil Affairs 250
Aviation: Integrated Air-to-Ground Defense Capabilities.....254
Military Intelligence.....255
Medical Stability Operations 258
March 2012 Coup d'état 258
Conclusion 259

Chapter 7: MALIAN COUNTERTERRORISM CAPACITY ANALYSIS 261
Strategic Factors.....261
Operational Factors.....264
Tactical Factors.....270
Training and Equipping Four CT Companies.....270
The Echelon Tactique Inter-Armées (ETIAs).....271

The 33rd Régiment des Commandos Parachutistes (RCP).....280
Building a CT Training Center in Gao 286
Exercise Flintlock 288
Maintenance and Logistics 291
Communications 296
Civil Affairs 302
Aviation: Integrated Air-to-Ground Defense Capabilities.....308
Military Intelligence.....315
Medical Stability Operations 323
Conclusion 325

Chapter 8: GENERAL FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS.....327
Lessons Learned Building Partner Capacity to Counter Terrorism.....327
Re-engaging US-Mali Security Cooperation after the 2012 Coup 331
US Strategic and Operational Level Conclusions.....339
US Tactical Level Conclusions.....354
Recommendations for Improved Counterterrorism Military T&E Programs.....362
Generalizability and Predictive Value 367
Recommendations for Future Research 368
Conclusion 369

Bibliography 371

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1 Successful Military Coups in the TSCTP Sahelian Countries since 1960.....84
Table 3.2 Religious Demographics within the TSCTP Countries of the Sahel 92

Table 4.1 Terrorist Attack and Casualty Rates in North Africa (1995-2000) 117
Table 4.2 Terrorist Attack and Casualty Rates in West Africa (1995-2000) 119
Table 4.3 Terrorist Attack and Casualty Rates in West Africa (2018) 136
Table 4.4 Sahelian Regional Perceptions: Fear and Experience of Violent Extremism (2019) .156

Table 5.1 Assessment of Defense Sector Critical Capacities in 2012 199
Table 5.2 Assessment of Areas for Improvement in Capabilities in 2012.....212

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 US European Command and US Africa Command Maps 14
Figure 1.2 Map of the Sahel....16
Figure 1.3 Early Sahelian Trading Routes....17
Figure 1.4 Pan-Sahel Initiative Map (2002-2005) 18
Figure 1.5 Partner and Non-Partner Countries in the TSCTP Program (2025) 21
Figure 1.6 US Security Assistance Annual Totals (FY 2001-FY 2020)....22
Figure 1.7 Global Allocations of International Military Assistance (FY 2000-FY 2020)....22
Figure 1.8 Breakdown of International Security Assistance (FY 2000-FY 2020) 23
Figure 1.9 US Military Assistance to Sub-Saharan TSCTP Members (FY 2000-FY 2020)....25

Figure 2.1 Global Coup d'états by Region since 1950 49
Figure 2.2 Military Coups in Africa (1950-2023)....50
Figure 2.3 Fatalities in the Sahel by Year (2009-2018)....61

Figure 3.1 The Difference in Territorial Distribution (1880 vs.1913), Resulting from the Scramble for Africa 74
Figure 3.2 The Contemporary Religious Composition of the Sahel (2010) 92
Figure 3.3 Incidents and Deaths from Terrorism in the Sahel (2007-2021) 101

Figure 4.1 GSPC Area of Operations (2003-2004)....116
Figure 4.2 Terrorist Attacks in North Africa (1995-2000) 118
Figure 4.3 Terrorist Attacks in West Africa (1995-2000) 119
Figure 4.4 Terrorist Attacks in West Africa (2018)....135
Figure 4.5 JNIM Violent Events (2017-2019)....144
Figure 4.6 Violent Events Linked to JNIM Component Groups (2015-2019) 146
Figure 4.7 Geographic Distribution of Violent Events in the Sahel (2018-2019) 155

Figure 7.1 Makeshift Range Training in Timbuktu, Mali....272
Figure 7.2 JCET Training with ETIA in Gao (2010)....273
Figure 7.3 1/10th SFG Teaches Mounted Infantry Tactics to Soldiers in Timbuktu (2006)....274
Figure 7.4 ETIA 2 Standing in Formation in Kidal 276
Figure 7.5 US Army Jumpmaster Gives Instructions to the 33rd RCP on Proper Slipping Techniques (2007) 281
Figure 7.6 Malian Soldiers Conduct Fast Rope Operations at Flintlock (2008)....289
Figure 7.7 TSCTP Vehicles Delivered to the Gao Support Company....294
Figure 7.8 10th SFG(A) Soldiers Demonstrate Communications Equipment to Malian Forces.297
Figure 7.9 US-Provided Harris Radios in Tessalit and Vehicle Setup in Kidal 297
Figure 7.10 Example of HF Morse Code Radio Utilized in Kidal and COIA in Bamako 300
Figure 7.11 Resident of Segou receives Deworming Medicine and Instructions from a Malian Military Doctor during a MEDCAP 302
Figure 7.12 A Malian Participant Leading a Breakout Session....305
Figure 7.13 TSS Senegalese Senior Military Mentor Confers with JSOTF-TS Commander,

during the TSS Senior Leader Symposium at Flintlock (2011) 307
Figure 7.14 6th SOS Conducting Pre-Flight Checks with Malian C-47 Pilots.....311
Figure 7.15 Basler BT-67 Maintenance and Supply Mobile Training Team (MTT) 311
Figure 7.16 Training for the 33rd RCP on Drop Zone Selection and Requesting Aerial Resupply (2011).....313
Figure 7.17 Photos of the Malian Tetras Conducting Aerial Resupply 314
Figure 7.18 CEMGA General Gabriel Poudiougou Briefs the Malian Press on the Battle of Ouagadou from the COIA (2011) 317
Figure 9.19 Mali Hosts a Regional Military Intelligence Professional Course (MIPC).....319
Figure 7.19 The 33rd RCP Receives Tactical Combat Casualty Care Training (2011) 324
Figure 7.20 Mali Share of TSCTP Regional Counterterrorism Train and Equip Funds (FY 2002–FY 2012).....325
Figure 7.21 Mali's Counterterrorism Train and Equip Programs (FY 2002–FY 2012).....326

Figure 8.1 Malian Military Expenditures (2000-2012).....343

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAA	Advise and Assist
AAD	Ansar al-Dine (Helpers of the Religion)
AAR	After Action Report
ACM	Action Civilo-Militaire (Civil-Military Coordination)
ACOTA	African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance
ACRI	Africa Crisis Response Initiative
ACSS	Africa Center for Strategic Studies
AFAF	Air Forces Africa
AFISMA	African-led International Support Mission in Mali
AFRICOM	US Africa Command
AFSOC	Air Force Special Operations Command
AQ	al Qaeda
AQIM	al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
ALP	Aviation Leadership Program
AM&E	Assessment, Monitoring, and Evaluation
AOB	Area of Operations Base
AOR	Area of Responsibility
ARSOTF	Army Special Operations Task Force
ARTEP	Army Training and Evaluation Program
ATT	Amadou Toumani Touré
AvFID	Aviation Foreign Internal Defense
BAFS	Bataillon Autonome des Forces Speciales (Autonomous Special Forces Battalion)
BN	Battalion
BG	Brigadier General
BPC	Building Partner Capacity
BVG	Bureau de Vérificateur Général
CA	Civil Affairs
CASEVAC	Casualty Evacuation
CBJ	Congressional Budget Justification
CCP	Compagnie de Commandos Parachutistes (Company Commandos Parachutistes)
CEMGA	Chef d'État Major General des Armées (Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces)
CEMOC	Comité d'État-Major Opérationnel Conjoint (Joint Operations Center)
CENTCOM	US Central Command
CENTIF	Centre national pour le traitement de l'information financière (National Center for the Treatment of Financial Information)
CFS	Compagnie de forces spéciales (Special Forces Company)
CHOD	Chef de la Défense (Chief of Defense Staff)
CJTF	Combined Joint Task Force
CMSE	Civil-Military Support Element
CNSP	Committee National pour la Salvation du Peuple (National Committee for the Salvation of the People)

COCOM	Combatant Command
COIA	Centre Operational Inter-Armée (Joint Operations Center)
COIN	Counter Insurgency
COL	Colonel
CONASCIPAL	Coalition Nationale des Organisations de la Société Civile pour la Lutte Contre la Prolifération des Armes Légères (National Coalition of Civil Society for Peace and the Fight against the Proliferation of Light Weapons)
CRS	Congressional Research Service
CSDP	Common Security and Defense Policy
CT	Counterterrorism
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
DATT	Defense Attaché
DCA	Directorate du commissariat des armées (Defense Logistics Agency)
DEM	Directorate of Military Education (Directorate des École militaire)
DENTCAP	Dental Capabilities Exercise
DFS	Détachement de Forces Spéciales (Special Forces Detachment)
DoD	Department of Defense
DoS	Department of State
DIILS	Defense Institute for International Legal Studies
DIRPA	Direction de l'Information et des Relations Publiques des Armées (Directorate for Information and Public Relations of the Armed Forces)
DFS	Détachement de forces spéciales (Special Forces Detachment)
DGGN	General Directorate of the National Gendarmerie
DGSE	Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure (Directorate General of External Security)
DMHTA	Direction du Matériel, des Hydrocarbures et des Transports des Armées (Army Directorate of Equipment, Hydrocarbons, and Shipping)
DoDD	Department of Defense Directive
DoDI	Department of Defense Initiative
DSAA	Defense Security Assistance Agency
DSART	Defense Sector Assessment Rating Tool
DSCA	Defense Security Cooperation Agency
DSM	Direction de Sécurité Militaire (Directorate of Military Intelligence)
DTTA	Direction des Transmissions et des Télécommunications des Armées (Army Directorate for Communication and Telecommunications)
ECOWAS	Economic Cooperation of West African States
DV	Dependent Variable
EDA	Excess Defense Articles
EMGA	Etat Major Général des Armées (General Staff of the Armed Forces)
EMP	l'École de Maintien de la Paix (Peacekeeping School)
ETIA	Echelon Tactique Inter-Armée
EU	European Union
EUCOM	US European Command

EUCAP	European Union Capabilities Mission in Mali
EUTM	European Union Training Mission
FAMa	Les Forces Armées Maliennes (Malian Armed Forces)
FFRDC	Federally Funded Research and Development Center
FID	Foreign Internal Defense
FIS	Islamist Salvation Front
FLM	Front de Libération du Macina (Macina Liberation Front)
FMF	Foreign Military Financing
FMS	Foreign Military Sales
FMTR	Foreign Military Training Report
FTO	Foreign Terrorist Organization
FY	Fiscal Year
GAO	Government Accountability Office
GCC	Geographic Combatant Command
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIA	Groupe islamiste algérien (Algerian Islamist Group)
GIABA	Groupe d'Action Intergouvernemental Contre le Blanchiment d'Argent en Afrique de l'Ouest (Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa)
GITSDNP	General Intelligence and Territorial Surveillance Directorate of the National Police (Direction générale du renseignement et de la surveillance territoriale de la police nationale)
G-TSCMIS	Global-Theater Security Cooperation Management Information System
GN	Gendarmerie Nationale
GNM	National Guard (Garde Nationale du Mali)
G5S-FC	Group 5 Sahel-Force Conjointe (Task Force)
GSPC	Groupe salafiste pour la prédication et le combat (Group Salafist for Preaching and Combat)
GTD	Global Terrorism Database
HF	High Frequency
HOA	Horn of Africa
ICS	Integrated Country Strategy
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IMET	International Military Education and Training
IS	Islamic State
ISR	Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance
ISGS	Islamic State in the Greater Sahara
ISWAP	Islamic State-West Africa Province
ISWAP-GS	Islamic State-West Africa Province and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara
IV	Independent Variable
IW	Irregular Warfare
JCET	Joint Combined Exchange Training
JNIM	Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (Group for Support of Islam

	and Muslims)
JOC	Joint Operations Center
JPAT	Joint Planning and Assistance Team
JSOC	Joint Special Operations Command
JSOTF-TS	Joint Special Operations Task Force-Trans Sahara
KAIPTC	Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping and Training Centre
LOPM	Loi de Programmation Militaire (Military Programming Law)
LTC	Lieutenant Colonel
MAF	Mauritanian Armed Forces
MARSOC	Marine Special Operations Command
MCC	Millenium Challenge Corporation
MDAC	Ministère de la Défense et des Anciens Combattants (Ministry of Defense and Veterans Affairs)
MEDCAP	Medical Capabilities Exercise
MEDEVAC	Medical Evacuation
MI	Military Intelligence
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MINUSMA	UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MISO	Military Information Support Operations
MIST	Military Information Support Team
MNLA	Mouvement National de Liberation de l'Azawad (Azawad National Liberation Movement)
MOE	Measures of Effectiveness
MOP	Measures of Performance
MSAS	Mobility Support Advisory Squadron
MSO	Medical Stability Operations
MTT	Mobile Training Team
MUJAO	Mouvement pour l'Unicité et le Jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa)
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NAVAF	Naval Forces Africa
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
NDAA	National Defense Authorization Act
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSC	National Security Council
OCO	Overseas Contingency Operations
ODA	Operational Detachment Alphas
OIG	Office of the Inspector General
OSC	Office of Security Cooperation
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense
OSM	Operational Support Medicine
PACOM	US Pacific Command
PA	Principal Agent
PAE	Pacific Architects and Engineers
PAO	Public Affairs Officer

PIGN	Peleton d'Intervention de la Gendarmerie (Gendarmerie Intervention Platoon)
PKO	Peacekeeping Operations
PMC	Private Military Contractor
PME	Professional Military Education
PMSC	Private Military Security Contractor
PN	Partner Nation
PPD	Presidential Policy Directive
PSI	Pan-Sahel Initiative
PSPDN	Programme spécial pour la paix, la sécurité et le développement dans le nord du Mali (Special Programme for Peace, Security and Development in Northern Mali)
QDR	Quadrennial Defense Review
RCP	Régiment Commandos Parachutistes (Parachute Commandos Regiment)
RECAMP	Renforcement des Capacités Africaines de Maintien de la Paix (Africa Peacekeeping Capacity Building Program)
SA	Security Assistance
SAIC	Science Applications International Corporation, Inc. (SAIC)
SC	Security Cooperation
SCO	Security Cooperation Officer
SEAL	Navy Sea Air Land Team
SDO/DATT	Senior Defense Official/Defense Attaché
SFA	Security Force Assistance
SFG	Special Forces Group
SGI	Security Governance Initiative
SOCEUR	Special Operations Command Europe
SOCAF	Special Operations Command Africa
SOCCET	Special Operations Critical Care Evacuation Team
SOCFWD-WA	Special Operations Command Forward-West Africa
SOCOM	Special Operations Command
SODARS	Special Operations Debrief and Retrieval System
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SOFLE	Special Operations Forces Liaison Element
SOG	Special Operations Group
SO/LIC	Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict
SOS	Special Operations Squadron
SOST	Special Operations Surgical Team
SOW	Special Operations Wing
SSA	Security Sector Assistance
SSR	Security Sector Reform
STATE	Department of State
SUT	Small Unit Tactics
SVBIED	Suicide Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device
TSCMIS	Theater Security Cooperation Management Information System
TSCTI	Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative

TSCTP	Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership
TSOC	Theater Special Operations Command
TSS	Trans-Sahara Security Symposium
TTP	Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures
TtT	Train the Trainer
T&E	Train and Equip
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USARAF	US Army Africa
VBIED	Vehicle Based Improvised Explosive Device
VEO	Violent Extremist Organization
VETCAP	Veterinary Capabilities Exercise

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

"The most lethal threats to the U.S.'s safety and security are likely to emanate from states that cannot adequately govern themselves or secure their own territory. Dealing with such fractured or failing states is the main security challenge of our time."[1]
-Former Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates

Central Research Puzzle

Since the September 11, 2001 attacks, the US has spent over eight trillion dollars on the Global War on Terror, with an estimated $406 billion directed toward building the counterterrorism capacity of partner states. This investment rests on a critical yet underexamined assumption: that strengthening the military capabilities of partner governments will reduce the threat of terrorism to the US. This dissertation challenges that premise by asking: Does US military CT assistance improve a recipient state's capacity to combat terrorism, and if so, to what extent and in what ways? To address this question, the study conducts a longitudinal, within-case analysis of US military training in Mali—a key US counterterrorism partner and a central node of terrorist activity in the Sahel—over the past two decades. Since 2001, Mali has received sustained annual CT support from the US, yet it has experienced persistent, and in many areas worsening, insecurity. This research evaluates Mali's evolving terrorism threat by analyzing incidents, group behavior, and public sentiment using conflict event data, public opinion surveys, and over 150 interviews conducted during multi-phase fieldwork in the US, Germany, and Mali. Employing detailed process tracing, the study assesses the institutional and operational effects of US assistance on Mali's security sector and counterterrorism outcomes. In doing so, it reveals both the limits and unintended consequences of externally driven capacity building, offering broader insights into the challenges of implementing effective CT policy in fragile states.

Purpose and Objectives

This dissertation offers policy-relevant insights into the effectiveness and unintended consequences of US military counterterrorism training programs in fragile states, using Mali as a critical case. Over two decades, the US has invested heavily in building the capacity of Malian

[1] Robert M. Gates, "Helping Others Defend Themselves," *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 3 (June 2010): 4.

security forces to counter terrorism. However, this study finds that such training efforts often fail to achieve their intended outcomes and, in some cases, contribute to instability by empowering elite units without addressing underlying political and institutional weaknesses. These findings suggest that current US approaches to partner-based counterterrorism, which prioritize tactical proficiency over structural reform or accountability, are poorly suited to contexts marked by weak governance and fragmented security sectors. The dissertation highlights the need for a more integrated strategy that links security assistance to governance reform, political inclusion, and long-term institutional development. Such an approach offers a more sustainable path to regional stability and a more effective use of US resources.

Case Selection and Methodology

This study uses Mali as a critical case to evaluate the effectiveness and unintended consequences of US military counterterrorism training programs in fragile states. Mali is a compelling case because it was a primary recipient of US CT assistance in the Sahel for the initial decade after 9/11. Yet despite extensive US support, Mali was unable to prevent terrorist and separatist groups from seizing control of roughly half the country. This study seeks to answer the questions: To what extent has US military counterterrorism training in Mali achieved its security objectives? What unintended consequences, if any, has this training produced in Mali's political, institutional, or security landscape? How do local political and institutional dynamics mediate the effects of US military counterterrorism training? And what broader implications can be drawn from the Malian case for US counterterrorism assistance policy in fragile states? By addressing these questions, this dissertation will explore the complexities of US security assistance, offering policy-relevant insights into the challenges of military aid in contexts of weak governance and fragmented security sectors.

The research adopts a qualitative, within-case analytical approach, drawing on process tracing, elite interviews, US government reports, and secondary sources to reconstruct the evolution of US-Mali security cooperation. This method enables an in-depth examination of causal mechanisms and the contextual factors that shape training outcomes. Tracing the intended and unintended effects of training programs over time, the study evaluates how military aid interacts with Mali's political dynamics, security institutions, and governance environment. The findings

provide empirically grounded insights into the limits of tactical assistance in weak states and offer broader implications for the design and implementation of future US security force assistance programs.

Key Terms and Definitions

It is essential to define key terms that will be central to this research, including how the threat of terrorism is defined, which actors the US engages with to counter terrorism, the methods of US engagement with other countries in counterterrorism efforts, and how the effectiveness of these counterterrorism engagements is measured.

When there are references to *terrorism* throughout this research, I refer specifically to "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents."[2] It is also important to note that terrorism's political effectiveness is greatly determined by the psychological effect of its violence on an audience.[3] A key difference between terrorism and other types of political violence is that the victim of the violence is generally not the ultimate target of the terrorist threat. For the purpose of this research, I am referring to violent Islamist extremism in West Africa. While the above definition identifies noncombatant targets as the primary victims of terrorist acts, in West Africa, terrorist violence is often directed at security forces to have a psychological effect both on security forces writ large and on the civilian population.

In the context of the US government (and this research), a partner nation (PN) is a country that engages with the US in the global struggle against violent extremism and receives associated counterterrorism assistance. As this research addresses the security context of US counterterrorism initiatives—specifically, military assistance—it is the defense forces or militaries of these member countries that the US partners with. Defense forces include the

[2] "U.S. Code, Title 22, Chapter 38, 2656f - Annual Country Reports on Terrorism," LII / Legal Information Institute, accessed October 13, 2021, https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/22/2656f.
[3] Raymond Aron, *Peace & War. A Theory of International Relations*, 1st ed. (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Books, 2003), 170.

country's Ministry of Defense and the different service branches of its armed forces—the Army, Air Force, Navy, and sometimes the National Guard.[4]

These service branches receive *military counterterrorism assistance*, which includes training events, advisory assistance, related equipment, and support infrastructure (buildings, shooting ranges, training facilities, etc.), and is paid for out of specific US financial accounts. It does not include direct financial contributions and generally does not include weapons transfers.[5] There are two main conduits through which the US provides military assistance–through the Department of State (DoS) and through the Department of Defense (DoD). The on-the-ground implementers of military assistance include the DoD's multiple service components, Customs and Border Protection (within the Department of Homeland Security), or the Army Corps of Engineers.

Security cooperation (SC) encompasses all the tools the US government uses to engage with foreign security forces to build military-to-military relationships, promote US security objectives, and develop a partner's military capabilities. Security Cooperation works to guarantee US forces with active peacetime and contingency relationships and access to the PN should it be needed.[6] *Security force assistance (SFA)* consists of a range of Department of Defense and Department of State security cooperation activities that support the development of foreign security forces and their supporting institutions.[7] *Security assistance* (SA) is the programs and assistance authorized under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, funded and authorized by the Department of State (DoS), administered by the Department of Defense (DoD) or contractors, and contributes to US security cooperation with other countries. *Security Sector Assistance (SSA)* is a term that was coined in President Obama's Presidential Decision Directive 23 (PPD-23), and refers to all State security sector assistance and all DoD security cooperation

[4] The National Guard is a law enforcement entity, however in the majority of francophone African nations where this research took place it is under the authority of the Ministry of Defense.
[5] Weapons can be included in this assistance. However, special justification and approval are required for authorization.
[6] Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Joint Pub. 3-20, Security Cooperation," May 23, 2017, https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_20_20172305.pdf.
[7] Joint Chiefs of Staff. GL-6.

programs, exercises, engagements, and all related activities of USAID, DOJ, and other agencies.[8] This research will utilize the term *military counterterrorism assistance* (or military CT T&E), which consists of the suite of military SFA and SSA programs that are dedicated to building CT capacity.[9]

Importantly, any attempt to measure the effects of military CT T&E programs is, therefore, conducted by two different US agencies responsible for oversight (State and Defense). A country's *capacity* to counter terrorism is the state's ability to detect, deter, and respond to a terrorist incident. A nation's *success* in countering terrorism is captured as a combination of increased *capacity* and improved counter terrorism *outcomes*.

In discussing religion, the following terms will be utilized. The word '*Islamism'* refers to the definition provided by Okumu and Ikelegbe of a "wide range of political, social, and religious activity across diverse disciplines and traditions within Islam."[10] '*Islamist,'* as captured by Esposito and Popal, encompasses "groups that proactively promote or enforce Islamic ideologies, laws, policies, or customs in the state and/or society."[11] Finally, '*Radical Islamist groups'* as defined by Guilain Denoeux, are "politico-religious movements which, through extreme methods, strive to bring about drastic sociopolitical changes based on a revolutionary reinterpretation of Islamic doctrine that claims to go back to the fundamental meaning and message of the faith."[12] The vast majority believe that violence is a legitimate means to impose regime change from impious to pious governments.[13]

---

[8] SSA includes both defense and law enforcement assistance and is thus too broad a term for this dissertation. The White House, "Fact Sheet: U.S. Security Sector Assistance Policy," whitehouse.gov, April 5, 2013, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/04/05/fact-sheet-us-security-sector-assistance-policy.
[9] These include the following accounts: Peacekeeping Operations (PKO), Section 1206/2282/333, African Leadership Program (ALP), Miscellaneous DoD/DoS Non-SA (money that pays for JCETs), Non-SA/Unified Command (Non-SA/UC).
[10] Wafula Okumu and Augustine Ikelegbe, *Militias, Rebels and Islamist Militants: Human Insecurity and State Crises in Africa* (Institute for Security Studies, 2010), 343, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/137173/MilitiasRebelsIslamistMilitants%20(Nov2010).pdf.
[11] John L. Esposito and Mariam Popal, "The Oxford Dictionary of Islam," *Islam* 85, no. 2 (2008): 151; Guilain Denoeux, "The Forgotten Swamp: Navigating Political Islam," *Middle East Policy* 9, no. 2 (June 2002): 61, https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-4967.00057.
[12] Denoeux, "The Forgotten Swamp," 68.
[13] Caitriona Dowd, "Cultural and Religious Demography and Violent Islamist Groups in Africa," *Political Geography* 45 (March 1, 2015): 11–21, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2014.09.006.

Background and Context

Understanding the funding streams and legal authorities underpinning US military counterterrorism assistance is essential before examining the tactical-level training efforts in Mali. These programs do not operate in a vacuum; they are shaped by broader policy decisions, congressional mandates, and strategic priorities that determine where, how, and to what end such assistance is delivered. In Mali, multiple overlapping initiatives—authorized under various titles and funded through distinct budget lines—have contributed to a fragmented yet persistent US military approach. Tracing this context is critical for evaluating the intent, coherence, and consequences of US efforts in the region.

US Security Policy and Assistance

The Department of State and the Department of Defense have long shared the responsibility of engaging with foreign military forces. The legal foundation for this assistance emerged after World War II, when security aid became a significant component of US foreign assistance to counter the rise of the Soviet Union. In 1961, Congress authorized the Foreign Assistance Act, which gave the State Department the lead role for funding and authorizing foreign assistance, which includes military and other security assistance.[14] Title 22 of the US Code (Foreign Relations) provides the Secretary of State with "continuous supervision and general direction" to ensure the coherence of international security assistance with foreign policy. This assistance is then generally administered by the Department of Defense or contractors and contributes to US security cooperation with other countries.

Department of State Security Cooperation Authorities and Resources

The State Department (State, led by the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs) funds and oversees a wide range of international military assistance programs. The International Military Education and Training (IMET) program is focused on professionalization and is designed to build long-term military to military relationships and to expose foreign military officers to US military schools, procedures, and the way military organizations

[14] Congressional Research Service, "Foreign Assistance Act of 1961: Authorizations and Corresponding Appropriations," April 18, 2012, 236–72, https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20120418_R40089_3d9b02e6f261c2556d164c1e424964ece793ea7a.pdf.

function under civilian control. Foreign Military Financing (FMF) is authorized to support PN purchases of US defense articles and services through grants to support defense, collective security arrangements, counterterrorism, and maritime security. The Foreign Military Sales (FMS) system, overseen by State and implemented by DoD, is a government-to-government relationship to procure US defense articles and services (including guidance on what training and spare parts packages might be needed), whether it is funded by the PN or through the FMF program. Finally, the Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) account is authorized to support voluntary peacekeeping operations and other programs carried out in furtherance of US national security interests.[15] The spectrum of US international security assistance also includes criminal justice sector programs, the oversight and management of which lies with the State Department's Bureaus of Counterterrorism, Conflict Stabilization Operations, and International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs; however, this research focuses concretely on military assistance.[16]

Department of Defense Security Cooperation Authorities and Resources

Originally, security assistance was largely a secondary DoD mission to warfighting. Title 10 of the United States Code outlines the role of armed forces.[17] DoD security assistance is commonly referred to as "Title 10 assistance," providing US military officers with the opportunity to enhance their own training in different operational environments and to foster communication, skills, and cultural exchanges bilaterally and regionally among the US and PN forces. Traditional Title 10 military assistance includes the Regional Centers for Security Studies (such as the African Center for Strategic Studies), Disaster Response (Humanitarian Assistance), Mine Action Programs, Drug Interdiction, and Counter-Drug Activities.

The increase in the provision of US security assistance after World War II necessitated the founding of the Defense Security Assistance Agency (DSAA) in 1971 to direct,

[15] Susan B Epstein and Liana W Rosen, "U.S. Security Assistance and Security Cooperation Programs: Overview of Funding Trends," *R45091*, February 1, 2018, 20–21.
[16] Epstein and Rosen, "U.S. Security Assistance and Security Cooperation Programs: Overview of Funding Trends," February 1, 2018.
[17] "10 U.S. Code - Ch.1041, §1, 70A Stat.1 - Armed Forces," ch.1041, §1, 70A Stat.1 § (1956), https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title10&edition=prelim.

administer, and supervise the execution of security assistance and to improve "oversight of existing military assistance programs."[18] In the 1980s, Congress began to slowly provide DoD with the authority and means to directly train, equip, and assist foreign military and other security forces in counternarcotics, counter-proliferation, and humanitarian assistance. In October 1998, to improve efficiency, the DSAA expanded to bring five previously disjointed military assistance programs from various agencies together under one authority. The DSAA was redesignated as the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) to represent this expanded mission, and the term 'security cooperation' was officially coined.[19]

In the 1990s, Congress again enabled DoD to train and equip North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces in nonproliferation and counterterrorism programs.[20] Authorities were extended in either Title 10 of the US Code (Armed Services) or through new provisions in the annual National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).[21]

Changes in US Security Engagement Post 9/11

In the wake of September 11th, 2001 (9/11), a new US Counterterrorism strategy focused on the analysis that threats "are likely to emanate from states that cannot adequately govern themselves or secure their own territory.... in these situations, the effectiveness and credibility of the United States will only be as good as the effectiveness, credibility, and sustainability of its local partners."[22]

US counterterrorism strategy is addressed through a wide spectrum of different security, governance, and development initiatives. At one end, programs exist to address the root

[18] "Defense Security Assistance Agency (DSAA)," Department of Defense Directive (Arlington, VA: Department of Defense, August 11, 1971).
[19] John J. Hamre, "Redesignation of the Defense Security Assistance Agency as the Defense Security Cooperation Agency," October 11, 2014, https://web.archive.org/web/20141011063938/http://www.defense.gov/dodreform/drids/drid40.html.
[20] Nina M Serafino, "Security Assistance and Cooperation: Shared Responsibility of the Departments of State and Defense" (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, May 26, 2016), https://sgp.fas.org/crs/natsec/R44444.pdf.
[21] Bolko J Skorupski and Nina M Serafino, "DOD Security Cooperation: An Overview of Authorities and Issues" (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, August 23, 2016), https://sgp.fas.org/crs/natsec/R44602.pdf.
[22] Robert M. Gates, "Helping Others Defend Themselves," *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 3 (June 2010): 4.

drivers of instability, and at the other end, military operations may be executed to destroy terrorist targets through direct action. This research examines the security sphere of US counterterrorism policy, and within that, specifically how the US military engages with (trains, equips, advises, and assists) foreign militaries and other security forces.

The 2002 National Security Strategy identified fractured or failing states as the principal security challenge of the 21st century.[23] The 2004 National Military Strategy confirmed that improving the military counterterrorism capabilities of allies and partners was a principal way the US would disrupt and attack terrorist networks worldwide, as PNs that provide for their security contribute more effectively to broader regional or global security challenges, and maintain professional, civilian-led militaries that respect human rights.[24] The 2005 National Defense Strategy identified that "one of the military's most effective tools in prosecuting the Global War on Terrorism is to help train indigenous forces" so that PNs would be able to operate alongside US forces in denying state sponsorship, support, and sanctuary to terrorist organizations.[25]

In the immediate post-9/11 environment, initial US combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq shifted quickly into a phase focused on building partner capacity.[26] The DoD requested—and Congress provided—a combination of crisis and wartime authorities to engage in "security cooperation" with foreign militaries to counter the new threat from non-state actors. The Fiscal Year (FY) 2006 NDAA provided the Secretary of Defense with the first temporary global authority to train and equip foreign military forces for two specified purposes—counterterrorism and stability operations.[27] The 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) elevated an indirect approach—building the security and governance capacity of other countries (BPC)—to become a critical element of the national security strategy. The QDR captured a shift in focus "from the US military performing tasks – to a focus on

[23] White House, "National Security Strategy 2002," September 2002, https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/nss/nss2002.pdf?ver=oyVN99aEnrAWijAc_O5eiQ%3d%3d.
[24] Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "National Military Strategy 2004," 2004, https://www.bits.de/NRANEU/others/strategy/NMS04.pdf.
[25] "National Defense Strategy 2005," March 2005, https://www.bits.de/NRANEU/others/strategy/nds2005.pdf.
[26] US BPC efforts ramped up training the Afghan National Army in 2002, and the New Iraqi Army in mid-2003.
[27] "National Defense Authorization Act FY2006," Pub. L. No. Public Law 109-163 (2006), https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-109publ163/pdf/PLAW-109publ163.pdf.

enabling partners to do more for themselves."[28] The US military sought to enhance PN capacity to conduct counterterrorism operations and to increase the capacity of states to address their own regional security challenges. This was to prevent an eventual US crisis intervention, to enhance coalition participation, and it was seen as a plausible exit strategy for the US to extricate itself from its post-9/11 military campaigns.[29] In a Report to Congress on Section 1206(f) of the 2006 NDAA (2007), the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs noted, "Building partner nation security capacity is one of the most important strategic requirements for the United States to promote international security, advance US interests and prevail in the war against terrorism."[30]

The creation of the "12 series" programs – 1203, 1206, 1207, and others – focused specifically on building partner capacity through tactical train and equip programs.[31] The DoD requested its own train and equip authority because it viewed the planning and implementation processes under which similar State Department security assistance was too slow and cumbersome.[32] The intent was to train and equip foreign military forces in response to urgent and emergent threats and opportunities, "solving problems before they become crises that require significant military intervention."[33] While these funds needed the concurrence of the Secretary of State to be obligated, these programs significantly expanded DoD's authorities and augmented its traditional role in building partner capacity.

After over a decade of growth of authorities and funding, counterterrorism responsibilities, involvement in overseas contingency operations, evolving national security priorities, and efforts to counter asymmetrical threats, security cooperation became recognized as one of

[28] Department of Defense, "2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Report" (Department of Defense, February 6, 2006), https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/quadrennial/QDR2006.pdf?ver=2014-06-25-111017-150.
[29] Kathleen J McInnis and Nathan J Lucas, "What Is 'Building Partner Capacity?' Issues for Congress," December 18, 2015, https://sgp.fas.org/crs/natsec/R44313.pdf.
[30] Bureau of Political-Military Affairs Department of State, "Report to Congress: Section 1206(f) of the 2006 National Defense Authorization Act" (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, July 3, 2007), https://2001-2009.state.gov/t/pm/rls/rpt/spec/90867.htm.
[31] "Foreign Military Training and DoD Engagement Activities of Interest, 2019-2020," *United States Department of State* (blog), accessed August 29, 2023, https://www.state.gov/reports/foreign-military-training-and-dod-engagement-activities-of-interest-2019-2020/.
[32] "U.S. Department of Defense FY2009 Budget Request" (Department of Defense, February), 103, https://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2009/FY2009_Budget_Request_Justification.pdf.
[33] "U.S. Department of Defense FY2009 Budget Request," 102.

DoD's priority tools and "an integral element of the DoD mission."[34] The DoD's security cooperation authorities were most recently and significantly modified in the FY 2017 NDAA,[35] which enacted several new provisions that modified the budgeting, execution, administration, and evaluation of DoD security cooperation programs and activities. As of 2024, there have been many improvements, but implementing many of these provisions remains a work in progress. The FY 2017 NDAA established new authority for building the capacity of foreign forces, otherwise known as Section 333 of Title 10, which incorporated existing authorities such as Section 1206 and 2282 programs.[36]

US Security Engagement in Africa

There are many key factors that shape US interest in Africa: the promotion of democracy and good governance; the growing threat of terrorism; securing natural resources; global trade; containing armed conflicts and humanitarian crises; and stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS, Ebola, and other deadly diseases.[37]

During the 1990s, US special forces missions to train indigenous forces rapidly increased to at least 110 countries, becoming a principal tool in exerting US influence abroad. While the primary purpose was supposed to be training US Special Operations Forces (SOF) how to train, the training was on "fighting drug traffickers, teaching counterinsurgency techniques in countries concerned about domestic stability, and sharing US military expertise in exchange for access to top foreign officials."[38]

The American public possessed a narrow understanding of the African continent during the 1990s, consisting principally of two key events. In 1993, the devastating Battle of

[34] Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, "DOD Policy and Responsibilities Relating to Security Cooperation" (U.S. Department of Defense, December 29, 2016), https://open.defense.gov/portals/23/Documents/foreignasst/DoDD_513203_on_Security_Cooperation.pdf.
[35] U.S. Congress, "National Defense Authorization Act of FY2017," Pub. L. No. 114–328, 1 (2016), https://www.congress.gov/114/plaws/publ328/PLAW-114publ328.pdf.
[36] These include Section 1206 of the FY2006 NDAA, P.L. 109-163, and 10 USC. 2282 in the FY2015 NDAA (P.L. 113-291).
[37] Nicolas Van De Walle et al., "Rising U.S. Stakes in Africa: Seven Proposals to Strengthen U.S.-Africa Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 83, no. 6 (May 2004): 162, https://doi.org/10.2307/20034193.
[38] Dana Priest, "Free of Oversight, U.S. Military Trains Foreign Troops: 1991 Law Waives Many Restrictions on Aid," *The Washington Post (1974-)*, July 12, 1998.

Mogadishu (otherwise known as Black Hawk Down), where 18 US Special Forces were brutally and very publicly killed and dragged through the streets amidst warring Somali clans, and in 1994, the Rwandan genocide.[39] As a result, US security engagement on the continent for the remainder of the decade shied away from and was not identified as a strategic priority for the US Government or military. This was one of the many reasons that Bin Laden himself found sanctuary in Sudan from 1991 until he departed for Afghanistan in 1996.[40]

In 1998, simultaneous truck bombs exploded in front of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, killing 244 people, including 12 Americans.[41] Al Qaeda (AQ) was quickly identified as having perpetrated the attacks. While the targets were against the US, they were far from the homeland. Even though AQ had attacked the US multiple times prior (Yemen, 1992; World Trade in New York, 1993; and Saudi Arabia, 1995), to the average American citizen, they represented a relatively unknown enemy.[42] However, three years later, the terrorist events of September 11, 2001, in New York, Washington, DC, and Shanksville, Pennsylvania, fundamentally reframed US security policy and priorities for the twenty-first century.

Africa was implicated in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in multiple ways. US President George Bush declared a sweeping "war on terrorism" in 2001 and openly labeled this effort a "crusade," which was met with a wave of frustration and anger from the greater Muslim world. The ensuing American military invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan each had a major impact in reviving recruiting efforts and popular support for terrorist groups at the local level.

[39] Airborne & Special Operations Museum Foundation, "Task Force Ranger and the Battle of Mogadishu Exhibit," September 8, 2015, https://web.archive.org/web/20150908082526/http://www.asomf.org/2014/11/06/task-force-ranger-and-the-battle-of-mogadishu/.
[40] Stuart M. Johnson, "Swamp of Terror in the Sahara," *Air & Space Forces Magazine*, November 1, 2004, https://www.airandspaceforces.com/article/1104sahara/.
[41] Federal Bureau of Investigation, "East African Embassy Bombings," Page, Federal Bureau of Investigation, accessed November 4, 2021, https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/east-african-embassy-bombings.
[42] "Historic Timeline | National Counterterrorism Center," accessed October 27, 2021, https://www.dni.gov/nctc/timeline.html#2000.

Given the 1998 attacks in Tanzania and Kenya and the known active presence of a terrorist group in Somalia, a temporary base, the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa, was immediately established in Djibouti in October 2001, with the mission of combating terrorism. A multinational coalition naval task force was also established, composed of ships from France, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States, to stop suspected shipping and piracy in the Horn of Africa and the surrounding seas in support of the global war on terror.[43]

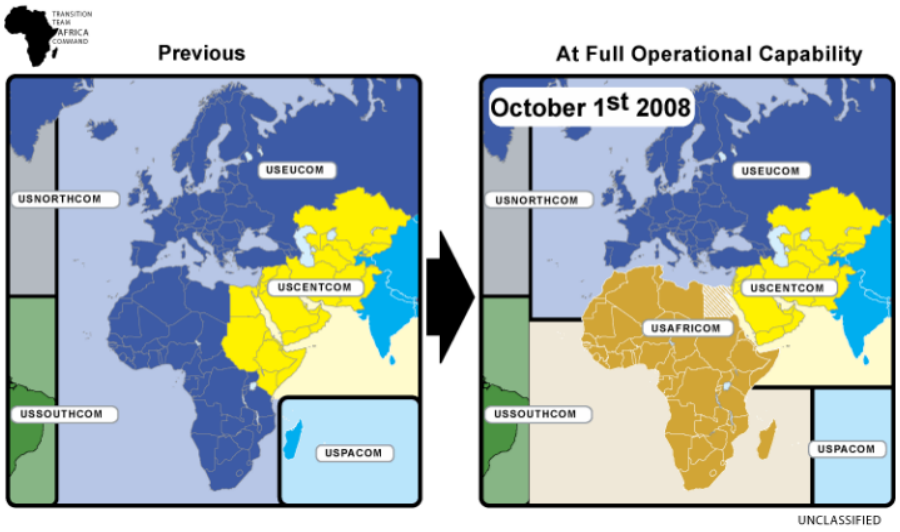
In November 2001, Susan Rice, former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs during the Clinton administration, testified before Congress that "Africa is unfortunately the world's soft underbelly for global terrorism," referring to the threat that possible terrorist groups on the continent posed to US allies across the European continent.[44] The 9/11 Commission Report identified Mali twice as a country that AQ had "established [a] cooperative but less formal relationship" with another extremist group in Mali and it was also a country that was identified by American and foreign government officials and military officers as "a likely country within which a terrorist leader might locate its base."[45] Though the US Government did not face an acute threat from terrorist organizations in the region at the time, policymakers assessed that a threat could spread in the region if left unaddressed. However, insufficient DoD resources and staffing were devoted to the continent, as Africa was a secondary priority for each of the geographic combatant commanders (GCCs) dedicated to it. Fully committed to the ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, US Central Command (CENTCOM) had very limited manpower and resources to devote to Africa. It was also very difficult and time-consuming to plan engagements on the continent, as it often required communication and coordination among three combatant commands (COCOMs) to implement regional training and

[43] CJTF-HOA remains today, in 2025, the US's only enduring military base on the continent, though it is still considered expeditionary and not permanent. Christian Jadot, "Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa," Government, CJTF-HOA, November 29, 2016, https://www.hoa.africom.mil/image/20380/combined-joint-task-force-horn-of-africa-image.
[44] "Africa and the War on Global Terrorism" (House of Representatives: 107th Congress, November 15, 2001), http://commdocs.house.gov/committees/intlrel/hfa76191.000/hfa76191_0f.htm.
[45] The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, "The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States," July 22, 2004, 58, https://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/report/911Report.pdf.

operations. As a result, DoD began discussing the creation of a geographic combatant command devoted solely to the African continent.

While the US response to the 9/11 attacks principally involved attacking AQ directly in Afghanistan, a component was also focused on the African continent and was a watershed moment that led to increased US-Africa security cooperation. The US Defense Department organizes its military commands on a geographic (Indo-Pacific, Asia, Europe) and functional (special operations, transport, space) basis. COCOMs are joint military commands that serve as a central node where all the US service components (Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines) are engaged, focusing on a particular area of responsibility or functional specialty. After the Cold War, US European Command (EUCOM) had oversight over and responsibility for 42 of Africa's 54 countries, and CENTCOM and US Pacific Command (PACOM), together had responsibility for the remaining 11.[46]

Figure 1.1 US European Command and US Africa Command Maps[47]



Source: US Department of Defense. "Draft AFRICOM Area of Responsibility" (2007).

[46] As there are 54 African countries, Egypt is the only country not under the oversight of AFRICOM and is overseen instead by US Central Command (CENTCOM). Lauren Ploch, "Africa Command: U.S. Strategic Interests and the Role of the U.S. Military in Africa," July 22, 2011, 43, http://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL34003.pdf.
[47] U.S. Department of Defense, *Draft AFRICOM Area of Responsibility*, February 2007, February 2007, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/1d/USAFRICOM_United_States_Africa_Command_Map_Draft.jpg.

After 9/11, US security cooperation and engagement with the continent steadily increased. A significant advancement in US security and counterterrorism policy for Africa occurred in 2008 when AFRICOM was established and became the first dedicated combatant command responsible for US military activity on the continent.[48] AFRICOM's mission to 'disrupt and neutralize transnational threats, protect US personnel and facilities, prevent and mitigate conflict, and build defense capability to promote regional stability and prosperity' marked a significant evolution in defense strategy towards Africa.[49] AFRICOM's creation meant a change in security prioritization and engagement for Africa: beforehand, Africa had consistently been considered a last priority, but now, it had a command all to itself.[50]

US Security and Counterterrorism Engagement in the Sahel

The Sahel region, a 3,670-mile band of semi-arid desert that stretches from Senegal and Mauritania in the West through Mali, Niger, Chad, and Sudan in the East, has experienced—and continues to experience—much longstanding political, economic, and humanitarian vulnerability. It is made up of countries that suffer from poor governance, weak democratic institutions, and a lack of development and economic opportunities for their citizens. Nations are composed of vast expanses of terrain that they cannot govern. Security services are barely able to maintain control outside of the state capitals. Vulnerabilities exist that are easily exploitable by violent extremist and criminal organizations.[51]

---

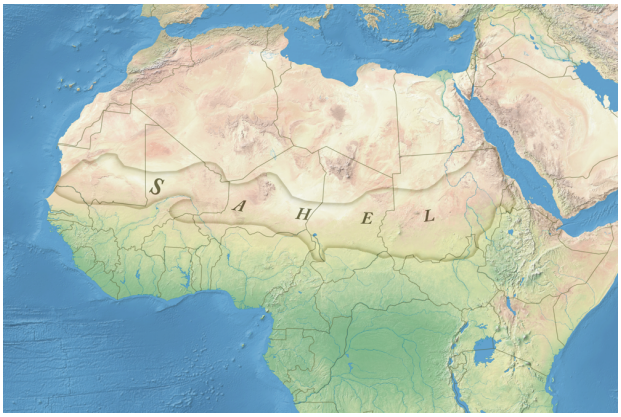
[48] Reflecting its low-security priority before 9/11, Sub-Saharan Africa had only become a part of the US Defense Department COCOM Structure in 1983, under the jurisdiction of an already overstretched US European Command (EUCOM). Based in Stuttgart, Germany, EUCOM had been responsible for 42 of Africa's 54 countries. The remaining 11 countries were under the purview of US Central Command (CENTCOM) and US Pacific Command (PACOM). Other major advances in Africa during the Bush administration were the creation of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), which donated billions to the global HIV/AIDS response across the African continent, and the Millennium Challenge Account, which provides time-limited grants that promote economic growth, reduce poverty, and strengthen institutions, to incentivize reform. US Department of State, "The United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief," United States Department of State, accessed August 13, 2024, https://www.state.gov/pepfar/; US Agency for International Development, "Millennium Challenge Corporation," Millennium Challenge Corporation, accessed August 13, 2024, https://www.mcc.gov/about/.

[49] "History of U.S. Africa Command," accessed October 27, 2021, https://www.africom.mil/about-the-command/history-of-us-africa-command.

[50] Many think AFRICOM still lacks priority in forces, funding, and attention compared to the resources that other geographic combatant commands receive.

[51] Michael T. [R-TX-10 Rep. McCaul, "Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership Program Act of 2021," Pub. L. No. HR 567, HR 567 (2021), https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/567/text.

Figure 1.2 Map of the Sahel[52]



Source: Munion, *Map of the Sahel* (The Sahel region of Africa, 2015).

While scarcely populated, the barren desert is marked by the presence of thousand-year-old Sahelian trade routes, which can be seen in Figure 1.3, linking the nations of the Gulf of Guinea to North Africa and beyond to Europe. Borders are nothing more than a line in the sand, and as most countries do not have formal trade agreements, all goods that cross borders are considered 'illicit.' Smugglers and criminal networks traffic people, weapons, drugs, and commodities, such as cigarettes, across the desert to get to Europe. With a nearly total lack of communications, the Sahara mostly defies national government authority. African armies, relatively small and poorly equipped, have difficulty monitoring the huge territories they are supposed to control.[53]

[52] Munion, *Map of the Sahel* (The Sahel region of Africa, August 31, 2015), https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_the_Sahel.png.
[53] It should be noted, however, that most armies–including the US, French, and UN forces–have had trouble supporting their forces logistically on the continent. Logistics is the Achilles heel for modern forces operating there due to the extreme conditions, lack of infrastructure, and tyranny of distance.

Figure 1.3 Early Sahelian Trading Routes[54]



Source: Sahel Major Trade Routes, accessed (2025).

Before 9/11, the primary terrorist group in the Sahel was the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC or Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédiction et le Combat), which was only operational in Algeria. The GSPC was created in September 1998 when it splintered off from what had been the largest and most active terrorist group during the Algerian civil war, the Armed Islamic Group (GIA or Groupe Islamique Armé).[55] The Algerian jihad adhered to Salafist interpretations and ideals. It was locally focused on overthrowing the government and establishing an Islamic state. By 2000, while it had expanded in size, it was ideologically in disarray and lacked a cohesive political agenda.[56]

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 9/11, Hassan Hattab, leader of the GSPC, supported Osama bin Laden and AQ, threatening the GSPC would "strike hard" at "American and European interests in Algeria if they implement(ed) their threats to attack Arab and Muslim states . . . [or] if they continue(d) to harass [the] Islamist network in the US, UK, France, and Belgium." On September 23, 2001, President George W. Bush

[54] *Sahel Major Trade Routes*, accessed April 1, 2025, https://www.sutori.com/en/item/untitled-db3c-3d4b.
[55] Anneli Botha, "Terrorism in Algeria," in *Terrorism in the Maghreb; the Transnationalisation of Domestic Terrorism*, ISS Monograph Series 144, 2008, 39.
[56] Evan F Kohlmann, "Two Decades of Jihad in Algeria: The GIA, the GSPC, and Al-Qaida," May 2007, 28.

signed Executive Order 13224, which blocked the finances of 28 terrorists and terrorist groups around the world and included the GSPC.[57] In May 2002, the State Department first documented the growing strength of the GSPC in its 2001 Patterns of Global Terrorism report, noting that "civilians have been attacked" in Algeria despite the group's alleged focus on government and security forces.[58]

In November 2002, the US government launched the Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI), a prevention-focused counterterrorism program focused on the countries surrounding Algeria, principally Mauritania, Mali, Niger, and Chad.[59] The PSI approach reflected a modest initial investment geared towards addressing the underlying economic, social, and political drivers of extremism throughout the sub-region in the hopes that it would afford an inhospitable environment for terrorist groups. Such a preventative approach was supposed to reflect a balanced increase in development, governance, and defense resources from the US to the four countries.

Figure 1.4 Pan-Sahel Initiative (2002-2005)[60]



[57] George W. Bush, "Executive Order 13224: Blocking Property and Prohibiting Transactions With Persons Who Commit, Threaten To Commit, or Support Terrorism," *United States Department of State* 66, no. 186 (September 25, 2001): 49079–83.
[58] Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, "Patterns of Global Terrorism 2000" (U.S. Department of State, April 30, 2001), https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2000/index.htm.
[59] Bureau of Public Affairs Department Of State. The Office of Electronic Information, "Pan Sahel Initiative" (Department Of State. The Office of Electronic Information, Bureau of Public Affairs., November 7, 2002), https://2001-2009.state.gov/s/ct/rls/other/14987.htm.
[60] Author generated map of the region.

Source: Author's depiction of the PSI region

Mauritania, Mali, Niger, and Chad were identified as PNs within the PSI. The partnership was—and still is—a multi-country, multi-year initiative to coordinate activities by the Department of State, Department of Defense, and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) to address the underlying drivers of instability and to build the capacity of PNs to combat terrorism in the Sahel and Maghreb regions.[61] It was a regional approach that attempted to make countries less vulnerable to recruitment and radicalization, build partner capacity so nations could better detect and deter threats, and enhance regional coordination and cooperation efforts to combat terrorism.[62] The PSI was supposed to act as a framework under which the US could integrate a development, governance, and security approach, better enabling Sahelian and Maghrebian nations to address longstanding drivers of extremism in the two sub-regions, including poverty, political marginalization, and social alienation.

The security-related component of the PSI focused on building partner capacity and was made up of "targeted efforts to improve the collective capabilities and performance of the Ministries of Defense and their partners" to combat terrorism.[63] The PSI brought military and civilian officials from the four countries together to encourage greater cooperation and information exchange within and among the region's governments on counterterrorism and border security issues.[64] It was designed to better protect regional borders, track the movement of people, combat terrorism, and enhance regional cooperation and stability.

[61] TSCTP was created following the Pan-Sahel Initiative (2002-2004), and the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCTI), which focused on military training and equipment provision for Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger from 2004-2005. While TSCTP was created in 2005, dedicated funding for the partnership did not start until 2007.
[62] "Examining U.S. Counterterrorism Priorities and Strategies Across Africa's Sahel Region" (Washington, DC, November 17, 2009), https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/GuteliusTestimony091117a1.pdf.
[63] Under Secretary of Defense, "Building Partnership Capacity; QDR Execution Roadmap" (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, May 22, 2006), file:///Users/andreamwalther/Downloads/756385.pdf.
[64] Department Of State. The Office of Electronic Information, "Pan Sahel Initiative."

The partnership also enabled US soldiers to conduct SOF-specific training requirements in a new environment they had not previously encountered in Europe. Between 2002 and 2004, forces from the 10th SFG, out of SOCEUR, were responsible for providing CT capacity building training and related equipment to six light mobile infantry companies for 600 soldiers from the four PSI countries (150 soldiers each). CT capacity was defined as proficiency in mobility, communications, land navigation, and small unit tactics.[65] Trainers sought to establish military-to-military relationships to foster cooperation among the various militaries and improve bilateral and regional border security. Accompanying related mobility and communications equipment, such as Toyota Land Cruisers, radios, and GPS monitors, were also provided. In return, US SOF learned about new cultures, terrain, and languages by working on the ground with their African partners.

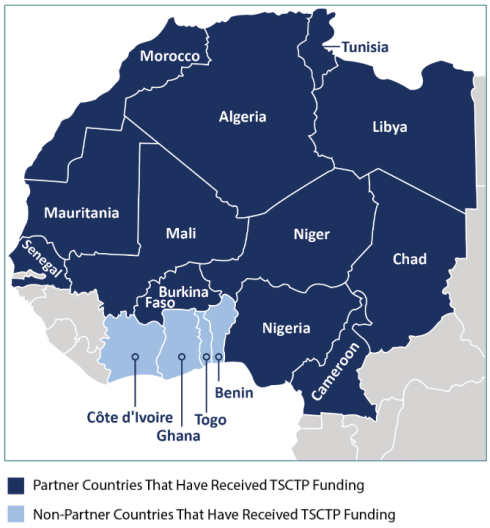
Shortly thereafter, in March 2004, the US renamed the PSI to the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCTI) and then quickly adjusted it again to the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) in 2005 to better highlight the partnership aspect of the effort.[66] With TSCTI and then TSCTP, the military component of the initiative increased its training from a company-sized element (100 soldiers) to a battalion (500 soldiers) for each of the nine PNs. Training continued to focus on mobility, communications, land navigation, and small unit tactics (enhancing border security, with accompanying vehicles, radios, and GPS monitors provided).

Membership slowly expanded over time. In 2005, three West African PNs were added (Burkina Faso, Nigeria, and Senegal) and three North African partners (Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia), given the porous borders between the Sahel and Maghreb and the movement of terrorist groups between the two regions. As of 2025, the TSCTP currently has 12 PNs—Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon (2014), Chad, Libya (2018), Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Tunisia. TSCTP program assistance

[65] Eric Schmitt, "As Africans Join Iraqi Insurgency, U.S. Counters With Military Training in Their Lands," *The New York Times*, June 10, 2005, sec. World, https://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/10/politics/as-africans-join-iraqi-insurgency-us-counters-with-military.html.
[66] Editor, "Pan Sahel Initiative (PSI)," Globalsecurity.org, accessed November 4, 2021, https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/pan-sahel.htm.

has also supported the non-partner, littoral nations of Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Togo, as they have been affected by spillover effects of terrorist groups operating in the Sahel. In March 2022, Congress passed the TSCTP Act, which officially authorized the program, established congressional notification requirements on funding allocations, required interagency strategies for TSCTP and regional policy objectives, and mandated regular reporting on whether the partnership was meeting its goals and working to resolve earlier operational inefficiencies.[67]

Figure 1.5 Partner and Non-Partner Countries in the TSCTP Program in 2025[68]



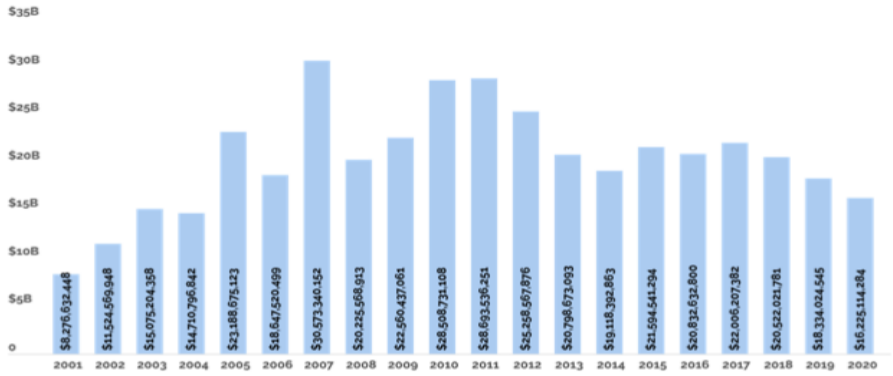
Source: OIG Audit of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership Program (2025)

Stark Increases in US Security Assistance and Cooperation After 9/11

Before 9/11, the US spent approximately $8.28 billion annually on international security assistance. As a result of the Global War on Terror, Figure 1.6 depicts how that number began increasing rapidly, peaking at $30.57 billion in FY 2007 (during the height of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, when it was almost four times larger than before 9/11). In FY 2020, it rested at $16.23 billion. This means that in twenty years, $406 billion was spent, with spending 96 percent higher in FY 2020 than in FY 2001.[69]

[67] Rep. McCaul, Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership Program Act of 2021.
[68] Office of the Inspector General, "Audit of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership Program" (Washington, DC: Department of State, March 2025), 3, https://www.stateoig.gov/uploads/report/report_pdf_file/aud-geer-25-11-web-posting_508.pdf.
[69] Woods and Yousif, "The Expanding Scope of U.S. Security Assistance Since 9/11," 6.

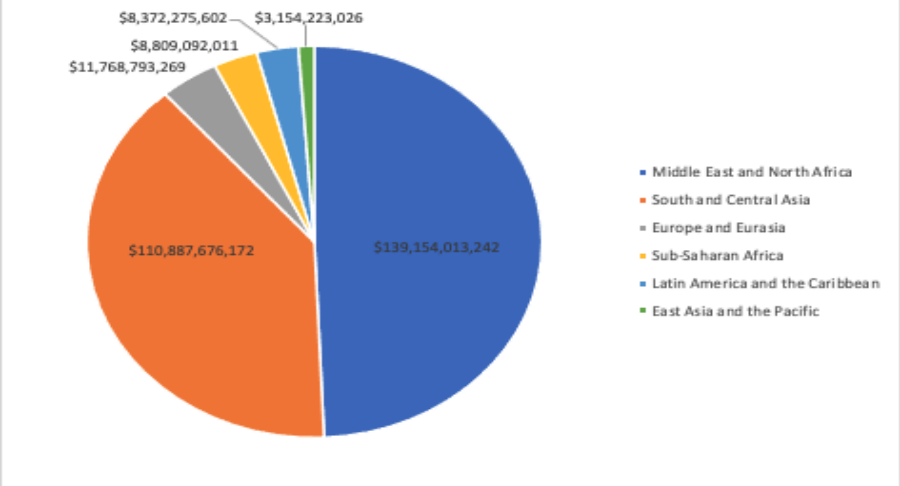
Figure 1.6 US Security Assistance Annual Totals (2001-2020)[70]



Source: The Expanding Scope of US Security Assistance Since 9/11, Security Assistance Monitor (2021)

As outlined in figure 1.7, below, between FY 2000 and FY 2020, the US spent $282 billion on international military assistance. The largest recipient regions were the Middle East and North Africa (49 percent) and South and Central Asia (39 percent), whereas Sub-Saharan Africa received only 3 percent.

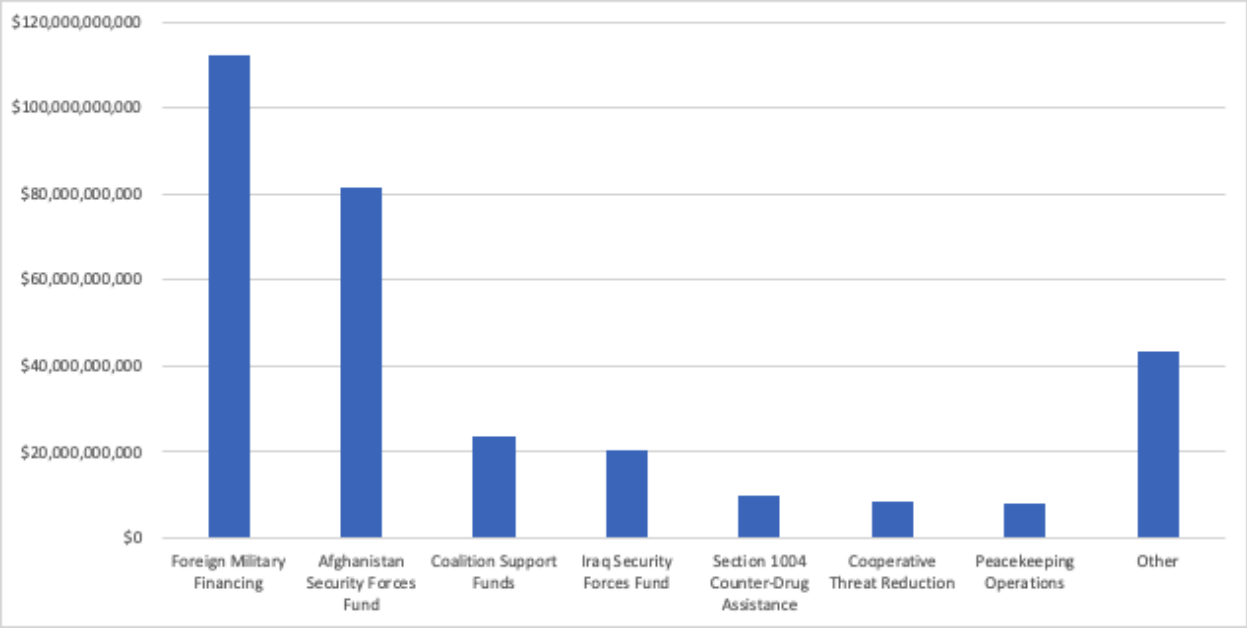
Figure 1.7 Global Allocations of International Military Assistance (FY 2000-FY 2020)[71]



Source: Security Assistance Database, Security Assistance Monitor (2021)

[70] Woods and Yousif, 6.
[71] The Security Assistance Monitor (SAM) is the most comprehensive and specific public information on the Pentagon's military aid spending currently available. SAM laboriously combs through Pentagon reports to the congressional oversight committees for information on military aid, country-by-country, and compiles the data online. Center for International Policy, "Security Assistance Database," Security Assistance Monitor, November 2, 2021, https://internationalpolicy.org/programs/sam/.

Figure 1.8 Breakdown of International Security Assistance (FY 2000-FY 2020)[72]



Source: Security Assistance Database, Security Assistance Monitor (2021)

While the name of the Peacekeeping (PKO) account clearly describes its goal of supporting ongoing non-UN peacekeeping operations and nations' ability to participate in ongoing peacekeeping operations, in practice, the PKO account also seeks to "help diminish and resolve conflict; address counterterrorism threats; and reform military establishments into professional military forces with respect for the rule of law in the aftermath of conflict."[73] As depicted in Figure 1.8, annual allocations of PKO funding are significantly less than Foreign Military Financing (FMF), which provides grants or loans to friendly governments to help them purchase American-made defense equipment, services, and training. The State Department traditionally focuses the PKO account to respond to urgent crises where countries are in–or are emerging from–conflict and may also need to rebuild their security sectors.

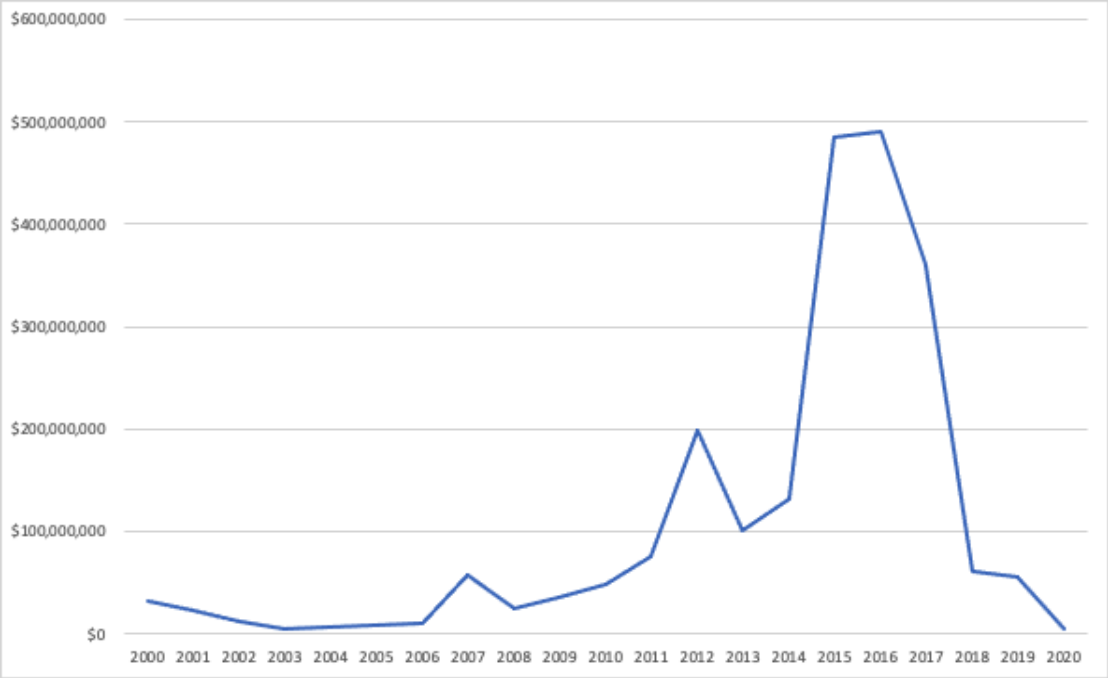
[72] Center for International Policy.
[73] "Congressional Budget Justification Foreign Operations Appendix FY2015" (Washington, DC: Department of State, FY 2015), 179, https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/224069.pdf.

The PSI began with $6.85 million in FY 2002 and FY 2003 PKO funding and increased to $7.75 million in FY 2005.[74] During these years, PSI funds were solely dedicated to military assistance. However, additional elements of US government support were also included to make it more of a 3D program, including development assistance and criminal justice sector assistance.

The US government committed $100 million annually to TSCTP from 2007 to 2011.[75] TSCTP is not funded by a specific congressional authorization or appropriation process, making it difficult to track fiscally. Instead, contributing agencies fund TSCTP activities at their discretion through multiple accounts. TSCTP has a combined annual interagency budget of approximately $115 million.[76] However, success in generating funding from annual globally competitive CT train-and-equip funding streams can significantly increase this top line.[77] The stark increases reflected in Figure 1.9 from FY 2014 to FY 2017 was the result of an influx in Global Security Contingency Fund and the Counterterrorism Partnership Fund during these fiscal years.[78]

[74] Susan B Epstein, "Foreign Relations Authorization, FY2006 and FY2007: An Overview" (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, September 15, 2005), 5, https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RL/RL33000.
[75] Schmitt, "As Africans Join Iraqi Insurgency, U.S. Counters With Military Training in Their Lands."
[76] US Department of State, "Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) Review" (Washington, DC: Department of State, June 2013), 1.
[77] Andre Le Sage, "The Evolving Threat of al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb," Strategic Forum (National Defense University: Institute for National Strategic Studies, July 2011), https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratforum/SF-268.pdf.
[78] The Global Security Contingency Fund and Counterterrorism Partnership Fund were limited year funds created to fund train and equip projects. "Counterterrorism: DOD Should Fully Address Security Assistance Planning Elements in Global Train and Equip Project Proposals," May 2018, 10-11, https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-18-449.pdf.

Figure 1.9 US Military Assistance to Sub-Saharan TSCTP Members (FY 2000-FY 2020)[79]



Source: Security Assistance Database, Security Assistance Monitor (2021)

Typology of Member States and Levels of Engagement

The basic prerequisites of receiving security cooperation assistance include whether PNs have the economic means and political will to "support, safeguard, and/or sustain" the potential military capabilities provided.[80] Partner nations tend to fall into one of three categories regarding the assistance they receive. A top-tier country is a key CT partner within the region, which has a high threat level. It receives large equipment packages (planes, boats, helicopters, etc.) and accompanying physical infrastructure projects to house such equipment (airplane hangar, boat house, training facility, etc.). It receives enduring nation-specific and regional training programs in multiple disciplines and can host active and ongoing DoD advise and assist missions. From year to year, it typically hosts a regional annual military exercise involving multiple neighboring countries. A mid-tier country is an active CT partner that neighbors a country of high threat level. This country participates in numerous regional

[79] Center for International Policy, "Security Assistance Database."
[80] Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, "DOD Policy and Responsibilities Relating to Security Cooperation," DOD Directive (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, October 24, 2008), https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodd/513203_dodd_2016.pdf.

and one or two nation-specific training programs (constantly shifting between enduring and episodic) and receives some accompanying equipment used in those training programs. Mid-tier countries also participate in annual military exercises and will generally host ancillary events. If an urgent situation develops where an active terrorist threat prevents a high-tier country from hosting an exercise, a mid-tier country may step in to host in its stead, but this is not the norm. A low-tier country is one that sustains a low terrorist threat level. It is a modest CT partner that receives some equipment that accompanies episodic training programs in one or two key disciplines and participates in regional training and annual military exercises.

After twenty years of enhanced security cooperation engagement, there has been significant scholarship dedicated to capturing trends in donor nation success in conducting security cooperation.[81] Several PN security cooperation and assistance trends have been established. Several potential characteristics on the PN side can significantly affect the implementation and/or success of a nation's security cooperation effort. This includes governance-related factors such as corruption, lack of political will, and poor leadership (civilian and/or military). There are also specific security governance-related factors that impact the success of a potential security cooperation effort, which include the potential for security force human rights violations, the potential for a coup d'état, the lack of professional military education, and the lack of a merit-based promotion system. Finally, the presence of concrete accountability mechanisms significantly shapes the outcomes of SC efforts. These mechanisms influence the alignment of donor and PN security priorities, the degree of PN buy-in—including financial contributions—the integration of sustainment planning during capability development, and the partner nation's capacity to absorb and maintain the assistance. The lack of a larger defense sector reform and security sector reform effort makes

[81] Christopher Paul et al., "What Works Best When Building Partner Capacity and Under What Circumstances?" (RAND Corporation, January 28, 2013), https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG1253z1.html; Christopher Paul, "What Works Best When Conducting Security Cooperation?" (RAND Corporation, October 21, 2015), https://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CT441.html; Christopher Paul et al., "What Works Best When Building Partner Capacity in Challenging Contexts?" (RAND Corporation, August 21, 2015), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR937.html; Stephen Watts et al., *Building Security in Africa: An Evaluation of U.S. Security Sector Assistance in Africa from the Cold War to the Present* (RAND Corporation, 2018), https://doi.org/10.7249/RR2447.

for a weak whole-of-government CT effort and an overall lack of willingness by the government (or its leader) to allow for reform and change.

Several characteristics also exist in certain PNs, likely to guarantee effective security cooperation. These include a nation that has congruent security priorities with the donor nation, one that is open to reform, willing to invest its own resources, has committed its own resources to sustaining the security cooperation investment, is willing to take over the responsibility of sustainment from the donor, and is a country that serves as a regional model for other PNs and assists in train and equip efforts in and with other PNs.[82]

How the US Government Measures Change

Despite more than seven decades of security assistance, little emphasis was placed on standardizing partner capacity-building or assessing its impact. September 11, 2001, ushered in an increased focus on security cooperation and efforts to build partner capacity as a "force multiplier, shaper, and stabilizer."[83] The assumption that building foreign security forces would have tangible benefits to US national security, still in 2025, remains greatly untested in both academic and practitioner communities. Discussions on the return on investment of building partner capacity—and the overarching concept of security cooperation—have compared security cooperation funding levels to the overseas emergency and contingency operations budget. The argument was made that spending a modest investment on "preventive" capacity would reduce the chance the US would need to go to war to support its partners. For example, in fiscal year 2020, the government budgeted roughly $1.4 billion in security cooperation assistance[84] and $72.4 billion in overseas emergency and contingency

[82] Much of the literature on security cooperation to date has focused on how donor countries contribute to problems too, including: inconsistent prioritization of requirements and policies, especially with changes of administrations; and inconsistent funding levels over time. A terrific summation of this can be found in Paul et al., "What Works Best When Building Partner Capacity and Under What Circumstances?"

[83] Keith D Smith, Mark H Lauber, and Matthew B Robbins, "Joint Publication 3-20, Security Cooperation; Adapting Enduring Lessons," *Joint Forces Quarterly* 85, no. Q2 2017 (2017): 94–99.

[84] Office of the Secretary of Defense, "FY2020 President's Budget Justification for Security Cooperation Program and Activity Funding" (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, March 2019), https://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2020/FY2020_Security_Cooperation_Book_FINAL.pdf.

operations (OCO).[85] Therefore, for many years, even if security cooperation had only a remote, relatively undetermined chance of success, it was still argued that—at 2 percent of the OCO budget—it was cost-effective to invest in it.[86]

In the immediate post-9/11 environment, no official policy directive or instruction governed how DoD or DoS should measure the effectiveness of capacity building training programs. The QDR established building partner capacity as a national security priority in 2006. The first DoD Directive on security cooperation, which "establish(ed) policy and assign(ed) responsibilities relating to the administration of security cooperation, including security assistance," was published in October 2008.[87] While the Directive instructed the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy to 'evaluate security cooperation program assessments and advise the Secretary of Defense on the effectiveness of DoD security cooperation efforts,' it was very inconclusive. There was no concentrated mention of a monitoring or evaluation framework or ensuing requirements. While a confusing patchwork of varying assessment requirements was specified (campaign plan assessment, operations assessment, programmatic assessment, and security cooperation assessment), a DoD Instruction (DoDI)—a follow-on document that should have prescribed how the defense establishment should carry out the policy in the DoD directive—was not issued.[88] This continued for many years as ensuing related guidance—the Army Field Manual on Security Force Assistance (May 2009), the 2010 QDR, and the DoDI for Security Force Assistance (October 2010)—continued to lack clarity or direction on assessment, monitoring, and evaluation.

As a result, for many years, DoD BPC guidance was minimal. At best, program managers followed programs and authorities by tracking measures of effectiveness (MOEs) and

[85] Office of the Under Secretary of Defense/Chief Financial Officer, "FY2021 Defense Budget Overview" (Department of Defense, May 13, 2020), https://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2021/fy2021_Budget_Request_Overview_Book.pdf.
[86] The Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) budget was a special funding mechanism used by the US government to finance military operations and other war-related expenses (counterterrorism efforts, foreign aid, etc) outside the regular defense budget.
[87] Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, "DOD Directive 5132.03," October 24, 2008.
[88] Washington Headquarters Services, "What Are the DoD Issuances?," accessed December 20, 2022, https://biotech.law.lsu.edu/blaw/dodd/general.html.

measures of performance (MOPs).[89] Measures of Performance are metrics used to determine the accomplishment of actions. They answer the question, "Are actions being executed as planned?" Examples of programmatic measures of performance in building partner capacity include how many training sessions were successfully implemented, how many soldiers graduated from each training program, the number and types of equipment furnished, or whether the construction of a training facility for partner nation security forces was completed. MOPs are important in understanding the long-term use of MOEs. Measures of Effectiveness are indicators used to help measure the achievement of objectives. MOEs help answer the question, "Are we doing the right things to create the effects or changes we initially desired?" Examples of measures of effectiveness include increased border patrolling by friendly forces whose units received border security, training, or aviation logistics teams conducting proper pre-flight logistics checklists.

The State and Defense Departments did conduct assessments of security assistance and cooperation programs; however, they were either capability gap assessments or program assessments. Capability gap assessments were conducted at the beginning of assistance programs rather than over the program's life cycle, undermining each Department's ability to measure outcomes against objectives.[90] Program assessments were conducted once every few years to determine the extent to which the program had been implemented. This meant that they were not able to measure whether, or how much, a particular country had realized its intended capacity building goals, or whether a particular program had an intended effect across multiple countries in a region. It also meant that the Department provided training and equipment without it being connected to the broader range of defense functions that guided the employment of that capability or reinforced its sustainment.

However, efforts to build partner capacity began to receive previously unimagined policy priority with accompanying financial resources as the US became committed to BPC in Afghanistan (2002) and Iraq (2003). Congress slowly became attuned to the need to better understand the envisioned changes each program sought to achieve and its effectiveness. In

[89] Center for Army Lessons Learned, "Military Decisionmaking Process (MDMP) Lessons and Best Practices" (Center for Army Lessons Learned, March 2015), https://usacac.army.mil/sites/default/files/publications/15-06_0.pdf.
[90] U.S. Congress, National Defense Authorization Act of FY2017, 1241.

May 2011, a DoD Instruction on DoD's Section 2822 Global Train-and-Equip Authority was finally published, illustrating new DoD authorities to train and equip foreign militaries. It laid out requirements that assessments (e.g., metrics, measurement of impacts) be coordinated for the section 1206 authority and that the implemented programs' return on investment be determined. Geographic Combatant Commanders (GCC) were tasked to develop "quantitative and qualitative measures of performance to assess the progress and success of the programs" as part of program proposals.[91]

In 2013, the Obama Administration published Presidential Policy Directive 23 (PPD-23), which systematized the overarching goals of security sector assistance and mandated alignment between national objectives and security cooperation programming. PPD-23 documented, "The United States Government will introduce common standards and expectations for assessing SSA [security sector assistance] requirements, in addition to investing in monitoring and evaluation of SSA programs. Such standards will be aided by a requirement for measurable SSA objectives, appropriate data collection of the impacts and results of SSA programs, and improved efforts to inform decision-making processes with data on what works and what does not work through impact evaluations when permissible."[92]

PPD-23 established the integrated country strategy as the core organizing document for US Government foreign assistance activities supporting a particular PN. The ICS, published by the DoS, is a four-year strategy capturing US priorities in a PN and links goals to US national security priorities, SSA objectives, and, if appropriate, regional security objectives.[93]

Congress did not enact legislation requiring DoD to develop a standardized, objective assessment, monitoring, and evaluation (AM&E) framework of DoD security cooperation initiatives until late 2016 as a part of the FY 2017 NDAA.[94] It noted that despite 15 years of increased security cooperation programs and activities, "the Department has not applied

[91] "DODI Section 2822 Global Train-and-Equip Authority," DOD Instruction (Department of Defense, May 8, 2017), https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodi/511119p.pdf?ver=2019-02-13-092715-593.
[92] "Presidential Decision Directive/NSC-25 U.S. Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations," Presidential Decision Directive (Washington, DC: The White House, May 3, 1994), https://irp.fas.org/offdocs/pdd/pdd-25.pdf.
[93] US Department of State, "Integrated Country Strategy Mali" (Bamako, Mali: US Department of State, August 3, 2018), https://2017-2021.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/ICS-Mali_UNCLASS_508.pdf.
[94] U.S. Congress, National Defense Authorization Act of FY2017.

sufficient emphasis and resources to develop a comprehensive framework to assess, monitor, and evaluate its security cooperation programs and activities from inception to completion."[95] The FY 2017 NDAA was quickly followed by more reforms to clarify and enhance the importance of AM&E across the defense establishment. A DoD Instruction, "Assessment, Monitoring, and Evaluation Policy for the Security Cooperation Enterprise," was finally published in January 2017, establishing a concrete policy framework and assigning responsibilities and standards for conducting AM&E of security cooperation plans, programs, and activities.[96]

DoD's Instruction for AM&E was supposed to be fully implemented by the end of FY 2022. Therefore, while the updated framework will be discussed in later chapters of this dissertation, it was not in place in 2018 and 2019 when fieldwork for this research was conducted in the case study country.

Outline of the Dissertation

Chapter 1 laid out the central research puzzle, defined key terms, and explained the background and context of how US security cooperation and counterterrorism efforts in the Sahel have changed since 9/11. Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive overview of existing scholarship within the literatures of counterterrorism and military aid, military training effectiveness, and the unintended consequences of military CT aid. The chapter also details the research methodology, outlining the key research questions and objectives, and the qualitative within-case analysis that forms the backbone of the dissertation's investigation. In Chapter 3, the broad context of the Sahel's security, governance, and development vulnerabilities is examined to situate Mali's historical and contemporary challenges within the region. The chapter also seeks to illuminate structural factors that could have influenced the success or failure of external security interventions in Mali. Chapter 4 addresses the evolution of the terrorist threat in Mali, comparing the security environment in 2000 with that of 2018, highlighting the transformation of local insurgencies and the increasing involvement of international actors. Chapter 5 examines Mali's defense sector by assessing the structure, capabilities, and limitations of its armed forces and

[95] U.S. Congress, 1241.
[96] Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, "DODI Assessment, Monitoring, and Evaluation Policy for the Security Cooperation Enterprise," DODI (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, January 13, 2017), https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodi/513214_dodi_2017.pdf.

analyzing both its institutional frameworks and tactical capacity to respond to internal and external security threats. Chapter 6 delves into the history of US-Mali security cooperation, tracing shifts in key areas of engagement, including military training and advisory efforts. The chapter examines how evolving US objectives, regional dynamics, and Mali's internal political developments have shaped the trajectory and character of bilateral security collaboration. In Chapter 7, the dissertation turns to an in-depth evaluation of Mali's counterterrorism programs, focusing on the specific US-led initiatives aimed at bolstering Malian security forces and the effectiveness of these programs in achieving counterterrorism goals. Finally, Chapter 8 synthesizes the findings from the previous chapters, drawing conclusions about the overall impact of US military training in Mali and offering policy recommendations for future US engagement in fragile states.

Conclusion

What makes this study distinctive is its focus on how US security assistance has affected Malian security forces and, in turn, shaped local security dynamics. By examining this case, the study sheds light on the broader consequences—both intended and unintended—of US engagement in fragile states. It contributes to ongoing debates in security studies and foreign policy about the effectiveness and ethics of external military assistance. The chapters that follow present the theoretical framework, research methodology, empirical findings, and implications for US foreign policy and international counterterrorism strategy.

CHAPTER TWO
THEORY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

This dissertation falls at the intersection of many different theoretical and intellectual schools. The fragile states, counterterrorism, and military aid effectiveness literatures are helpful for examining the results of military counterterrorism assistance programs. There are related topics, such as counterinsurgency (COIN) assessment methodology, alliances, principal agent theory, and security sector reform, that also touch upon the issue and deserve mention. Existing theories primarily focus on the donor country at the nation-state level, examining its top-down effects. Therefore, I believe this dissertation will contribute to the current literature by examining what factors within the recipient country influence the effectiveness of military training in building CT capacity.

This chapter will provide an overview of the existing relevant literature. It will identify relevant gaps and how this research hopes to contribute to the larger field of scholarship. It continues with an overview of the study's research design, methods, and process. Finally, it concludes by identifying the generalizability and predictive value of this research and lays out the author's identified potential challenges and caveats of the research approach**.**

Theoretical Convergence Across Disciplines

Fragile States

The 1648 Peace of Westphalia is believed to have first introduced the initial precedents of state sovereignty. Max Weber further defined a state by its ability to maintain a "monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force" within a certain geographical territory in 1919.[1] At the creation of the United Nations in 1945, there were 50 member states. Decolonization abruptly changed the world map and the commonly accepted power structures soon thereafter. By the end of the twentieth century, 106 former colonies, protectorates, and/or dominions worldwide had fought for–and gained–their independence, effectively tripling the

[1] Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation" (Munich University, Munich, Germany, January 1919).

UN's signatories by 2000 (total member states reached 156). Fifty-one of those additional countries were on the continent of Africa.[2]

Some scholars identified that during the postwar era, theories of social and political change did not focus on the concept of the state,[3] and it was only with Samuel P. Huntington's 1965 article, Political Development and Political Decay, that politics was introduced as an independent enterprise.[4] In his book Political Order in Changing Societies, Huntington took the concept further, noting that the major distinction between states lay not in their type of government but in the degree to which the government really governs.[5] Aristede R. Zolberg clarified further that in regard to African states, the "major problem is not too much authority, but too little."[6]

During the second half of the twentieth century, US and Soviet foreign aid sustained the governments of many weak states based on their Cold War strategic significance. The war's termination greatly decreased foreign aid provision, revealing the real, underlying vulnerability of many countries.[7] The 1990s exposed many severely underdeveloped economies and governments. Civil strife and economic privation quickly deteriorated into violence and large-scale human rights abuses. Faltering nations quickly became designated as

[2] "List of Sovereign States by Date of Formation," in *Wikipedia*, July 30, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=List_of_sovereign_states_by_date_of_formation&oldid=1167961611.
[3] Stephen D. Krasner, "Approaches to the State: Alternative Conceptions and Historical Dynamics," ed. Eric Nordlinger et al., *Comparative Politics* 16, no. 2 (1984): 223–46, https://doi.org/10.2307/421608; Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol, eds., *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511628283.
[4] Samuel P. Huntington, "Political Development and Political Decay," *World Politics* 17, no. 3 (1965 1964): 386–430.
[5] Samuel P. Huntington and Francis Fukuyama, "Political Order and Political Decay," in *Political Order in Changing Societies* (Yale University Press, 1996), 1–92, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1cc2m34.6.
[6] The author would like to acknowledge that the Marxist Theory of the State advanced with the formalization of agriculture and brought about private property, which created social classes. Marx believed that the origin of the state was a byproduct of class struggle and that it served as a tool of class oppression, safeguarding the interests of the bourgeoisie. Duncan, Graeme. "The Marxist Theory of the State." *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 14 (September 1982): 129–43. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0957042X00001784; Aristide R. Zolberg, "Introduction to Revised Edition," in *One-Party Government in the Ivory Coast* (Princeton University Press, 1964), vii–xiv, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt183pjtn.2.
[7] Robert H. Bates, *When Things Fell Apart; State Failure in Late-Century Africa* (Harvard University, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 2012), https://www-cambridge-org.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/core/books/when-things-fell-apart/AFC9C7AE3AF742A5C5ECEF95EC72E77C.

'failing states;' countries that were recognized by international institutions but existed in stark opposition to Weber's initial concept and elucidation of the state.[8]

After the terrorist attacks of 9/11 uncovered the threat non-state armed groups could pose, attention quickly pivoted to addressing state fragility globally. Countries with weak state capacity, entrenched corruption, and low per capita gross domestic product (GDP) often lacked the institutional foundations necessary to uphold security or govern in line with democratic norms and values. While international maps identified finite borders between nations, the situation on the ground in many regions was extremely fluid. In many cases, governing institutions could barely extend their reach beyond state capitals. These countries, identified as having fragmented security sectors and large swaths of 'ungoverned territories,' were assessed as being more likely to experience violent insurgencies.[9] In the face of grave security concerns, and without the ability to provide security, states were unable to provide basic services to citizens.[10]

Counter Terrorism

While there has been a plethora of research dedicated to the definition and concept of terrorism, the same cannot be said for counterterrorism.[11] Since 9/11, public and scholarly attention has been dedicated to the study of terrorists, groups, and motivations, but not as intensely on the people fighting them. The definition of *terrorism* was identified in Chapter 1 for this research as: (i) violence (ii) against non-combatants (or, alternatively, against innocent people) for the sake of (iii) intimidation (and, on some definitions, (iv) coercion).[12]

---

[8] Gerald B. Helman and Steven R. Ratner, "Saving Failed States," *Foreign Policy*, no. 89 (1992): 3–20, https://doi.org/10.2307/1149070.

[9] James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 01 (February 2003): 75–90, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055403000534; Havard Hegre and Nicholas Sambanis, "Sensitivity Analysis of Empirical Results on Civil War Onset," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, no. 4 (August 2006): 508–35, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002706289303.

[10] Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Aid, Military," in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of the World Economy*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 55–57, https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/stable/j.ctt7sfvn.

[11] Oliver Lewis, "Conceptualizing Counterterrorism and Explaining the Terrorism Phenomenon," in *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Modern War*, 1st ed. (Hoboken, NJ: CRC Press, 2015).

[12] Igor Primoratz, "Terrorism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, Spring 2015 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2015), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entrieserrorism/.

Weber's definition of the state and its legitimization of political violence assists in framing these definitions to terrorism and counterterrorism within a historical concept of the state.[13] Weber contends that a state fulfills core functions for its population—including public administration, control over territory, taxation, and, crucially, the exclusive and legitimate use of force to manage violence. Citizens consider a government 'legitimate' if their protection is guaranteed via the government's predictable adherence to the rule of law.[14] However, terrorists reject the authority and legitimacy of the state. They resort to terrorism as a tactic, deliberately targeting noncombatants to successfully achieve their specific political goals.[15]

The field of counterterrorism remains "under-researched" and, therefore, poorly conceptualized.[16] It encompasses the methods and approaches states adopt to counter terrorist threats and address their aftermath. A range of counterterrorism strategies and instruments exists, including a combination of anticipatory measures and reactive responses.[17] It includes the strategies and tools states use to confront terrorism and manage its consequences. States also employ proactive or offensive strategies aimed at directly targeting terrorists and their enablers. Finally, they seek to cut off the resources, financial networks, sanctuary spaces, and support systems that sustain terrorist groups.[18] These challenges can be tackled through a

[13] James A. Piazza, "Incubators of Terror: Do Failed and Failing States Promote Transnational Terrorism?," *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 3 (September 1, 2008): 469–88, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2008.00511.x; Pinar Bilgin and Adam David Morton, "Historicising Representations of 'Failed States': Beyond the Cold-War Annexation of the Social Sciences?," *Third World Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (February 1, 2002): 55–80, https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590220108172.
[14] Lewis, "Conceptualizing Counterterrorism and Explaining the Terrorism Phenomenon."
[15] The terrorist argument is that terrorism is legitimate because it is seeking to correct a form of injustice. Terrorists believe that their use of political violence and their attempts to regulate violence are, therefore, in fact legitimate. Justifications can include acting in self-defense, that the state is not providing basic needs, that the state is a foreign entity, etc). Mikkel Thorup, *An Intellectual History of Terror: War, Violence and the State* (London, England: Routledge, 2010).
[16] Daniel Byman, "Counterterrorism Strategies," in *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, ed. Erica Chenoweth et al. (Oxford University Press, 2019), 0, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.
[17] Audrey Kurth Cronin, James M. Ludes, and Georgetown University. Center for Peace and Security Studies., *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2004), http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/toc/ecip048/2003019462.html.
[18] Byman, "Counterterrorism Strategies."

blend of 'soft' tools—such as diplomacy, negotiation, intelligence, and social reform—and 'hard' measures, including military force, legal enforcement, and economic sanctions.[19]

There has been insufficient study dedicated to why and how terrorist groups deteriorate.[20] Diverse viewpoints exist on how counterterrorism success is defined. In 'hard,' security terms, success is generally identified by Robert Nalbandov as "a situation in which the government succeeds in lowering the level of terrorist violence from that of previous years, as measured in terms of non-combatant fatalities within a region."[21] Whereas, in more 'soft' security terms, scholars classify the purposive action of terrorism as having two components: the deed and the intent.[22] To succeed, a state's counterterrorism actions must therefore address noncombatants' physical, psychological, and political security.[23] From this perspective, counterterrorism is a deliberate effort aimed at achieving one or more of three objectives: responding to acts of indiscriminate violence, addressing threats of such violence, and confronting political demands issued through the use or threat of indiscriminate violence.[24] Given counterterrorism is conducted by a wide variety of agencies at strategic, operational, and tactical levels, a government's measurement of its overall CT effort quite challenging and complex. It is one thing to measure and assess whether and how well a government is carrying out the policies and procedures it said it would. It is quite another to evaluate whether the combined unity of effort is having its intended effect.[25]

Finally, while terrorism had occurred and been studied for centuries, AQ's 9/11 attacks ushered in a new era. Terrorism shifted from existing as a very local threat (potential

[19] Robert Nalbandov, "Evaluating the 'Success' and 'Failure' of Counterterrorism Policy and Practice," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Counterterrorism Policy*, ed. Scott Nicholas Romaniuk et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2017), 91–115, https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-55769-8_4.
[20] Audrey Kurth Cronin, "How and Why Do Terrorist Campaigns End?," in *Illusions of Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism*, ed. Richard English (British Academy, 2015), 0, https://doi.org/10.5871/bacad/9780197265901.003.0007.
[21] Nalbandov, "Evaluating the 'Success' and 'Failure' of Counterterrorism Policy and Practice"; Prem Mahadevan, *The Politics of Counterterrorism in India: Strategic Intelligence and National Security in South Asia* (London, England: I.B. Tauris, 2012).
[22] Lewis, "Conceptualizing Counterterrorism and Explaining the Terrorism Phenomenon."
[23] Audrey Kurth Cronin, James M. Ludes, and Georgetown University. Center for Peace and Security Studies., *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2004), http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/toc/ecip048/2003019462.html.
[24] Lewis, "Conceptualizing Counterterrorism and Explaining the Terrorism Phenomenon."
[25] Audrey Kurth Cronin, "How Al-Qaida Ends: The Decline and Demise of Terrorist Groups," *International Security* 31, no. 1 (2006): 7–48.

sporadic acts carried out by different religious extremists) to the coordinated growth of a trans-national group with meticulously planned large-scale events that invoked mass casualties and had global reach.[26] According to Audrey Kurth Cronin, stimulated and buoyed by a new interconnected, online world, the creation of the internet afforded AQ "fluid organization, methods of recruitment, funding, and means of communication".[27] While AQ did display certain parallels to forerunner groups of the 20th century (international linkages, ideological drive, open-ended aims, and impressive public communication), the internet afforded new possibilities in the realms of fundraising, communication, global indoctrination and recruitment, virtual organization, education (research on attack sites, spreading weapons technology), and psychological warfare. Terrorism become the primary international security threat. The US launched its GWOT and took "the battle to the enemy' wherever terrorist groups were located.[28] This fundamentally altered the field and landscape of terrorism and counterterrorism for the twenty-first century.

US Military Aid

Traditionally, US security policy has avoided putting "boots on the ground" to support US global security objectives in an effort to avoid the significant financial and human cost of deploying soldiers to new theaters of conflict. Instead, the US has chosen to outsource security-related tasks to smaller, national governments when possible.[29]

While development aid is determined based on recipient need, merit, and donor self-interest,[30] military aid allocation has always been driven by US national security priorities

[26] Cronin.
[27] Audrey Kurth Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 12.
[28] George W Bush, "President Bush Delivers Graduation Speech at West Point" (Speech, West Point, NY, June 1, 2002), https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020601-3.html.
[29] David A. Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations* (Cornell University Press, 2011); Amira Jadoon, "Conflict Aggravation or Alleviation? A Cross-National Examination of U.S. Military Aid's Effect on Conflict Dynamics with Insights from Pakistan," *Political Science Quarterly (Wiley-Blackwell)* 135, no. 4 (December 2020): 665–95, https://doi.org/10.1002/polq.13128; "Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) and Human Rights: Background and Issues for Congress" (Congressional Research Service, January 26, 1999), https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/19990126_RL30034_7baa1efe188979cd5bd57071147243738b2d884f.pdf.
[30] Alberto Alesina and David Dollar, "Who Gives Foreign Aid to Whom and Why?," *Journal of Economic Growth (Boston, Mass.)* 5, no. 1 (2000): 33–63, https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1009874203400.

and the recipient country's geostrategic interests to the US.[31] The provision of military aid is firmly couched in the belief that the security of the US depends upon "the security of free and independent nations. It is intended to "furnish to such countries cooperative military assistance…to help them provide for their own security…and for the security of international organizations of which they may be members".[32]

Wartime and post-war alliances were the primary factors determining the allocation of US foreign assistance during the 20th century, and the threat of transnational terrorism became the critical deciding factor in aid allocation in the 21st.[33] A major shift in the global security environment and its provision occurred. In the wake of 9/11, bilateral aid flows starkly increased to "source nations," those countries from which terrorism emanated, which acted as delegated partners in the US's Global War on Terrorism.[34] This effectively enabled the US to purchase the involvement of recipient governments and their security forces in its war on terror.[35] The US–and other international donors–identified that the most significant threats to national security came from 'ungoverned territories,'[36] areas where a state's central

[31] R. D. McKinley and R. Little, "The US Aid Relationship: A Test of the Recipient Need and the Donor Interest Models," *Political Studies* 27, no. 2 (June 1, 1979): 236–50, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.1979.tb01201.x.
[32] Fred B Schoomaker, "An Assessment of Current Criteria for Furnishing Aid through the US Military Assistance Program," July 13, 1966.
[33] Andrew Boutton and David B. Carter, "Fair-Weather Allies? Terrorism and the Allocation of US Foreign Aid," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 58, no. 7 (October 1, 2014): 1144–73, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002713492649; Robert K. Fleck and Christopher Kilby, "Changing Aid Regimes? U.S. Foreign Aid from the Cold War to the War on Terror," *Journal of Development Economics* 91, no. 2 (March 1, 2010): 185–97, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2009.09.011.
[34] Thomas Gries, Daniel Meierrieks, and Margarete Redlin, "Oppressive Governments, Dependence on the USA, and Anti-American Terrorism," *Oxford Economic Papers* 67, no. 1 (January 1, 2015): 83–103, https://doi.org/10.1093/oep/gpu038; Boutton and Carter, "Fair-Weather Allies?"; Kwesi Aning, "Security, the War on Terror, and Official Development Assistance," *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 3, no. 1 (April 2010): 7–26; William Easterly, "Foreign Aid Goes Military!," Op-Ed, *Brookings*, November 6, 2008, https://www.brookings.edu/articles/foreign-aid-goes-military/.
[35] Fleck and Kilby, "Changing Aid Regimes?"; Subhayu Bandyopadhyay, Todd Sandler, and Javed Younas, "Foreign Aid as Counterterrorism Policy," *Oxford Economic Papers* 63, no. 3 (2011): 423–47, https://doi.org/10.1093/oep/gpq030; Jean-Paul Azam and Véronique Thelen, "Foreign Aid Versus Military Intervention in the War on Terror," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 54, no. 2 (2010): 237–61, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002709356051.
[36] "…an ungoverned territory as an area in which a state faces significant challenges in establishing control. Ungoverned territories can be failed or failing states, poorly controlled land or maritime borders, or areas within otherwise viable states where the central government's authority does not extend. Ungoverned territories can also extend to airspace, for instance, air routes through South and Central America and the Caribbean that the countries affected are unable to control—routes that drug smugglers use to transport illegal drugs." Angel Rabasa, ed., *Ungoverned Territories: Understanding and Reducing Terrorism Risks* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2007), https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2007/RAND_MG561.pdf.

governmental authority was not able to maintain control,[37] and such weakness offered a potential safe haven for terrorist groups to exploit (fundraise, organize, equip, train, launch attacks, and hide from arrest).[38] The 2002 National Security Strategy identified for the first time that "weak states...can pose as great a danger to our national interests as strong states,"[39] and ungoverned territories became the front lines of the new war on terrorism.[40]

Rather than sending large ground force deployments to force regime change and then build nations under fire (Afghanistan and Iraq) or investing in expensive security sector reform projects to stabilize states (as the European Union (EU) was doing in various countries in Eastern Europe and Africa), efforts to train, advise, and equip foreign armed forces to prevent the spread of violent extremism became established as the preferred form of military counterterrorism intervention.[41] Former Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates posited, "Arguably, the most important military component in the War on Terror is not the fighting we do ourselves, but how well we enable and empower our partners to defend and govern their own countries."[42]

"Training and equipment" is an overarching term to capture how the US government attempts to delegate its fight against terrorism by constructing purportedly apolitical security forces who support their government and country while at the same time upholding US policies.[43] Competent, capable, and accountable security forces are considered necessary and important in protecting their nation from security threats. This approach is based on the critical underlying assumption that if capable security forces engage in counterterrorism

[37] Angel Rabasa, ed., *Ungoverned Territories: Understanding and Reducing Terrorism Risks* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2007), xv, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2007/RAND_MG561.pdf.
[38] Øystein H. Rolandsen, Maggie Dwyer, and William Reno, "Security Force Assistance to Fragile States: A Framework of Analysis," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 15, no. 5 (October 20, 2021): 563–79, https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2021.1988224; Kofi Annan, "Uniting against Terrorism: Recommendations for a Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy," Report of the Secretary-General (New York: United Nations, April 27, 2006).
[39] White House, "National Security Strategy 2002," September 2002, https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/nss/nss2002.pdf?ver=oyVN99aEnrAWijAc_O5eiQ%3d%3d.
[40] The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, "The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States," July 22, 2004, https://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/report/911Report.pdf.
[41] Stephen Biddle, "Building Security Forces & Stabilizing Nations: The Problem of Agency," *Daedalus* 146, no. 4 (October 2017): 126–38, https://doi.org/10.1162/DAED_a_00464.
[42] Gates, "Helping Others Defend Themselves."
[43] U.S. Department of the Army, "Joint Doctrine Note 1-13: Security Force Assistance," JDN 1-13 § (2013), https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=736034.

practices, terrorist groups will be weakened, and terrorist attacks will be reduced. If terrorist attacks are reduced, security in fragile states will be bolstered, the central government will be able to extend the reach of the state outside of the capital and resume providing basic services for its citizens, and citizens will regain their confidence and trust in the functioning of the state. If a state defends itself from internal and external threats, the conflict will not spill over into neighboring countries (or expand throughout the region), and a global power like the US would not need to become involved. Therefore, improving the capabilities of security forces in fragile states to enable them to address security threats also increase US security.[44] Ultimately, security sector reforms play a crucial role in a wider US strategy that operates on the belief that democratic, accountable governments and institutions reduce the attractiveness of extremist ideologies.[45]

Understanding whether the assumptions are correct and the effort is having the intended effect is the most crucial aspect of this causal chain. The effectiveness of security assistance–military assistance and military training, more specifically–can only be tested via assessments, monitoring, and evaluation, of which there has been an extremely limited number and poor quality. Additionally, rigorous independent academic research has not focused on this area; as a result, there is essentially no data to support the aforementioned assumption chain. Donor countries depend on this causal understanding to justify their well-funded military training programs, yet consistently and persistently ignore the lack of data and knowledge of effects, even if no clarity exists on the potential unintended consequences of such a strategy and approach.

The Existing Literature and its Gaps

As this research falls at the intersection of overlapping fields of study, it seeks to fill gaps in multiple existing intertwined literatures: arms and influence, counterterrorism and military intervention, and security force assistance.

[44] Seth G. Jones et al., "Historical Context," in *Securing Tyrants or Fostering Reform? U.S. Internal Security Assistance to Repressive and Transitioning Regimes*, 1st ed. (RAND Corporation, 2006), 9–22, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg550osi.10.
[45] Jones et al.

Arms and Influence

The effects of military training on recipient country behavior have not been examined within the arms and international influence literature to date.[46] While the literature has examined the connection between aid and recipient country behavior, findings thus far have centered around two main factors–the type of aid that is provided and the recipient state behavior of interest. Within the aid literature, the effects of economic aid, military aid, and arms transfers have been examined, but surprisingly few studies disaggregate aid.[47]

The US provides military aid to recipient countries to 1) increase their capacity to counter terrorism, 2) enable contributions to multinational peacekeeping operations, and/or 3) assist in the development or reform of a recipient country's security forces or supporting institutions. Since September 11, 2011, the US has prioritized utilizing military assistance to build recipient country defense capacity to combat terrorism.[48] Recipient state behaviors examined to date–influenced by the provision of military aid–include a

[46] Patricia L. Sullivan, Brock F. Tessman, and Xiaojun Li, "US Military Aid and Recipient State Cooperation," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 7, no. 3 (2011): 275–94, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1743-8594.2011.00138.x.
[47] Joseph K. Young and Michael G. Findley, "Can Peace Be Purchased? A Sectoral-Level Analysis of Aid's Influence on Transnational Terrorism," *Public Choice* 149, no. 3/4 (2011): 365–81.
[48] U.S. Department of the Army, Joint Doctrine Note 1-13: Security Force Assistance; Fleck and Kilby, "Changing Aid Regimes?"; Axel Dreher and Andreas Fuchs, "Does Terror Increase Aid?," *Public Choice* 149, no. 3/4 (2011): 337–63, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11127-011-9878-8; Todd Moss, David Roodman, and Scott Standley, "The Global War on Terror and U.S. Development Assistance: USAID Allocation by Country, 1998-2005," n.d.

country's democracy and human rights record,[49] UN vote compliance,[50] foreign policy behavior,[51] and potential for armed conflict.[52]

Counterterrorism Literature and Military Aid

To date, the counterterrorism literature has examined the effects of different kinds of military interventions in countering terrorism. While foreign military occupations,[53] interstate rivalries,[54] and international alliances have each received ample scholarly attention,[55] only

[49] Shannon Lindsey Blanton, "Instruments of Security or Tools of Repression? Arms Imports and Human Rights Conditions in Developing Countries," *Journal of Peace Research* 36, no. 2 (March 1, 1999): 233–44, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343399036002006; Talukder Maniruzzaman, "Arms Transfers, Military Coups, and Military Rule in Developing States," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 36, no. 4 (December 1, 1992): 733–55, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002792036004006; Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Alastair Smith, "Foreign Aid and Policy Concessions," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51, no. 2 (2007): 251–84, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002706297696; David L. Cingranelli and Thomas E. Pasquarello, "Human Rights Practices and the Distribution of U.S. Foreign Aid to Latin American Countries," *American Journal of Political Science* 29, no. 3 (1985): 539–63, https://doi.org/10.2307/2111142.

[50] Bruce E. Moon, "The Foreign Policy of the Dependent State," *International Studies Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (1983): 315–40, https://doi.org/10.2307/2600686; Brian Lai and Daniel S. Morey, "Impact of Regime Type on the Influence of U.S. Foreign Aid," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 2, no. 4 (October 1, 2006): 385–404, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1743-8594.2006.00037.x.

[51] David Kinsella, "Conflict in Context: Arms Transfers and Third World Rivalries during the Cold War," *American Journal of Political Science* 38, no. 3 (1994): 557–81, https://doi.org/10.2307/2111597; David Kinsella and Herbert K. Tillema, "Arms and Aggression in the Middle East: Overt Military Interventions, 1948-1991," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 39, no. 2 (June 1, 1995): 306–29, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002795039002005; Alesina and Dollar, "Who Gives Foreign Aid to Whom and Why?"; James Meernik, Eric L. Krueger, and Steven C. Poe, "Testing Models of U.S. Foreign Policy: Foreign Aid during and after the Cold War," *The Journal of Politics* 60, no. 1 (1998): 63–85, https://doi.org/10.2307/2648001; Glenn Palmer and T. Clifton Morgan, *A Theory of Foreign Policy* (Princeton: University Press, 2006).

[52] Cassady Craft and Joseph P. Smaldone, "The Arms Trade and the Incidence of Political Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1967-97," *Journal of Peace Research* 39, no. 6 (November 1, 2002): 693–710, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343302039006003; Volker Krause, "Hazardous Weapons? Effects of Arms Transfers and Defense Pacts on Militarized Disputes, 1950-1995," *International Interactions* 30, no. 4 (October 1, 2004): 349–71, https://doi.org/10.1080/03050620490884038.

[53] Victor Asal, "The Preconditions for Ethnic Suicide Bombing Campaigns, 1991–2003" (International Studies Association, San Diego, CA, 2006); Simon Collard-Wexler, Costantino Pischedda, and Michael G. Smith, "Do Foreign Occupations Cause Suicide Attacks?," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 58, no. 4 (2014): 625–57, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002713478558; Robert A. Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 3 (August 2003): 343–61, https://doi.org/10.1017/S000305540300073X; Robert Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (Random House Publishing Group, 2006); Robert Pape and James Feldman, *Cutting the Fuse : The Explosion of Global Suicide Terrorism and How to Stop It* (Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism.: University of Chicago Press, 2010); James A. Piazza, "A Supply-Side View of Suicide Terrorism: A Cross-National Study," *The Journal of Politics* 70, no. 1 (January 2008): 28–39, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381607080024; Charlinda Santifort-Jordan and Todd Sandler, "An Empirical Study of Suicide Terrorism: A Global Analysis," *Southern Economic Journal* 80, no. 4 (2014): 981–1001.

[54] Michael G. Findley, James A. Piazza, and Joseph K. Young, "Games Rivals Play: Terrorism in International Rivalries," *The Journal of Politics* 74, no. 1 (2012): 235–48, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381611001551.

[55] Thomas Plümper and Eric Neumayer, "The Friend of My Enemy Is My Enemy: International Alliances and International Terrorism," *European Journal of Political Research* 49, no. 1 (2010): 75–96, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2009.01885.x.

recently have scholars begun to examine the effects of military aid programs as a component of military intervention in countering terrorism.

US training is designed to increase the competence and professionalism of recipient country militaries with the goal of enhancing their own, as well as broader international, security. Post-9/11 military counterterrorism training is predicated upon the assumption that strengthened security forces and increased proactive recipient government efforts will lead to a weakening of terrorist groups, reduced attacks, and improved citizen security. However, the effectiveness of security assistance–military assistance, and military training, more specifically–has not been the focus of rigorous research. Furthermore, most studies on the provision of military assistance have focused on the consequences of US arms transfers and not on the effects of military training.[56]

There has been a dramatic increase in the number of terms related to this field of study. Within the security assistance literature, the term *military assistance* has been used interchangeably with *military aid* to refer to "all transfers of US military weapons, equipment, and training to recipient governments."[57] The terms will be used interchangeably throughout this research.

"Military aid" is made up of different categories of assistance, such as grants, loans, or credits, to enhance the effectiveness of local partners by providing them with training, advisory services, and defense equipment.[58] This aid can be 'tied' so that a recipient can only utilize it for a specific purpose, such as directly to a recipient government's counterterrorism

[56] Ronald G. Sherwin and Edward J. Laurance, "Arms Transfers and Military Capability: Measuring and Evaluating Conventional Arms Transfers," *International Studies Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (1979): 360–89, https://doi.org/10.2307/2600173; Maniruzzaman, "Arms Transfers, Military Coups, and Military Rule in Developing States"; Blanton, "Instruments of Security or Tools of Repression?"; Craft and Smaldone, "The Arms Trade and the Incidence of Political Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1967-97."
[57] William H. Mott, "United States Military Assistance: Concepts and Themes," in *United States Military Assistance: An Empirical Perspective* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002), 1–18, https://web-p-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzEyNjc1MV9fQU41?sid=093ab7bc-bf52-469f-ae1d-648218939f73@redis&vid=0&format=EB&lpid=lp_297&rid=0.
[58] Alex Neads, "Rival Principals and Shrewd Agents: Military Assistance and the Diffusion of Warfare," *European Journal of International Security* 6, no. 2 (May 2021): 233–55, https://doi.org/10.1017/eis.2021.1.

policy.[59] The donor nation therefore attempts to augment the recipient government's proactive counterterrorism efforts.[60]

Studying the effects of military aid is very challenging. Data are scarce and unreliable both from major donors and from recipient countries.[61] Funding levels, programs, and composition are often treated as state secrets, even in openly political, democratic countries. Portions of military budgets dedicated to 'black programs' are also not available to the public.[62] A recipient country's military aid is often counted as a component of its military expenditures, which is one of the most uncertain components of the government's budget.

Finally, military counterterrorism aid is a relatively new concept post-9/11, and the depth of scholarly research is nowhere near as extensive as other types of aid.[63] Counterterrorism assistance is channeled from the US Departments of State and Defense directly to the recipient nation. A growing body of scholarship on this subject has revealed paradoxical results; increased levels of military counterterrorism assistance have led to an *escalation* in terrorist activity in recipient countries.[64] Increases in transnational and domestic terrorist

[59] Collier and Hoeffler, "Aid, Military."
[60] Jean-Paul Azam and Alexandra Delacroix, "Aid and the Delegated Fight Against Terrorism," *Review of Development Economics* 10, no. 2 (2006): 330–44, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9361.2006.00321.x; Fleck and Kilby, "Changing Aid Regimes?"; Bandyopadhyay, Sandler, and Younas, "Foreign Aid as Counterterrorism Policy"; Boutton and Carter, "Fair-Weather Allies?"
[61] Michael Brzoska, "Chapter 3 World Military Expenditures," in *Handbook of Defense Economics*, vol. 1 (Elsevier, 1995), 45–67, https://doi.org/10.1016/S1574-0013(05)80005-5.
[62] Brzoska.
[63] Tobias Heinrich, Carla Martinez Machain, and Jared Oestman, "Does Counterterrorism Militarize Foreign Aid? Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa," *Journal of Peace Research* 54, no. 4 (July 2017): 527–41.
[64] Nauro F. Campos and Martin Gassebner, "International Terrorism, Domestic Political Instability, and the Escalation Effect," *Economics and Politics* 25, no. 1 (2013): 27–47, https://doi.org/10.1111/ecpo.12002; Gries, Meierrieks, and Redlin, "Oppressive Governments, Dependence on the USA, and Anti-American Terrorism"; B. Peter Rosendorff and Todd Sandler, "Too Much of a Good Thing? The Proactive Response Dilemma," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48, no. 5 (2004): 657–71, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002704268278; Orlandrew E. Danzell, Emizet F. Kisangani, and Jeffrey Pickering, "Aid, Intervention, and Terror: The Impact of Foreign Aid and Foreign Military Intervention on Terror Events and Severity," *Social Science Quarterly* 100, no. 3 (2019): 951–64, https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12599.

attacks,[65] in attacks targeting US citizens,[66] in battlefield deaths,[67] fatalities, and casualties,[68] in local support for terrorist groups,[69] and protracted terrorist campaigns[70] have all been documented. Lastly, an increase in military counterterrorism aid seems linked to a rise in terrorist incidents, resulting in a higher baseline of terror-related activity and violence. [71] Further research is desperately needed, and this dissertation aims to contribute to this effort.

Military Counterterrorism Aid and Unintended Consequences

Military counterterrorism assistance can inadvertently destabilize recipient countries, a thorough examination of which, will follow. It is considered more intrusive than general foreign assistance and can have severe risks and unintended consequences for fragile states.[72] As US military counterterrorism assistance enters its third decade post-9/11, it is critical to analyze its effects, especially the unintended consequences.[73] There remains a fundamental lack of understanding about military aid's effects on conflict dynamics, which demands further study. This ambiguity of effects has significant security implications and may likely undermine fundamental donor counterterrorism goals.[74] In identifying the intended and unintended effects of military CT assistance in Mali, this research hopes to contribute to this line of inquiry.

[65] Bandyopadhyay, Sandler, and Younas, "Foreign Aid as Counterterrorism Policy"; Danzell, Kisangani, and Pickering, "Aid, Intervention, and Terror."
[66] Eric Neumayer and Thomas Plümper, "Foreign Terror on Americans," *Journal of Peace Research* 48, no. 1 (2011): 3–17, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343310390147; Gries, Meierrieks, and Redlin, "Oppressive Governments, Dependence on the USA, and Anti-American Terrorism."
[67] Amira Jadoon, "Aiding Repression? The Effects of U.S. Military Aid on Conflict Intensity and Civilian Targeting" (Ph.D., United States -- New York, State University of New York at Albany, 2017), https://www.proquest.com/docview/1886481969/abstract/96AEF9BA5AA24937PQ/1.
[68] Amira Jadoon, "Persuasion and Predation: The Effects of U.S. Military Aid and International Development Aid on Civilian Killings," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 41, no. 10 (October 3, 2018): 776–800, https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2017.1353355.
[69] Kevin Siqueira and Todd Sandler, "Terrorists versus the Government: Strategic Interaction, Support, and Sponsorship," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, no. 6 (2006): 878–98, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002706293469.
[70] Andrew Boutton, "Of Terrorism and Revenue: Why Foreign Aid Exacerbates Terrorism in Personalist Regimes," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 36, no. 4 (2019): 359–84.
[71] Danzell, Kisangani, and Pickering, "Aid, Intervention, and Terror."
[72] Bandyopadhyay, Sandler, and Younas, "Foreign Aid as Counterterrorism Policy."
[73] Seung-Whan Choi, "Does U.S. Military Intervention Reduce or Increase Terrorism?," August 2011, 41.
[74] Jadoon, "Aiding Repression?"

Nations with weak state capacity, widespread corruption, and low per capita GDP are recognized to be more likely to experience higher levels of conflict and violent insurgencies.[75] The types of states that receive military assistance are traditionally weak states with corrupt, unrepresentative, clientelist regimes. While military assistance can save lives and alleviate suffering, distributing it to a specific set of actors can change existing power structures, increase regime instability,[76] cause collateral damage,[77] and exacerbate existing fractures in a country.[78] All of these factors prolong terrorist campaigns[79] and exacerbate the factors that initially contributed to the emergence of terrorist groups. [80]

Unsurprisingly, the effects of military aid on terrorism are dependent on local dynamics in the recipient country.[81] First, outcomes are dependent on the political motivations of the recipient country. Fragile states are often led by personalist dictators, who exchange counterterrorism 'cooperation' for military counterterrorism assistance and become dependent on the aid to sustain their regime.[82] A moral hazard issue also exists–while military counterterrorism aid may be effective in dissuading recipient countries from negotiating with terrorist groups, it disincentivizes them from disarming terrorist groups as they understand that their continued receipt of aid is contingent upon the presence of a continued threat of terrorism. Resolving such a threat would mean the critical defense resources they had come to rely upon would be terminated.[83]

[75] Fearon and Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War"; Hegre and Sambanis, "Sensitivity Analysis of Empirical Results on Civil War Onset."
[76] Bandyopadhyay, Sandler, and Younas, "Foreign Aid as Counterterrorism Policy."
[77] Danzell, Kisangani, and Pickering, "Aid, Intervention, and Terror."
[78] Mary B. Anderson, *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace or War* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), https://www.rienner.com/title/Do_No_Harm_How_Aid_Can_Support_Peace_or_War; Ursula C. Schroeder, "Unintended Consequences of International Security Assistance: Doing More Harm than Good?," in *Rethinking Security Governance* (Routledge, 2010).
[79] Boutton, "Of Terrorism and Revenue."
[80] Navin A. Bapat, "Transnational Terrorism, US Military Aid, and the Incentive to Misrepresent," *Journal of Peace Research* 48, no. 3 (2011): 303–18, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343310394472.
[81] Azam and Thelen, "Foreign Aid Versus Military Intervention in the War on Terror"; Gries, Meierrieks, and Redlin, "Oppressive Governments, Dependence on the USA, and Anti-American Terrorism."
[82] Boutton, "Of Terrorism and Revenue"; de Mesquita and Smith, "Foreign Aid and Policy Concessions."
[83] Bapat, "Transnational Terrorism, US Military Aid, and the Incentive to Misrepresent"; Boutton and Carter, "Fair-Weather Allies?"

Second, recipient states are also positively affected by incoming military assistance, as it reduces their own direct cost of fighting terrorism.[84] These additional funds tend to distort elites' incentives to reform and hinder the natural political development of recipient countries.[85] In looking for the most qualified unit to work with, military assistance providers often single out small units for specialist training to fight insurgents. While seemingly pragmatic, it has worsened the fragmentation of the armed forces in countless countries.

Third, some recipient countries are known as authoritarian or illiberal democracies. Strengthening the security forces of such countries disincentivizes good governance, enhances the state's repressive capacity, further increasing state repression, and therefore actively enables authoritarianism and violence.[86] While the goal of such aid is to increase the recipient government's proactive counterterrorism countermeasures, unintended and dysfunctional consequences result. Enhanced repressive capacity can lead to collateral damage, igniting local grievances and resentment. The recipient government is then seen as complicit with US and Western policies,[87] carrying with it the potential for increased terrorist recruitment and retaliatory attacks.[88] The US, then, also becomes associated with—and tainted by—the local repression. This could account for why this aid is met with resistance, leading to further grievances that are specifically directed against the US[89] and target its citizens.[90]

[84] Azam and Thelen, "Foreign Aid Versus Military Intervention in the War on Terror."
[85] Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," in *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 170–87; Jeffrey Herbst, "Responding to State Failure in Africa," *International Security* 21, no. 3 (Winter 1997/1996): 120–44.
[86] Sarah von Billerbeck and Oisín Tansey, "Enabling Autocracy? Peacebuilding and Post-Conflict Authoritarianism in the Democratic Republic of Congo," *European Journal of International Relations* 25, no. 3 (September 1, 2019): 698–722, https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066118819724; Claire Q. Smith et al., "Illiberal Peace-Building in Asia: A Comparative Overview," *Conflict, Security & Development* 20, no. 1 (January 2, 2020): 1–14, https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2019.1705066; Patricia L. Sullivan, Leo J. Blanken, and Ian C. Rice, "Arming the Peace: Foreign Security Assistance and Human Rights Conditions in Post-Conflict Countries," *Defence and Peace Economics* 31, no. 2 (February 17, 2020): 177–200, https://doi.org/10.1080/10242694.2018.1558388.
[87] Heinrich, Machain, and Oestman, "Does Counterterrorism Militarize Foreign Aid? Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa."
[88] Gries, Meierrieks, and Redlin, "Oppressive Governments, Dependence on the USA, and Anti-American Terrorism."
[89] Gries, Meierrieks, and Redlin.
[90] Neumayer and Plümper, "Foreign Terror on Americans."

Figure 2.1 Global Coup d'États by Region since 1950[91]

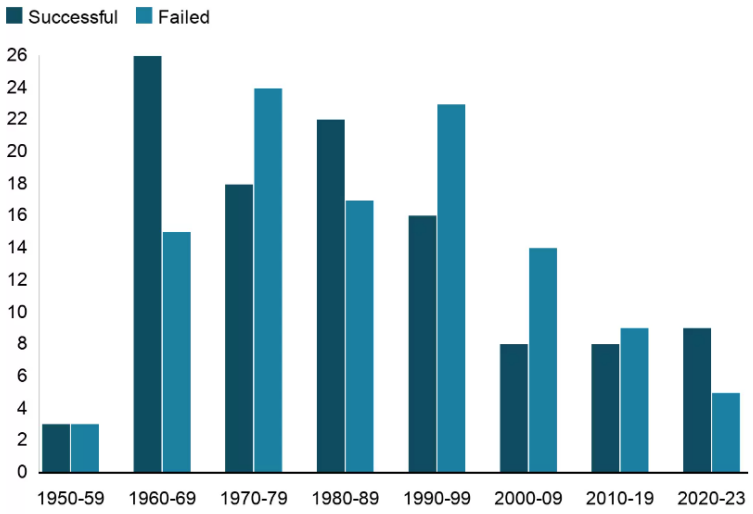
Region	Coup attempts	Successful	Failed
Africa	220	109	111
Latin America	146	70	76
East Asia	49	27	22
Middle East	44	21	23
Europe	17	8	9
South Asia	16	10	6
Global	492	245	247

Source: Suzor and Williamson, Voice of America (2023)

Fourth, it is widely acknowledged that without security, economic development is not possible. Africa has a higher risk of coups than the rest of the world. [92] Figure 2.1 reflects that of the 492 attempted or successful coups carried out around the world since 1950, 220 were in Africa (the most of any region), with 50 percent of them successful. The military is both a defender of the republic and a potential threat in and of itself. Where coup risk is sufficiently high, governments display high military spending to coup-proof themselves (external security protection). Such military expenditure comprises a large percentage of the government's budget, exhausting funds that could otherwise go to providing basic social services such as infrastructure, health, and education.[93] Figure 2.2 depicts the positive downward trend of coups on the continent, from a high of 26 in the 1960s, immediately after independence, to a low of 8 in the 2000s. There is unfortunately an uptick noticeable in the 2020s, given the multiple recent coups in the Sahel.

[91] Current as of October 3, 2023. Megan Duzor and Brian Williamson, "By The Numbers: Coups in Africa," *Voice of America*, October 3, 2023, https://projects.voanews.com/african-coups/.
[92] This research draws from a data set that covers Africa from independence through 2003, and includes successful coups, failed attempts, and foiled plots. Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Military Expenditure in Post-Conflict Societies," *Economics of Governance* 7, no. 1 (January 2006): 89, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10101-004-0091-9.
[93] Saadet Deger and Ron Smith, "Military Expenditure and Growth in Less Developed Countries," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 27, no. 2 (June 1, 1983): 335–53, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002783027002006.

Figure 2.2 Military Coups in Africa (1950-2023)[94]



Source: Peter Mwai, BBC News (2023)

Finally, the military aid a country receives from donors, as well as the extent of its democracy, significantly impacts its military spending. Approximately 40 percent of African military spending is financed by aid,[95] and military governments spend more than 2 percent of their GDP on the military.[96] Increased military spending has a plethora of negative consequences. It significantly reduces growth, increases the risk of conflict and potential civil war, and motivates neighbors to emulate increased military spending, often escalating regional arms races.[97] These are all ways that military counterterrorism assistance can have unintended consequences and destabilize recipient countries. This research aims to closely examine the unintended consequences of two decades of military CT aid on Mali.

Military Counterterrorism Training Effectiveness

Surprisingly, existing scholarship has only recently begun to examine whether military training accomplishes its fundamental goal of increasing a recipient country's military CT

[94] Peter Mwai, "Gabon Coup: The Latest in a Series of Military Takeovers on the Continent," *BBC News*, August 30, 2023, sec. Africa, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-46783600.
[95] Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Unintended Consequences: Does Aid Promote Arms Races?*," *Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics* 69, no. 1 (2007): 1–27, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0084.2006.00439.x.
[96] Collier and Hoeffler, "Military Expenditure in Post-Conflict Societies."
[97] Collier and Hoeffler, "Unintended Consequences."

capabilities.[98] Scholarly and practitioner communities agree that the study of military training effectiveness remains extremely underdeveloped.[99] While certain components of military training have received some scholarly attention, there has been little focus on the causal mechanism–military training's direct effect on its recipients' military proficiency. This small but rapidly evolving scholarly literature tends to be more government sponsored, prescriptive than theoretical, and suffers from difficult problems of identification and measurement.

The massive financial cost of military CT aid is ample justification for analyzing its effectiveness. Governments are typically held responsible for proving their policies work to justify the cost. One would think that effectiveness would be important both to donors and recipients, especially given that the US spent $19.5 billion in 2018, and $270 billion between 2000 and 2018, on military assistance globally. One could assume that there would be significant public and government interest in closely studying its effects and consequences (intended and unintended)[100] given that decision-makers need to better understand the short- and long-term implications of this aid.

The efficacy of military CT training has been greatly impacted by a severe data limitation on individual military training programs. Military CT training programs are implemented in conflict zones on restricted military bases or in the field where troops are deployed. This often does not afford the average researcher access, which leaves available data supplied by the donor nation fragmented and difficult to independently verify.[101] There is little consensus

[98] Boutton and Carter, "Fair-Weather Allies?"; Heinrich, Machain, and Oestman, "Does Counterterrorism Militarize Foreign Aid? Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa"; Biddle, "Building Security Forces & Stabilizing Nations"; Biddle, Macdonald, and Baker, "Small Footprint, Small Payoff."
[99] Stephen Biddle, "Introduction: Military Power," in *Military Power*, Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle (Princeton University Press, 2004), 1–13, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt7s19h.5; Biddle, "Building Security Forces & Stabilizing Nations"; Stephen Biddle, Julia Macdonald, and Ryan Baker, "Small Footprint, Small Payoff: The Military Effectiveness of Security Force Assistance," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 41, no. 1–2 (February 23, 2018): 89–142, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2017.1307745.
[100] Security Assistance Monitor, "Security Assistance Database," Center for International Policy, November 2, 2021, https://securityassistance.org/security-sector-assistance/.
[101] Brzoska, "Chapter 3 World Military Expenditures."

on program effects, let alone whether the aid brings about favorable counterterrorism outcomes.[102]

Government-sponsored research on the topic began with a large three-part study on "The Effectiveness of US Military Training Activities in Promoting Internal Defense and Development in the Third World," (1992-1993), which reflected on the Cold War era training period. It identified US military training programs lacked a strategy, selection criteria, and a mechanism for analyzing effectiveness.[103] In the years that followed, no reforms rectified these initial shortcomings.

It wasn't until after September 11th that primary research on the subject was again sponsored by the Pentagon and Congress. Federally funded research and development centers (FFRDCs, such as the RAND Corporation) and the Congressional Research Service (Congress's internal research and analysis staff) are considered government employees and are given full access to Embassy staff, government reports and documentation, and financial accounting to conduct their research. Two initial reports were published in 2004: they defined what 'security cooperation,' at that point still known as "Army International Activities," was, identified the different actors, roles, and responsibilities, and clarified the SC planning processes. While all US armed service branches had a role in SC, the Army received most of the resources and conducted the majority of military-to-military engagements with global partners. This initial reporting assessed that the Army lacked "reliable data" on the extent of its security cooperation activities. SC planning systems "lack concrete measures of effectiveness and do not incorporate fully both cost and benefit information." Therefore, from the beginning, the Army was not able to calculate the return on its investment.[104]

---

[102] Risa A. Brooks, "Integrating the Civil-Military Relations Subfield," in *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 22, 2019, 379–98, https://www-annualreviews-org.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev-polisci-060518-025407.
[103] Jennifer Morrison Taw and William H. McCoy, Jr., "International Military Student Training: Beyond Tactics" (The RAND Corporation, 1993), https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/notes/2009/N3634.pdf.
[104] Thomas S. Szayna et al., "U.S. Army Security Cooperation: Toward Improved Planning and Management" (RAND Corporation, December 17, 2004), https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG165.html; Jefferson P. Marquis et al., "Assessing the Value of U.S. Army International Activities" (RAND Corporation, August 11, 2006), https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG329.html.

DoD strategic guidance came out in 2006 (2005 QDR) and the 2006 Building Partnership Capacity Execution Roadmap), prioritizing the building of partner military capabilities to support coalition operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other hotspots in the War on Terror. Multiple primers were published on the different new military training programs that were created in the FY 2006 NDAA. Additional reports followed in 2007, focusing on 'Building Partner Capacity,' again defining the concept, actors, roles, and process.[105] Reports published in the 2009 and 2010 timeframe recommended military training programs establish a more cohesive strategy, begin to capture lessons learned, and develop a framework for measurement.[106] Throughout this decade, despite the proliferation of security and military assistance programs, no academic research was dedicated to military training effectiveness.

During the second decade post-9/11 (2012-2019), FFRDC research developed and suggested the use of frameworks and other tools to monitor programs by tracking metrics, conducting assessments, evaluating impact, and capturing lessons learned.[107] However, the majority of

[105] In the immediate years after 9/11, there was never a complete accounting completed of the resources of AIA, due to the complexity of the programming and budget processes. The best estimate tabulated was Szayna et al., "U.S. Army Security Cooperation." Also, Jennifer D. P. Moroney, Adam R. Grissom, and Jefferson P. Marquis, "A Capabilities-Based Strategy for Army Security Cooperation" (RAND Corporation, July 31, 2007), https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG563.html; Jennifer D. P. Moroney et al., "The Challenge of Building Partner Capability and Capacity," in *Building Partner Capabilities for Coalition Operations* (RAND Corporation, 2007), http://www.jstor.com/stable/10.7249/mg635a.10.

[106] Jennifer D. P. Moroney et al., "A Framework to Assess Programs for Building Partnerships" (RAND Corporation, March 20, 2009), https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG863.html; Terrence K. Kelly, ed., *Security Cooperation Organizations in the Country Team: Options for Success*, Technical Report, TR-734-A (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Arroyo Center, 2010); Jennifer D. P. Moroney et al., "Developing an Assessment Framework for U.S. Air Force Building Partnerships Programs" (RAND Corporation, February 2, 2010), https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG868.html; Jefferson P. Marquis, ed., *Adding Value to Air Force Management through Building Partnerships Assessment*, Technical Report (Rand Corporation), TR-907-AF (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2010); Jefferson P. Marquis et al., "Developing an Army Strategy for Building Partner Capacity for Stability Operations" (RAND Corporation, May 14, 2010), https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG942.html; Jennifer D. P. Moroney et al., "How Successful Are U.S. Efforts to Build Capacity in Developing Countries?: A Framework to Assess the Global Train and Equip" (RAND Corporation, September 14, 2011), https://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR1121.html; Jennifer D. P. Moroney et al., "Lessons from U.S. Allies in Security Cooperation with Third Countries: The Cases of Australia, France, and the United Kingdom" (RAND Corporation, October 5, 2011), https://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR972.html; Terrence K. Kelly, Nora Bensahel, and Olga Oliker, "Security Force Assistance in Afghanistan: Identifying Lessons for Future Efforts" (RAND Corporation, September 7, 2011), https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG1066.html.

[107] Ben Connable, "Embracing the Fog of War: Assessment and Metrics in Counterinsurgency" (RAND Corporation, April 13, 2012), https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG1086.html; Jennifer D. P. Moroney, David E. Thaler, and Joe Hogler, *Review of Security Cooperation Mechanisms Combatant Commands Utilize to Build Partner Capacity* (Santa Monica, Calif: RAND, 2013),

research, case studies, and lessons learned reports focused on US efforts to build capacity, focusing on the implementation process rather than the impact on and outcomes in recipient countries.

The academic community finally began publishing as well. In an important initial study on the effects of US military aid on recipient state behavior, military aid was revealed to serve neither as a carrot nor a stick with recipient countries (unlike ample findings regarding development aid). Results reflected increased US *dependence on* recipient countries rather than increased US *influence over* recipient countries, with recipient state behavior becoming less and less cooperative the more US dependency (military aid) increased.[108] "The more critical the situation, the less leverage the United States can muster."[109] A study examining the effectiveness of US efforts to build militaries in fragile states identified the US approach as a "fundamentally flawed…critical policy failure…[that] wastes time, effort, and

https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR400/RR413/RAND_RR413.pdf; Christopher Paul et al., "What Works Best When Building Partner Capacity and Under What Circumstances?" (RAND Corporation, January 28, 2013), https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG1253z1.html; Christopher Paul et al., "The RAND Security Cooperation Prioritization and Propensity Matching Tool" (RAND Corporation, November 6, 2013), https://www.rand.org/pubs/tools/TL112.html; Stephen Watts et al., "Countering Others' Insurgencies: Understanding U.S. Small-Footprint Interventions in Local Context" (RAND Corporation, February 25, 2014), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR513.html; Larry Hanauer et al., "Evaluating the Impact of the Department of Defense Regional Centers for Security Studies" (RAND Corporation, April 23, 2014), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR388.html; Michael J. McNerney et al., "Assessing Security Cooperation as a Preventive Tool" (RAND Corporation, March 20, 2014), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR350.html; Christopher Paul et al., "A Building Partner Capacity Assessment Framework: Tracking Inputs, Outputs, Outcomes, Disrupters, and Workarounds" (RAND Corporation, August 21, 2015), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR935.html; Christopher Paul, "What Works Best When Conducting Security Cooperation?" (RAND Corporation, October 21, 2015), https://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CT441.html; Jefferson P. Marquis et al., "Developing an Assessment, Monitoring, and Evaluation Framework for U.S. Department of Defense Security Cooperation," October 6, 2016, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1611.html; Michael J. McNerney, "Department of Defense and Security Cooperation: Improving Prioritization, Authorities, and Evaluations" (RAND Corporation, March 9, 2016), https://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CT454.html; Michael J. McNerney et al., "SMART Security Cooperation Objectives: Improving DoD Planning and Guidance" (RAND Corporation, May 5, 2016), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1430.html.; Stephen Watts, *Limited Intervention: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Limited Stabilization, Limited Strike, and Containment Operations* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2017); Marquis et al., "Assessing the Value of U.S. Army International Activities"; Angela O'Mahony et al., "Assessing, Monitoring, and Evaluating Army Security Cooperation: A Framework for Implementation" (RAND Corporation, July 24, 2018), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2165.html; Beth Grill et al., "Follow the Money: Promoting Greater Transparency in Department of Defense Security Cooperation Reporting" (RAND Corporation, September 19, 2017), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2039.html.

[108] Sullivan, Tessman, and Li, "US Military Aid and Recipient State Cooperation"

[109] Shafer, "The Unlearned Lessons of Counterinsurgency."

resources."[110] Existing US government assessments of recipient militaries were identified as being narrowly focused on training and equipment requirements and lacked important, macro-level defense and security sector analysis. Finally, such criticism was not limited to the US, it was determined that in partnering with and mentoring local forces as part of state stabilization strategies, the West "created its own problems and created the potential for significant, negative consequences".[111]

Despite the proliferation of military CT training programs since 9/11 and their checkered records, there is a lack of research on the challenging realities of these programs in fragile states. To allow congressional decision-makers to provide the critical oversight required of them by law, fundamental questions need to be answered, such as to what extent has US military counterterrorism training in Mali achieved its security objectives? What unintended consequences, if any, has this training produced in Mali's political, institutional, or security landscape? How do local political and institutional dynamics mediate the effects of US military counterterrorism training? And what broader implications can be drawn from the Malian case for US counterterrorism assistance policy in fragile states? This research hopes to answer these questions.

Other Related Topics

While there is very limited extant literature on military training effectiveness, there are related topics–such as counterinsurgency assessment methodology, alliances, principal agent theory, and security sector reform–that also touch upon the issue and deserve mention.

While the attacks of 9/11 were an act of terror, scholars have classified the US's post-9/11 security strategy more as a campaign against a globalized Islamist insurgency than a "War on Terrorism".[112] The term was decided upon as everyday Americans were more familiar with

[110] Three of the four case studies focused on twentieth-century examples. Mara E. Karlin, "Training and Equipping Is Not Transforming: An Assessment of U.S. Programs to Build Partner Militaries" (Ph.D., United States -- Maryland, The Johns Hopkins University, 2012), https://www.proquest.com/docview/1313745284/abstract/6C06F33849548C9PQ/1.

[111] Robert Johnson, "Upstream Engagement and Downstream Entanglements: The Assumptions, Opportunities, and Threats of Partnering," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 25, no. 3 (May 4, 2014): 647–68, https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2014.913755.

[112] David J. Kilcullen, "Countering Global Insurgency," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 28, no. 4 (August 1, 2005): 597–617, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390500300956.

the concept of 'war' rather than a 'counterinsurgency campaign,' which also had terrible holdover memories for many US citizens from the war in Vietnam. The US's global campaign against AQ meant closer ties with other governments that were fighting local Islamist insurgents with ties to al Qaeda. In these conflicts, local security forces were on the frontlines of the fight against AQ. While the Army's 2004 counterinsurgency doctrine identified that the "US military aims to improve the effectiveness of Host Nation security forces" as a part of US COIN efforts, no additional details were provided that described what this entailed, nor was additional attention given to the potential challenges and pitfalls of working with Allies in this approach.[113] A component of COIN strategy is 'Foreign Internal Defense' (FID), a legacy Special Forces mission "to organize, train, advise, assist, and improve the tactical and technical proficiency" of recipient country forces.[114]

Alliances are an essential element of the COIN effort. However, associated challenges such as adverse selection, moral hazard, and limited leverage can greatly impact US success. Many countries that have become US allies possess structural weaknesses, high rates of discrimination, and corruption that led to the insurgencies in the first place.[115] US support in a way has served as an unintentional reward for their policy missteps, prolonging certain regimes' time in power, eliminating their need for political reform. These states can inadvertently pursue policies that hinder COIN efforts, or they could act contrary to US interests.[116]

Finally, principal-agent (PA) theory is a framework designed to examine the relationship between a principal, who assigns authority to an agent to carry out a task on their behalf. While the goal is cost savings, it typically results in imperfect performance.[117] The principal

[113] U.S. Department of the Army, "Counterinsurgency Operations," Field Manual (FM) (Washington, DC: U.S. Army, October 2004), https://irp.fas.org/DoDdir/army/fmi3-07-22.pdf.
[114] US Army, "Special Forces Foreign International Defense Operations" (Department of the Army, February 2007), https://www.bits.de/NRANEU/others/amd-us-archive/fm3-05.202%2807%29.pdf.
[115] Daniel L. Byman, "Friends like These: Counterinsurgency and the War on Terrorism," *International Security* 31, no. 2 (2006): 79–115.
[116] Douglas Blaufarb, *The Counterinsurgency Era: U.S. Doctrine and Performance* (New York: Free Press, 1977).
[117] Daniel L. Nielson and Michael J. Tierney, "Delegation to International Organizations: Agency Theory and World Bank Environmental Reform," *International Organization* 57, no. 2 (April 2003): 241–76, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818303572010; Peter D. Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Idean Salehyan, "The Delegation of War to Rebel Organizations," accessed October 13, 2023, https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/doi/abs/10.1177/0022002709357890.

agent model within the framework of military training is very asymmetric and complex. Large agency losses, major information asymmetries, and difficulties in monitoring are often standard.[118] The circumstances surrounding the provision of training often lead to significant misalignments of interest between the US (the principal) and the recipient country (the agent). This works to the detriment of the principal, who has a weaker understanding of the local context (political and security) and is remote.[119] Most recipient governments are more concerned about internal rivals than the external counterterrorism threats that the US usually prioritizes.[120] Furthermore, the more donors provide training in a given country, the less leverage each individual donor has for enforcement, resulting in agency losses and inefficiency in aid provision. PA theory has only begun to unpack recently how PA challenges are different in highly fragile states vs stable democracies.

There has been great emphasis placed on military training, security assistance, and tactical training post-9/11. This has meant a significant shift for the US military (doctrine, training, and strategic focus) to prioritize security cooperation and assistance to support local allies in their fight against insurgents and/or terrorists instead of more traditional military warfighting roles.[121] It has also meant that the US strategy and approach with recipient countries focuses on short-term tactical training and equipping rather than longer-term security sector reform efforts. This research will contend that the US should shift its focus towards security sector reform and the development of robust governance institutions that regulate military conduct, rather than prioritizing training at the individual or unit level.[122] Security sector reform is a larger strategic, organizational, and operational effort to reform the security sector. Tactical training is normally a component of that operational effort (related to specific procedures and processes). Traditional Western approaches to security sector reform have been limited to engagement between the donor and statutory forces of the recipient country, however, there

[118] Biddle, Macdonald, and Baker, "Small Footprint, Small Payoff."
[119] Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations*; Walter C. Ladwig III, "Influencing Clients in Counterinsurgency: U.S. Involvement in El Salvador's Civil War, 1979–92," *International Security* 41, no. 1 (Summer 2016): 99–146.
[120] Biddle, "Building Security Forces & Stabilizing Nations."
[121] As part of its by, with, and through (local partners) approach. Derek S. Reveron, "Introduction," in *Exporting Security*, International Engagement, Security Cooperation, and the Changing Face of the U.S. Military (Georgetown University Press, 2010), 1–10, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt2tt6kj.7.
[122] Querine Hanlon and Richard H. Shultz, *Prioritizing Security Sector Reform: A New U.S. Approach* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2016).

are many new models that should be investigated and taken into consideration moving forward.[123] Any analysis of whether capacity has been built requires a fundamental look at the defense sector and how/whether it has been reformed and then what progress individual units have made.[124]

Research Design and Methodology

Are there specific attributes of a military CT assistance approach that are more effective than others in terms of recipient country effectiveness? I have examined this question by utilizing a longitudinal within-case study analysis to examine the effects of US CT training and equipping in Mali over the past 20 years. A within-case analysis allows for a deep, contextualized investigation of a single case, making it well-suited for exploring complex causal mechanisms and long-term impacts. This approach is particularly useful in evaluating security assistance programs, as it enables the study of military training's evolving effects on Mali's security landscape, military institutions, and counterterrorism effectiveness. It also builds on the existing weak states, military training effectiveness, and security sector reform and assistance literatures.

Within-Case Analysis

Given the unique geopolitical and security dynamics of Mali, a longitudinal within-case analysis enables an in-depth evaluation of causal pathways that might be obscured in broader cross-national comparisons. It provides the necessary depth to assess whether and how US military CT training has influenced Mali's security landscape, military institutions, and counterterrorism effectiveness. As the US's original key CT partner in the Sahel and the epicenter of initial and continued terrorist activity, it is an important case study. To capture the evolving effects of US military CT training, this study adopts a longitudinal perspective, covering the period from 2000 to 2018 (approximately 20 years). It employs process tracing**,** a qualitative method that systematically examines a series of events to identify whether and how US training programs contributed to specific outcomes, such as military effectiveness, insurgent activity, or political instability.

[123] Robin Luckham and Tom Kirk, "The Two Faces of Security in Hybrid Political Orders: A Framework for Analysis and Research" 2, no. 2 (September 2, 2013): Art. 44, https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.cf.L
[124] OSCE, "Security Sector Governance and Reform" (Vienna, Austria: OSCE, January 2022), https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/2/4/512470_0.pdf; DAC OECD, *The OECD DAC Handbook on SSR: Supporting Security and Justice*, 2007.

I have analyzed US military assistance to Mali over the period of 2000 to 2018 (independent variable). I assessed the country's success at countering terrorism over the duration of time (dependent variable or DV), using a combination of structured and unstructured qualitative interviews. US personnel who worked on military CT assistance to the Sahel at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels participated in interviews. Field research enabled me to engage with recipient country personnel and elites within relevant government ministries, security, development, governance, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and special CT unit soldiers. I attempted to triangulate my research by engaging with subject matter experts in the US, internationally, and throughout the subregion who focused on these issues. Across the board, I utilized snowball sampling, which enabled me to broaden and enrich my interview pool by allowing existing interview subjects to connect me to new, additional interview subjects. Many subjects had not been interviewed before regarding their involvement in US military CT training in the Sahel.

Case Selection

I selected Mali based on several parameters. For the first ten years of CT capacity building efforts, Mali was the US's key CT partner in the Sahel. The country received US military assistance to increase its military capacity to counter that threat. The total collapse of the Malian army in the face of a Tuareg rebellion supported by jihadist groups in early 2012 and the subsequent coup by junior officers against Mali's democratically elected government make it a distinct and critical case to examine. By conducting a longitudinal within-case analysis, this research examines pre- (2000) and post-military assistance (2018) over time to compare Mali's capacity to counter terrorism.

Field Research

This research relied on fieldwork at US government installations, including US Africa Command (Stuttgart, Germany), 3rd Special Forces Group Headquarters (Fort Bragg, NC), and the US State and Defense Departments in Washington, DC. Fieldwork in the Sahel included trips to Mali in October 2016 and October 2018 and drew from over ten years of the researcher's prior professional experience working for the US government in these countries.

Structured and unstructured interviews and a heavy emphasis on both international and local Francophone news greatly supported this research.

IV Measurement

US military assistance to counter terrorism began after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The two primary military assistance accounts that the US dedicates to train partner nations to combat terrorism in this region are the State Department's Peacekeeping Operations and the State/Defense joint Train and Equip accounts.[125] Annual obligation figures for both accounts can be found in the State Department's annual Congressional Budget Justifications (CBJ) as well as annual State Department Congressional Notifications for these accounts. A number of additional DoD accounts are also investigated that contributed to CT T&E efforts, including Non-Security Assistance - Unified Command funds, which paid for Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) events, the Aviation Leadership Program, FMF, and FMS.[126] The first year that funds were allocated for military CT training was $6.85 million of FY 2002 and FY 2003 Peacekeeping Operations.[127] This initial funding enabled PSI pre-deployment assessments and training to begin in November 2003.[128] Dedicated new funding accounts for military CT training in the Sahel (Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative funds) first started with the FY 2005 Peacekeeping Operations account and the FY 2007 Train and Equip account.[129]

---

[125] This includes Section 1206, which then became Section 333.

[126] A JCET is a special forces training event in a foreign country that primarily trains US forces in core special operations skills and secondarily engages with and trains host nation forces."10 U.S. Code § 321 - Training with Friendly Foreign Countries: Payment of Training and Exercise Expenses," LII / Legal Information Institute, accessed May 6, 2025, https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/10/321.

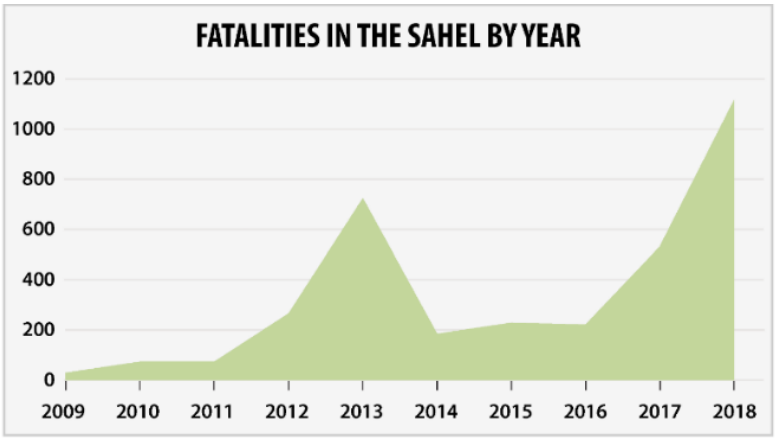
[127] Epstein, "Foreign Relations Authorization, FY2006 and FY2007: An Overview," 5.

[128] Interview with Colonel (ret) Victor Nelson, West Africa Desk Officer, Office of the Secretary of Defense for Africa (2003-2006) and Policy Officer for West Africa, State Department Bureau of Counterterrorism (2006-2019), on March 12, 2025.

[129] TSCTI first appears in the FY 2007 State CBJ as both an FY 2007 request ($16,750k in PKO) and a confirmation of the FY 2005 actual figure ($3,000k of PKO). "Support the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCTI), a multi-disciplinary approach to countering terrorist threats and influence in North Africa, the Sahel, and across the Sahara. Civilian, police, and military programs will enhance border control and rapid response capabilities, strengthen institutions, and foster development and education. PKO funds will develop and enhance counterterrorist capabilities of security forces in the region, including supporting activities that promote interoperability and facilitate coordination between the countries to counter common threats." "Congressional Budget Justification FY2007," n.d., 229–30; Nina M Serafino, "Security Assistance Reform: 'Section 1206' Background and Issues for Congress," Background and Issues for Congress (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, February 11, 2011), 26, https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20110211_RS22855_5c6c42aee3ad93cfe51517e930f6847558bd3bbe.pdf.

I selected 2000 as the base year of comparison so that a baseline can be established for what military CT assistance consisted of prior to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Second, these choices allowed me to isolate and examine what information led and contributed to the US government's designation of the Foreign Terrorist Organization list via Executive Order 13224 on September 23, 2001. Even though no military aid was provided in 2002, were we to focus on this year for terrorism analysis, local groups could have been inspired by 9/11 to increase their targeting, which would affect our 2001 data (September through December of 2001).

Figure 2.3 Fatalities in the Sahel by Year (2009-2018)[130]



Source: The Complex and Growing Threat of Militant Islamist Groups, ACSS (2019)

Figure 2.2 captures the steady increase in militant Islamist group activity in the Sahel from 2009 to 2018. In 2000, there were 149 incidents of terrorism in the subregion and 553 deaths.[131] One hundred thirty-eight (93 percent) of the incidents were in Algeria, and 20 percent of those attacks were conducted by the only internationally known terrorist groups operating in the region – the GIA and the GSPC.[132] By 2018, the threat of terrorism had grown exponentially and shifted south. Militant Islamist group activity in North and West Africa was

[130] African Center for Strategic Studies, "The Complex and Growing Threat of Militant Islamist Groups in the Sahel," *Africa Center for Strategic Studies* (blog), February 15, 2019, https://africacenter.org/spotlight/the-complex-and-growing-threat-of-militant-islamist-groups-in-the-sahel/.
[131] "START (National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism)" (Global Terrorism Database 1970 - 2020, 2022), https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd.
[132] Another 20 percent were conducted by other unknown "Islamic extremists".

concentrated in two theaters: the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel (Central Mali and border areas), and the number of active groups significantly increased.

In 2000, neither of the military CT assistance accounts had been created yet, so Mali (as well as the region) received $0 in military assistance. From 2000 to 2018, US military CT aid skyrocketed to the larger TSCTP region. In 18 years, the TSCTP subregion received $1.1 billion of military CT assistance, with Mali receiving $160 million. In 2018, Mali was allocated $5.4 million.[133] Field research was conducted in 2018 and bounds the period of academic examination. I closely examined annual allocation and obligation figures from 2000 to 2018.

DV Measurement - Successful State Capacity to Counter Terrorism

I measured state counterterrorism capacity qualitatively, focusing on 2000 to 2018. A formal and systematic assessment of Mali's counterterrorism capacity and capabilities, couched within a larger defense sector/security governance assessment, informed my analysis.[134] First, I examined important contextual and societal factors that identified the condition of the state over the period 2000 to 2018. Second, I studied essential characteristics of the defense sector, focusing on the military forces themselves. Third, I assessed the various institutions and processes that sustain and exercise control over those forces. Finally, I analyzed the specific threat of terrorism each country faced and that country's overall capacity to respond to it. This four-step assessment process enabled me to rank and qualitatively assess each country's capabilities based on the following scale: 1 – *Very Low* (entirely lacking capacity), 2 – *Low* (beginning to develop), 3 – *Neither Low nor High* (minimal but functioning), 4 – *High* (functional but room for improvement), and 5 – *Very High* (strong capacity and no major improvements needed).

To examine relevant contextual factors, I analyzed the country's cohesion and socio-economic, political, and security trends. I analyzed all relevant cross-national data sets to establish the context for the country's overall political, economic, and security environment. I examined the

[133] Center for International Policy, "Security Assistance Database."
[134] I utilize the RAND Corporation's Defense Sector Assessment Rating Tool (DSART), which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five, Mali Defense Sector Assessment.

political and justice system, the financial situation, and the security environment (internal conflicts and external threats).

For the second component, I used structured and unstructured interviews to assess each country's military forces. I identified what function the military provides, its composition, organization, capabilities, readiness, logistics, personnel policies, justice policies, and doctrine. I investigated the military's involvement in political affairs and analyzed the role of each special CT unit within the larger military force structure and defense sector. I conducted over 25 interviews within Mali's Ministry of Defense and Veterans Affairs (Ministère de la Défense et des Anciens Combattants or MDAC), including offices such as Manpower and Personnel, Logistics, Strategy and Plans, and Training. I obtained a distribution of junior, mid, and senior officers in these interviews.

The third component of my assessment focused on the various defense institutions and processes that sustain and exercise control over these forces. Over 25 interviews for this third component, again structured and unstructured, were conducted with different offices within the MDAC again, this time including: Intelligence, Operations, Logistics, Strategy and Plans, Training, and Finance, Ministry of Interior Security Office of Planning and Emergency Management, as well as the Ministry of Finance, which oversees military defense resourcing and allocations. I again attempted to obtain an equal distribution of junior, mid, and senior officers, and conducted archival research of appropriate military texts and sources. I analyzed each unit's tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs), command and control, and technical capacity, including organizational charts, roles and responsibilities, chain of command, and relevant tactics, techniques, and procedures.

In the fourth component of my assessment process, I qualitatively appraised Mali's technical capacity to counter terrorism. I evaluated the history of the specific counterterrorism units in question and the counterterrorism assistance these units received from the US and other international partners. The training received by Mali consisted of light infantry, small unit maneuver skills (basic marksmanship, planning, communications, land navigation, patrolling, and medical care). Mali also received training in military intelligence, civil affairs, and air-to-

ground integration of aviation capacities. To evaluate Mali's proficiency in these functions, I utilized the US Army's Training and Evaluation Program (ARTEP) mission training plan for the infantry rifle platoon and squad (ARTEP 7-8), the standard evaluation mechanism the Army uses to gauge infantry platoon performance throughout its active and reserve units.[135] ARTEP 7-8 serves as "a descriptive, performance-oriented training program to assist leaders in training their units".[136] It is composed of 14 critical 'battle drills,' or standard operating procedures that reduce military tactics to the bare essentials. These are taught "with clear explanations regarding the objects to be achieved, the principals involved, and the individual task of each member of the team."[137] I selected five battle drills–conduct an attack, react to direct fire, break contact, react to ambush, enter a building, and clear a room–to evaluate. To analyze each recipient unit's TTPs, command and control, and technical CT capacity, I interviewed each leader of the military unit (in Mali) throughout the lifetime of the unit, capturing how unit performance did or did not change over time in each of the seven technical areas. If the units had received specialized CT training in small unit tactics, logistics, communication, aviation, military intelligence, civil affairs, and/or combat medical training, I interviewed related personnel to determine how each CT training component was supposed to have been implemented, how each element was actually implemented, and whether and how each unit actively utilized the training capacities over time. Interviewees for this component were conducted with current and past Commanders of special, counterterrorism, and border security forces, and senior defense leadership that provided oversight over the Malian special forces units. US and other international forces who had trained these units in counterterrorism tactics, techniques, and procedures were also interviewed to determine different perspectives on how the units responded to incidents of terrorism in terms of TTPs and command and control.

[135] Headquarters, Department of the Army, "Mission Training Plan for the Infantry Rifle Platoon and Squad," Training Manual, September 29, 1994, https://mcoecbamcoepwprd01.blob.core.usgovcloudapi.net/library/ArmyPubs/ARTEPs/ARTEP%207-8-MTP%20Sept%201994.pdf.
[136] Headquarters, Department of the Army.
[137] Directorate of History, National Defense Headquarters, "Fieldcraft and Battle Drill," *Instructors' Handbook on Fieldcraft and Battle Drill)* (Ottawa, Canada) (n.d.): 16.

In addition to in-country interviews that supported each component of this four-step assessment process, I interviewed subject matter experts from think tanks, security institutes, security and defense-focused NGOs in Bamako, US military training instructors, and US Army Foreign Area Officers (current and retired) who have served in or focused on Mali and the Sahel. These interviews verified and validated my findings.

This four-step assessment process enabled me to conduct a broad defense sector assessment for Mali, ranking and qualitatively assessing the country's capabilities based on the following scale: 1 – *Very Low* (entirely lacking capacity), 2 – *Low* (beginning to develop), 3 – *Neither Low nor High* (minimal but functioning), 4 – *High* (functional but room for improvement), and 5 – *Very High* (strong capacity and no major improvements needed).

DV Measurement - Successful Outcomes in Countering Terrorism

One of the challenges for those assessing progress in counterterrorism is identifying key events that determine outcomes and evaluating the extent to which they have been addressed. I reviewed the counterterror incidents that Mali experienced. I also reviewed Mali's outcomes by evaluating the terrorism process, including the structural and environmental conditions under which the various groups operated between 2000 and 2018.

An analysis of the data surrounding incidents, attitudes, and behaviors investigated whether the process of terrorism had been successfully disrupted. The number of terrorist attacks, or "incidents," is defined by the number and nature of the acts and was examined on an annual basis. I sought to capture key elements of terrorist incidents, which involved violence or the threat of violence, designed to instill fear and anxiety, and aimed at compelling specific actions. The incidents I tracked each possessed a motive, including a political objective, directed against civilian targets, and could have been against a group or an individual. I used the University of Maryland's National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism Global Terrorism Database (GTD) and corroborated it with the US State Department's Country Reports on Terrorism.

Many different types of change were observed. First, I examined potential *attitudinal changes* to understand how changing citizen attitudes as a result of terrorism affected political decisions and sentiments. Influencing attitudes to undermine or erode the political will to fight terrorism is a key objective of terrorists and a crucial measure of success or failure. Data on perceptions and beliefs that affect attitudinal shifts were examined from Afrobarometer, the Pew Research Center's Dataset on Global Attitudes and Trends, and other local studies encapsulating local perspectives on African defense, governance, and security issues. I also examined potential *behavior changes* of terrorist groups, which revealed evidence of the sophistication of the factions under examination, such as recruitment, financing, organization, tactics, techniques, and procedures.

This research benefitted from multiple qualitative data sources, including primary documents, such as official US and Malian government reports, military training program documents and evaluations, and congressional testimonies; interviews from military personnel, policymakers, security analysts, and civil society actors with direct knowledge of Mali's counterterrorism programs; academic and policy reports, such as scholarly research, think tank analyses (such as the RAND Corporation, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and the International Crisis Group), and NGO assessments of security assistance; and finally media and archival sources, such as news articles, investigative reports, and historical records that have documented security trends and significant events. In an effort to evaluate and capture successful (or lack thereof) outcomes in countering terrorism, US and other international forces who have trained these units in CT tactics, techniques, and procedures were interviewed to determine different perspectives on the different units' capacity to detect, deter, and respond to incidents of terrorism.

Challenges and Caveats

This effort to gauge the effectiveness of military CT training in the Sahel encountered challenges involving severe data limitations, endogeneity, and potential bias.

Data Limitations

This research depends on multiple different types of data–conflict in Africa, terrorism, US security expenditures, and assessment, monitoring, and evaluation–and significant data limitations exist for each of these categories. First, the academic community's collective knowledge about armed conflicts in Africa remains weak. This is mainly based on challenges in defining, collecting, and validating indicators and instances of armed conflict. Conflicting opinions exist on classifying primary indicators of armed conflict, difficulty abounds in collecting data as violence often occurs in remote regions, and reporting often lacks consistency, impartiality, and verification.[138] Second, there are specific challenges researchers face in collecting data on terrorism in comparison to other types of criminal violence.[139] In criminology, "official" data on illegal violence is collected by legal agents (police, FBI, Interpol, UN, WHO), the general population collects victim data, and self-report data is collected from offenders. However, no standardized mechanism exists to collect this data consistently and uniformly across the international spectrum. Given the rarity of terrorist events, the collection of victimization data and self-report data faces serious limitations.[140] The principal way quantitative and qualitative studies of terrorism (in both academic and policy circles) track terrorism group activity is through open-source terrorism event databases.[141] Their principal metric–terrorist attacks (launched plots)–are gleaned from and verified by independent news sources. They do not include attacks prevented by authorities (foiled plots), unsuccessful attacks, or ones in regions with less media penetration. Furthermore, when the media is unable to identify a perpetrator (which is a common challenge), it is often difficult to classify incidents as terrorism because an event's terrorism classification is dependent on specific motives. Third, major data quality limitations exist on expenditures

[138] Clionadh Raleigh et al., "Introducing ACLED: An Armed Conflict Location and Event Dataset - Clionadh Raleigh, Rew Linke, Håvard Hegre, Joakim Karlsen, 2010," *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 5 (September 2010): 651–60.
[139] Gary LaFree and Laura Dugan, "Introducing the Global Terrorism Database," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 2 (April 6, 2007): 182, https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550701246817.
[140] While detailed official data is routinely produced by the criminal justice system on common crimes, this is not true for terrorism. Terrorism is much rarer than violent crime and few individuals have been terrorist victims, or legal agents investigating terrorists. Finally, primary contact with suspected or actual terrorists is extremely rare. LaFree and Dugan, 183.
[141] LaFree and Dugan, 183.

of US military assistance.[142] Accounting practices are not consistent across security assistance programs and accounts.[143] Constraints on the availability of data on forms of military aid other than arms exports prevent scholars from undertaking similar studies for other international donors that militarily support foreign governments.[144] Data are also scarce and unreliable from both donors and recipient countries.[145] The different fiscal accounts that are used to fund US military CT assistance have different expenditure deadlines (PKO has a nine-year lifetime while 1206/333 has two years). Therefore, the training or equipment delivery does not happen in the year it is funded. Quite the contrary, it can take up to nine years to be spent, with continuing updates or changes to training or equipping efforts. Many military funding accounts are notified to Congress at the regional level and do not include country breakdowns.[146] Funding levels, programs, and composition are often treated as state secrets, even in openly political, democratic countries. Portions of military budgets dedicated to 'black programs' (classified programs) are also not available to the public.[147] A recipient country's military aid is often counted as a component of its military expenditures, one of the least reliable components of the government's budget. The validity of databases and datasets capturing expenditures on military spending is dependent on the quality and distinction of precisely this kind of data and nuance. As a result, data limitations of this nature have significantly prevented researchers from conducting program specific evaluations.[148] Finally, for assessment, monitoring, and evaluation, basic terms and appropriate measurement techniques in this field are a work in progress and are not clearly and universally defined. Therefore, the term 'effectiveness' is not clearly determined. A significant constraint is the recency of assessments, monitoring, and evaluation to be incorporated into the DoD

[142] Collier and Hoeffler, "Aid, Military."
[143] Susan B Epstein and Liana W Rosen, "U.S. Security Assistance and Security Cooperation Programs: Overview of Funding Trends" (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, February 1, 2018), 16, https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R45091.
[144] Neumayer and Plümper, "Foreign Terror on Americans."
[145] Brzoska, "Chapter 3 World Military Expenditures."
[146] Christina Arabia and Colby Goodman, "Major Trends in U.S. Counterterrorism Aid FY 2015-19; Increased Focus on DoD, Africa, Border Security, and Countering Violent Extremism" (Security Assistance Monitor, n.d.), 1, https://securityassistance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Major-Trends-in-U.S.-Counterterrorism-Aid-FY-2015-19-1.pdf.
[147] Brzoska.
[148] Watts et al., *Building Security in Africa*.

SC program lifecycle. The DoDI for Assessment, Monitoring, and Evaluation of SC was issued in 2017. Due to a range of factors, monitoring was not conducted writ large across the SC enterprise until at least 2021 or 2022. It takes years of collecting data–and the right data–to be able to understand what tangible effects (anticipated or unanticipated) a program might be having. As of 2025, DoD has implemented 'limited evaluations.' Therefore, in 2025, an extremely limited number of evaluations of government counterterrorism policies still exist.[149] Governments and people around the world, in general, tend not to want to be evaluated or assessed. They fear that through an evaluation or assessment, they may end up being criticized, that it might be revealed that they are not overseeing or monitoring their work properly, and/or that their work is not having the intended effects and could be discontinued. They believe that negative or unanticipated results could determine a decrease in funding. Furthermore, assessment, monitoring, and evaluation have a reputation for significantly increasing the regular program manager's implementation and oversight workload. But without this necessary information, the scarcity of evaluation analysis leaves researchers with limited ability to draw strong conclusions about the effectiveness of counterterrorism strategies. Finally, while databases exist tracking regional and global terrorist incidents, no such dataset is available containing information on different aspects of states' counterterrorism programs.[150] All of these different data limitations complicate researchers' ability to monitor and evaluate the potential effects and outcomes of government counterterrorism training, inevitably restricting the depth of possible analysis, and reducing the chances of obtaining statistically significant and reliable results.

Endogeneity

There are many factors that make military CT aid endogenous with respect to terrorist attacks. First, donors identify whether a country receives military CT aid based on

[149] This data point was expressed in multiple interviews the researcher conducted with AM&E professionals throughout the SC workforce in January and February 2025. Cynthia Lum, Leslie W. Kennedy, and Alison Sherley, "Are Counter-Terrorism Strategies Effective? The Results of the Campbell Systematic Review on Counter-Terrorism Evaluation Research," *Journal of Experimental Criminology* 2, no. 4 (2006): 489–516.
[150] Mariya Y. Omelicheva, "Counterterrorism: The State of Scholarship, Directions for Future Data Collection and Analysis," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 1, no. 2 (2007), https://www.jstor.org/stable/26298292.

whether they have a presence of highly militant terrorist groups within their territory.[151] While it is possible that the provision of military aid can lengthen the duration of a terrorist campaign, it is also possible that the US responds to longer terrorist campaigns by providing recipient countries with more military aid. I attempted to use process tracing to try to work around this issue. Second, CT assistance is not provided to countries that do not have a terrorist threat, so it is impossible to compare two units of analysis, one country with and one without the counterterrorism intervention.[152] Finally, there are many other components of a country's military counterterrorism effort that impact the effectiveness of its counterterror response. While I have made note of weaknesses or discrepancies as they have affected my research of the military sphere, that is beyond the scope of this research.

Potential Bias

Several external factors could have constituted omitted variable bias (affecting both the independent and dependent variables) and thereby could have potentially affected the results of this study. These include the potency of the threat of terrorism throughout Mali and the subregion, national economic fluctuations, regional instability and potential for spillover, and host nation relationships with other donors (the French, United Kingdom, the United Nations, and the European Union). I will account for each of these factors by attempting to isolate each factor as a potential intervening variable and identifying how each may have contributed to the captured outcomes. Finally, given that I set up this research method after the term of the experiment, and a historical public record existed of the terrorism countries faced and how they responded, there was some potential for selection bias to occur. Other selection biases, such as access due to insecure environments in certain countries and interviewee bias, where senior leadership assigns individuals to be interviewed based on their participation, may have also occurred. Individuals who volunteered information could also have had a constructivist bent to their feedback and analysis. Finally, the author served as the Director of the Trans-Sahara

[151] Azam and Thelen, "Foreign Aid Versus Military Intervention in the War on Terror."
[152] Azam and Delacroix, "Aid and the Delegated Fight Against Terrorism."

Security Symposium (TSS) from 2009 to 2011, which was the JSOTF-TS's civil-military relations senior leader training program.

Conclusion

This dissertation makes several contributions to the study of international security assistance and counterterrorism policy. Empirically, it provides a detailed, longitudinal analysis of US military training in Mali, a case that has received limited sustained scholarly attention despite its centrality to post-9/11 counterterrorism strategy in the Sahel. The study traces the implementation and evolution of military counterterrorism training programs over two decades, offering granular insight into how these efforts shaped local military capacity, institutional behavior, and broader patterns of security and instability. Theoretically, the dissertation contributes to debates on the efficacy of external military assistance in fragile and conflict-affected states by revealing how such engagement can produce unintended outcomes, such as elite militarization, institutional fragmentation, or diminished state legitimacy, that undermine its stated objectives. Methodologically, the use of a within-case qualitative design highlights the value of context-sensitive process tracing in evaluating complex security interventions, particularly where quantitative data is limited or misleading. Collectively, the findings challenge prevailing assumptions about the linear benefits of capacity-building and invite reconsideration of how external actors conceptualize and measure success in partner-based counterterrorism efforts. The next chapter situates Mali within the broader regional landscape, providing critical context for the case study analysis that follows.

CHAPTER THREE
THE REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT

> The history of every continent is written clearly in its geographical features, but of no continent is this more true than of Africa.
> –*Lord Hailey, An African Survey*[1]

This chapter provides a foundational overview of regional dynamics that contextualize the subsequent case study chapters on Mali. It begins by examining the underlying development, governance, and security challenges that have shaped the Sahel, offering a historical perspective on the region's structural vulnerabilities. The chapter then turns to the role of external actors, assessing how international security assistance has influenced both the trajectory of conflict and the region's evolving strategic landscape. This broader analysis situates Mali's experience within the wider Sahelian context, highlighting patterns and pressures that inform the study's central questions.

Sahelian Regional Conditions and Capacity

A precise framing of the regional economic, political, and security landscape is critical before dynamics are examined at the country level, because many important factors transcend country borders. Underlying development, governance, and security weaknesses underpin the region's profound instability and recent deterioration. This study's regional review examines and analyzes the following countries in the Sahel, tied together by the experience of ongoing US counterterrorism programs post-9/11: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal.[2] The francophone Sahel is one of the most understudied regions in sub-

[1] Jeffrey Herbst, "The Challenge of State-Building in Africa," in *States and Power in Africa*, REV-Revised, 2, vol. 149, Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control - Second Edition (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 11, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qh05m.5.

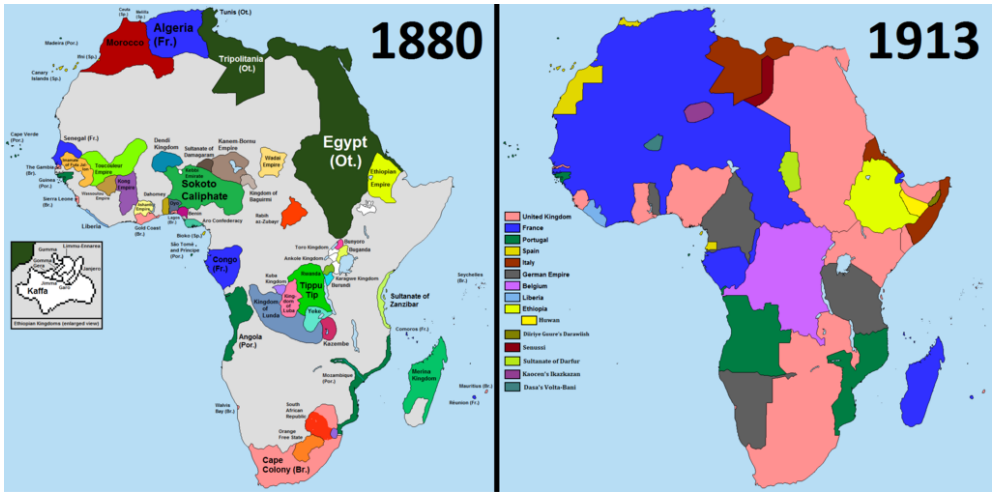
[2] In addition to the countries listed above, the Sahel also includes the Gambia, Sudan, and Eritrea. This research focuses exclusively on the Western Sahel countries involved in the US counterterrorism engagement through the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP), which was composed of Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal.

Saharan Africa.[3] The word 'Sāhil' is of Arabic origin, meaning coast or shoreline.[4] It refers to the vast 5,000 km southern edge of the Sahara Desert, which stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea. Of the seven countries examined in this research, only two lies on the Sahel's Atlantic coast, which offers access to fishing markets and extra-regional trade. Inland countries share a typical climate and ecological and agro-pastoral context.

The region's geography was partitioned at the Conference of Berlin (1884-1885), where the allocation of colonial territory among the seven European powers was regulated.[5] However, the European powers sought to establish territorial states, not nation-states. Boundaries were arbitrarily drawn to suit competing colonial economic interests and not with a vision to create future legitimate, capable, or unified states.[6] They were also not committed to expanding state authority into the vast interior and rural areas.[7] Therefore, colonial rule offered a very limited, incomplete, and violent governance mechanism. Given the lack of control over territory and the very limited nature of administrative structures, force and the cooption of local chiefs through both treaties and 'divide and rule' payouts were the only mechanisms to get things done.[8]

[3] Giorgio Blundo, "Corruption and The State in the Sahel," in *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel*, by Giorgio Blundo, ed. Leonardo A. Villalón (Oxford University Press, 2021), 363, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198816959.013.21.
[4] Gregory Mann, "French Colonialism and The Making of the Modern Sahel," in *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel*, by Gregory Mann, ed. Leonardo A. Villalón (Oxford University Press, 2021), 35, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198816959.013.9.
[5] "Berlin West Africa Conference | Colonialism, Imperialism, Decolonization | Britannica," accessed January 10, 2024, https://www.britannica.com/event/Berlin-West-Africa-Conference.
[6] Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg, "The Marginality of African States," in *African Independence: The First Twenty-Five Years* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1985), 46.
[7] Herbst, "The Challenge of State-Building in Africa."
[8] Jeffrey Herbst, "The Europeans and the African Problem," in *States and Power in Africa*, REV-Revised, 2, vol. 149, Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control - Second Edition (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 58–96, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qh05m.7.

Figure 3.1 The Difference in Territorial Distribution (1880 vs. 1913), Resulting from the Scramble for Africa[9]



Source: Map of Scramble for Africa, 1880 to 1913 (2014)

Regional Development Environment

The Sahel has experienced swift social and economic changes driven by complex demographic, environmental, and political factors. While economic growth has occurred, it has not yet resulted in significant structural transformation. High levels of multidimensional poverty present major challenges to human security, including food insecurity, underdevelopment, inadequate health and sanitation systems, limited access to proper medical care, and ineffective social protection systems for education and employment.

Socioeconomically, Sahelian states rank among the world's least developed according to the most important measures: gross national product per capita, level of industrialization, size of wage employment, degree of literacy, and extent of education.[10] In 2020, fifteen million people in West Africa faced the threat of food insecurity. The most severe conditions were in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, where internally displaced populations suffered the most due to conflict and climate change. For over a decade, the Human Development Index, an annual assessment

[9] davidjl123 / Somebody500, *Map of Scramble for Africa 1880 to 1913*, December 3, 2014, December 3, 2014, Own work, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Scramble-for-Africa-1880-1913.png.
[10] Gwendolen Margaret Carter, ed., *African Independence: The First 25 Years*, A Midland Book 348 (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Pr, 1986), 57.

conducted by the United Nations Development Program of development indicators (life expectancy, education, and social mobility), evaluated that the majority of Sahelian countries have demonstrated "low human development," and lie within the bottom 15 percent of global rankings.[11] The Sahel is one of the poorest regions in the world, with an average per capita income of 41 percent lower than the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa.[12]

Economies across the Sahel are struggling to absorb a rapid population explosion from 65 million in 1960 to 309 million in 2020 (it multiplied 4.75 times in 60 years).[13] The region is home to some of the highest birth rates in the world (in 2021 the average fertility rate amongst the seven countries included in this study was 5.4 with Niger at 6.8 and Mauritania and Senegal at 4.4).[14] Robust, long-term global health interventions, mixed with positive economic growth, have together contributed to steadily declining childhood mortality. Concurrently, Sahelian countries have been confronted with an increasing youth bulge; over 60 percent of the population was under 25 in 2018.[15] This is when reduced infant mortality rates and high birth rates combine to produce a high concentration of youth in the population.[16] The combination of these two factors has steadily increased population rates throughout the sub-region.

Sahelian urban spaces have undergone rapid urbanization and become subject "to intense demographic pressures in a context of economic scarcity and a shortage of public resources."[17]

[11] In 2019 76% of the Nigerien population, 56% of the Malian population, 30% of the Mauritanian population, and 68% of the Chadian population lived in multidimensional poverty, ranking within the worst 10 countries. Cameroon ranked in the bottom tier of Medium Development. United Nations, "Human Development Index," *Human Development Reports* (United Nations), accessed January 11, 2024, https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/documentation-and-downloads#:~:text=Table%201%3A%20Human%20Development%20Index%20and%20components.
[12] "Global GDP," World Bank Open Data, 2022, https://data.worldbank.org.
[13] "World Population Prospects 2022: Demographic Indicators by Region, Subregion and Country, Annually for 1950-2100" (United Nations, 2021), https://population.un.org/dataportal/home?df=8835c9b4-8fdb-4b9b-8713-64c5088b6ecd.
[14] "Global Fertility Rates," World Bank Open Data, 2021, https://data.worldbank.org.
[15] World Food Programme, "Scaling up for Resilient Individuals, Communities and Systems in the Sahel," 2018, 4, https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000110294/download/?_ga=2.114928321.776274370.1705764561-1872091143.1705764561.
[16] Justin Yifu Lin, "Youth Bulge: A Demographic Dividend or a Demographic Bomb in Developing Countries?," January 5, 2012, https://blogs.worldbank.org/developmenttalk/youth-bulge-a-demographic-dividend-or-a-demographic-bomb-in-developing-countries.
[17] Florence Boyer and David Lessault, "Urbanization and The Dynamics of Change in the Sahel," in *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel*, by Florence Boyer and David Lessault, ed. Leonardo A. Villalón (Oxford University Press, 2021), 708–28, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198816959.013.41.

This has quickly transferred poverty from rural to urban environments.[18] This translates into more mouths to feed and bodies to employ at a time when the employment rate remains fixed.[19] As described in a recent ICG report, "It remains crucial to understand that the inability of the state to educate and offer opportunities has alienated swathes of [the] population from the state."[20] Young populations require education, housing, health services, training, and jobs, things that Sahelian urban centers lack.[21] Resulting high youth unemployment creates an increasingly embittered youth population, which will drive significant potential future social and political instability.[22]

The Sahel is dominated by a crop and mobile livestock production system. With approximately two-thirds of the Sahel's population residing in rural areas, agriculture is the main source of formal employment (42 percent),[23] income (30 to 50 percent of GDP), and regional cross-border trade.[24] Modern Sahelian economic structures were inherited from French and British colonial rule.[25] Investment in the economy was historically concentrated in extractive industries that have traditionally failed to create local jobs, such as gold in Mali and Burkina Faso, oil in Chad, iron ore in Mauritania, uranium in Niger, and phosphate in Senegal.[26] Sahelian states have not, therefore, been incentivized to develop other economic sectors, and as a result, economies have remained undiversified and dependent on agricultural output.[27] Furthermore, governments have not properly developed transportation networks and other infrastructure in rural areas. As the

[18] Boyer and Lessault.
[19] Sarah McKune, ed., "Section III: The Environment and the Challenge of Climate Change," in *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel*, 1st ed. (Oxford University Press, 2021), 207, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198816959.001.0001.
[20] "The Central Sahel: A Perfect Sandstorm," Africa Report N°227 (Brussels, Belgium: International Crisis Group, June 25, 2015), 10, https://icg-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/227-the-central-sahel-a-perfect-sandstorm.pdf.
[21] Boyer and Lessault, "Urbanization and The Dynamics of Change in the Sahel."
[22] "World Development Report 2011; Conflict, Security, and Development" (The World Bank, 2011), 7, https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/806531468161369474/pdf/622550PUB0WDR0000public00BOX361476B.pdf.
[23] "Western & Central Africa: Development News, Research, Data," World Bank, accessed May 8, 2024, https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/afr/western-and-central-africa.
[24] McKune, "Section III: The Environment and the Challenge of Climate Change."
[25] "The Sahel: Regional Politics and Dynamics," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, by Sebastian Elischer (Oxford University Press, 2019), 1–24, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.765.
[26] Blundo, "Corruption and The State in the Sahel." This dissertation is explicitly focused on the TSCTP countries of the Sahel. Therefore, any references by the author to 'the Sahel' are limited to an examination of Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal.
[27] Ousmane Badiane and Tsitsi Makombe, "Agriculture, Growth, and Development in Africa: Theory and Practice," November 3, 2014, 319.

formal sector has not generated sufficient employment opportunities, the informal sector has grown, contributing "at least half of the national income and account[ing] for 80 percent or more of employment."[28]

The Sahel climate is a highly variable environment, which makes the region vulnerable to climate change. Temperatures are rising at a rate 1.5 times faster than the global average, with the year alternating between intense rainfall and prolonged droughts.[29] As a consequence, the region has become an ecological hotspot, facing escalating environmental stress.[30] Regular environmental shocks and the ensuing chronic food insecurity limit economic development (including infrastructure, governance, education, and basic health services). Impending climate change threatens to decrease crop production, increase animal disease, and increase flooding and intermittent drought. The region suffered from four different food crises in the 2000s, highlighting the vulnerability faced by a region dependent on agriculture and the threat this poses for chronic food instability.[31] Thirteen million people faced a critical lack of food in 2019, and 1.6 million children under five suffered from severe acute malnutrition.[32] Widespread desertification has put increased strain on jobs and food production, increasing food insecurity and the forced migration of communities.[33]

As a result of these vulnerabilities, socioeconomic disparities that drive violent conflict have been increasing across the region. Conflict in certain areas of the Sahel between herders and

[28] Renata Serra, ed., "Section IV The Challenges of Development," in *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel*, 1st ed. (Oxford University Press, 2021), 305–10, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198816959.001.0001.
[29] The Human Development Index (HDI) measures the following key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and having a decent standard of living, and represents the geometric mean of normalized indices for each of the three dimensions. UN News, "Building Climate Resilience and Peace, Go Hand in Hand for Africa's Sahel," Africa Renewal, November 14, 2018, https://www.un.org/africarenewal/news/building-climate-resilience-and-peace-go-hand-hand-africa%E2%80%99s-sahel-%E2%80%93-un-forum.
[30] "Ecological Threat Register 2020: Understanding Ecological Threats, Resilience and Peace" (Sydney, Australia: Institute for Economics & Peace, September 2020), 60, https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/ETR_2020_web-1.pdf.
[31] Food crises in the Sahel occurred in 2005, 2008, 2010, and 2012."The Central Sahel: A Perfect Sandstorm."
[32] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), "Sahel Crisis: Overview of Humanitarian Needs and Requirements (May 2020) | OCHA," May 13, 2020, 6, https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/nigeria/sahel-crisis-overview-humanitarian-needs-and-requirements-may-2020.
[33] Tor A Benjaminsen, "Climate Change and Human Conflict in the Sahel," in *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel*, Oxford Handbooks (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2021), 269–85, https://academic.oup.com/edited-volume/37091/chapter/323203902.

farmers has spiraled over the past ten years, with herders encroaching on and often destroying arable cultivated farmland and farmers expanding cultivated land, which decreases herders' pastureland. The emergence of jihadi-Salafi groups and subsequent fighting between the groups and the various national forces has led to a refugee crisis of unprecedented proportions.[34] This surge has uprooted entire communities and disrupted livelihoods. One in four people in the Sahel lived in a conflict area in 2019. The region hosted more than 4.5 million internally displaced or refugees, and 6.9 million struggled with the aftereffects of forced displacement.[35] Rampant insecurity translated into the closure of more than 10,000 schools, affecting millions of children and over 7,000 health centers.[36] These spiraling conflicts have devastated the region's already limited economy.[37] Border closures destabilized livelihoods for both agricultural and pastoral communities as livestock and crops could not be transported to market.

While Sahelian economies have experienced some positive macroeconomic growth over the past fifteen years compared to the rest of West Africa, it has been growth without development. Per-capita income growth has not translated into analogous improvements in social indicators, environmental sustainability, or overall quality of life.[38] One reason is that central governments–like the colonial powers before them–have invested little in the vast geographic areas beyond state capitals. Structural factors such as extensive corruption and poor infrastructure do not instill confidence in the state and its fragile social and political institutions. Human resources are scarce, educational and workforce development is lacking, and there are seldom good job prospects. The professional working class in each country migrates to Europe and the US in an unrestrained brain drain, further undermining the limited provision of healthcare and infrastructure development throughout the region.[39] At the local level, competent public officials

[34] Cristina Barrios, "Security Provision and Counterterrorism in the Sahel," in *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel*, by Cristina Barrios, ed. Leonardo A. Villalón (Oxford University Press, 2021), 438–58, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198816959.013.28.
[35] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), "Sahel Crisis," 6.
[36] "'Unprecedented' Insecurity in West Africa and the Sahel," UN News, January 10, 2023, https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/01/1132332.
[37] Daniel Eizenga, "Long Term Trends Across Security and Development in the Sahel," West African Papers, vol. 25, West African Papers, September 2019, https://doi.org/10.1787/630477ee-en.
[38] Badiane and Makombe, "Agriculture, Growth, and Development in Africa: Theory and Practice."
[39] Abdel-Fatau Musah, "West Africa: Governance and Security in a Changing Region," February 2009, 6.

are lost to higher-paying positions with NGOs, development agencies, and international institutions.[40]

Finally, governments are highly dependent on foreign assistance, over which they exercise little control, including foreign trade, foreign aid, external investment, foreign technology and skills, and world prices for their primary commodity exports.[41] Sahelian aid dependence has become entrenched, existing as a permanent and sizable component of state budgets.[42] Foreign aid, or official development assistance, has traditionally accounted for a substantial portion of the gross national income in Sahelian countries, with an average of 6.86 percent in 2015.[43] However, additional income often fosters opportunities for rent-seeking and misappropriation, undermining incentives for government accountability and increasing the likelihood of widespread corruption.[44]

Regional Governance Environment

The legacy of the authoritarian and repressive colonial state has loomed large over the Sahel and was very influential in the way that states formed and grew. During their first sixty years of independence, despite being challenged with consistent political, socioeconomic, and security instability, Sahelian states transitioned from initial independence to military rule, to political liberalization, and finally to democratization. The combination of multiple ingrained and inherited traits, such as neo-patrimonialism, weak governance, and systemic corruption, resulted in incomplete state formation, governments with low popular legitimacy, a lack of territorial control, weak institutions without essential service delivery, factionalized elites, and little economic development.[45] Although for twenty years there was a visible trend toward civilian

[40] Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, "The Construction of States and Societies in the Sahel," in *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel*, by Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, ed. Leonardo A. Villalón (Oxford University Press, 2021), 56, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198816959.013.10.
[41] Carter, *African Independence*, 57.
[42] Philippe Lavigne Delville, "La Réforme Foncière Rurale Au Bénin: Émergence Et Mise En Question D'une Politique Instituante Dans Un Pays Sous Régime D'aide," *Revue Française de Science Politique* 60, no. 3 (2010): 467–91.
[43] 5 percent in Mauritania in 2014, 5.74 percent in Chad, 9.45 percent in Mali, 12.23 percent in Niger, 6.49 percent in Senegal, and 9.11 percent in Burkina Faso in 2015.
[44] Isaline Bergamaschi, "The Political Economy of Aid in the Sahel," in *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel*, by Isaline Bergamaschi, ed. Leonardo A. Villalón (Oxford University Press, 2021), 346–62, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198816959.013.20.
[45] Musah, "West Africa: Governance and Security in a Changing Region," 6.

rule across the region, several stark contemporary challenges are reversing those initial positive trends.[46]

State Formation and the Impact of Colonialism

One of, if not the principal preoccupation of the French empire, was to exploit the resources of its colonies and to increase market access for French goods. Under French rule, eight Sahelian states belonged to the federation of French West Africa (Afrique Occidentale Française).[47] No effort was made, however, to develop these colonies into true territories of France with functioning local governance systems.[48] As a result, the imperial administration operated principally out of capital cities, focused on moving goods to market. At the same time, the rest of the territory was administered by a loose bureaucratic structure that "subcontracted" authority to a diverse group of local intermediaries.[49]

In the wake of the Second World War, indigenous nationalist movements gained strength and a new political climate focused on self-determination. The Atlantic Charter of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization specifically noted the organization's prioritization of "the right of all peoples to choose the form of Government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them."[50] This fundamentally altered the grounds by which the international system examined and granted independence to new states. Jackson and Rosberg pointed out that for

[46] Sebastian Elischer, "Militaries in Sahelian Politics," in *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel*, by Sebastian Elischer, ed. Leonardo A. Villalón (Oxford University Press, 2021), 424, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198816959.013.27.

[47] Dahomey (now Benin), Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), Côte d'Ivoire, French Guinea (now Guinea), French Sudan (now Mali), Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal belonged to AOF. Chad is the sole Sahelian exception, which belonged to French Equatorial Africa (*Afrique Equatorial Française, AEF*) along with Gabon, French Congo (now Republic of the Congo), and Ubangi-Shari (now Central African Republic).

[48] Africa was France's most important source of raw materials, and after Europe, its second most important market for exports. Michael Crowder, "History of French West Africa until Independence," in *Africa South of the Sahara* (Europa Publications, 1991), 77–80, https://illiad.library.tufts.edu/illiad/TFF/illiad.dll?Action=10&Form=75&Value=939204.

[49] Mann, "French Colonialism and The Making of the Modern Sahel," 42.

[50] North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "The Atlantic Charter: Declaration of Principles Issued by the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom" (1941), https://www.nato.int/docu/basictxt/b410814a.htm.

the first time, “arbitrary political units and unproven governments” without sufficient internal legitimacy and capability, were offered juridical statehood.[51]

Over the next fifteen years (1944-1959), France’s colonies were granted the status of ‘overseas territories.’ They were slowly offered incremental reforms and voting rights to reward African support during the war and placate rising calls for independence to maintain the French empire.[52] When offered the choice, representatives from all francophone territories except Gabon chose strengthened gradual local autonomy over full and immediate independence. Paris would still uphold key ‘sovereign’ functions, such as diplomacy, defense, and monetary policy. At the same time, the territories would be responsible for internal self-government.[53] However, by the mid-1950s, Paris decided to transfer local political control–and with it mounting financial burdens–directly to elected African governments. Decolonization, determined as an external process, offered each nation little opportunity to experience the "internal forging of mutual constraints between rulers and ruled," a freedom that European states benefitted from when they first developed.[54]

After over 300 years of French presence and 60 to 70 years of direct colonial rule, each state gained independence from France in 1960.[55] Early Sahelian experiments with

[51] Jackson and Rosberg, “The Marginality of African States,” 65.
[52] After West African colonies served as a major supplier of men and materials for the French war effort, they were rewarded from 1944-1948 with different reforms, offered at placating calls for independence. The 1946 French constitution identified the colonies as ‘overseas territories,' allowed for increased political rights (participation and representation), terminated the forced labor and indigénat system, and made significant investments in infrastructure (roads, railways, schools, hospitals, agricultural development, water supplies, etc., but fell short of offering equal rights for all French citizens. Elizabeth Schmidt, ed., “France’s Private African Domain, 1947–1991,” in *Foreign Intervention in Africa: From the Cold War to the War on Terror*, New Approaches to African History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 168, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139021371.009.
[53] Mann, “French Colonialism and The Making of the Modern Sahel,” 40.
[54] Charles Tilly, “War and the Power of Warmakers in Western Europe and Elsewhere, 1600-1980,” in *Global Militarization*, by Peter Wallensteen, ed. Peter Wallensteen, Johan Galtung, and Carlos Portales, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2019), 84, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429044694-3.
[55] Each colony was originally occupied by the following dates: Upper Volta (Burkina Faso) 1892, Chad 1900, Soudan (Mali) 1893, Mauritania 1910, Niger 1906, Nigeria 1885, and Senegal 1890. Each country gained their independence in 1960: Upper Volta (Burkina Faso) August 1960, Chad 1960, French Soudan (Mali) June 1960, Mauritania November 1960, Niger August 1960, and Nigeria October 1960, Crowder, “History of French West Africa until Independence,” 77.
https://illiad.library.tufts.edu/illiad/TFF/illiad.dll?Action=10&Form=75&Value=939204; Schmidt, “France’s Private African Domain, 1947–1991,” 75.

democratization proved "relatively rare and short-lived."[56] Independence leaders were left in charge of fragile and incompetent states without routinized state foundations and institutions and limited prospects for progress and modernization.[57] These conditions led to precarious politics, intra- and inter-elite power struggles, rampant corruption, and political vacuums.

The newly independent nations inherited rudimentary and, at times, worthless bureaucratic substructures. The initial governments featured "identical if parallel" political institutions formed from the example of the French Fifth Republic (1958–).[58] Competition for political power and access to resources led the newly independent governments to centralize control, empowering a strong executive, transform their constitutions into instruments of coercion, and transition to single-party regimes.[59] Stephen Elischer states that these governments were supposed to "undermine ethnic cleavages and craft cohesive developmental states."[60] Instead, they lacked popular legitimacy and inclusiveness, were unable to deliver services, and extended the neo-patrimonial and militarist practices of the colonial era.[61]

Neocolonialism and the Cold War

After independence, France maintained significant influence in the Sahel, both politically, economically, and militarily. Former colonies were considered a *pré carré* (private domain), which should not be accessed by other world powers. As the Cold War began, French concerns about communist subversion, as well as growing frustration with American expansion into France's traditional sphere of influence, dominated political engagement with the continent. Economic cooperation agreements and monetary accords enabled France to maintain significant control and leverage over the internal workings of its former colonies. It

[56] At the time of independence, only 9 out of 39 African countries were governed by democratic regimes. Ten years later that number had dropped to 6. Dr Monty G Marshall, "Conflict Trends in Africa, 1946-2004" (Arlington, Virginia: Africa Conflict Prevention Pool (ACPP), September 2006), 13, https://www.systemicpeace.org/vlibrary/ConflictTrendsAfrica2006MGMarshall.pdf.
[57] Blundo, "Corruption and The State in the Sahel," 364.
[58] Mann, "French Colonialism and The Making of the Modern Sahel," 1.
[59] Mamadou Bodian and Leonardo A. Villalón, "The Democratic Struggle in the Sahel," in *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel*, by Mamadou Bodian and Leonardo A. Villalón, ed. Leonardo A. Villalón (Oxford University Press, 2021), 389, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198816959.013.24.
[60] "The Sahel," 7.
[61] Nicolas van de Walle, "Africa's Range of Regimes Elections without Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 2 (April 2002): 69.

also remained entangled on the military front. In the first 30 years after independence, France intervened over 35 times militarily in 16 different African countries (including Chad, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal). The former colonial power was also linked to multiple anticommunist dictators, who safeguarded French interests in Africa.[62]

In this post-independence period, regardless of the system of government, state marginality became pervasive. Countries suffered from administrative shortcomings, significant dependence on foreign aid, rampant corruption (in politics and institutions), elite capture, and challenges with electoral democracy for those who experienced it. While a slim minority of African governments achieved some measures of civil and socioeconomic development, most countries experienced consistent leadership challenges. Jackson and Rosberg described how such rulers "squandered national resources, engaged in abusive misgovernment, pursued ill-advised ideologies… foundered amid turbulent and uncontrollable natural or social forces, or presided over jurisdictions which offer[ed] very limited opportunities for development."[63]

The Role of the Military in Politics

Since independence, the armed forces across the Sahel have served as incredibly powerful political actors.[64] Multiple overlapping factors led to frequent military intervention throughout the region, including adversarial socioeconomic conditions in the context of widespread poverty, power concentrated in the hands of autocratic elites, alongside ineffective and corrupt state bureaucracies, a lack of trust in civilian rulers, and bad treatment of the armed forces by civilian rulers, all of which undermined the legitimacy of existing civilian rule throughout the region.[65]

[62] Schmidt, "France's Private African Domain, 1947–1991," 165.
[63] Jackson and Rosberg, "The Marginality of African States," 65.
[64] Elischer, "Militaries in Sahelian Politics," 423.
[65] John F. Clark, "The Decline of the African Military Coup," *Journal of Democracy* 18, no. 3 (July 2007): 141-145,147-155, https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2007.0044; Thomas H. Johnson, Robert O. Slater, and Pat McGowan, "Explaining African Military Coups d'Etat, 1960-1982," *The American Political Science Review* 78, no. 3 (September 1984): 622–40, https://doi.org/10.2307/1961833; Patrick J. McGowan, "Coups and Conflict in West Africa, 1955-2004: Part II, Empirical Findings," *Armed Forces & Society* 32, no. 2 (January 1, 2006): 234–53, https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X05277886.

In the early 1960s, Elischer noted that fledgling "incompetent civilian rulers" were quickly overtaken by military coups and rule, with junta leaders depicting themselves as the "guardians of stability and order."[66] Over the next three decades, these military dictatorships relied on coercion and corruption to secure resources and on terror to maintain power. Military regimes disallowed political parties and independent associations, shuttered parliaments, and severely restricted the jurisdiction of civilian tribunals.[67] In the absence of elections, military coups became the chosen mechanism for regime change.[68] These local dynamics played out against the backdrop of the Cold War, where rival superpowers played active and prolonged proxy warfare with Sahelian states.[69]

Table 3.1 Successful Military Coups in the TSCTP Sahelian Countries since 1960[70]

Country	# of Successful Military Coups	Years	Year of Last Successful Coup
Burkina Faso	9	1966, 1974, 1980, 1982, 1983, 1987, 2014, 2022 (2)	2022
Cameroon	0	-	-
Chad	3	1975, 1990, 2021	2021
Mali	5	1968, 1991, 2012, 2020, 2021	2021
Mauritania	6	1978, 1979, 1980, 1984, 2005, 2008	2008
Niger	5	1974, 1996, 1999, 2010, 2023	2023
Nigeria	6	1966 (2), 1975, 1983, 1985, 1993	1993
Senegal	0	-	-

Source: Author compiled data from Cheeseman, Institutions and Democracy in Africa (2018)

[66] Elischer, "Militaries in Sahelian Politics," 424.
[67] Michael Bratton and Nicholas Van De Walle, "Neopatrimonial Rule in Africa," in *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective*, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 76, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139174657.
[68] Robin Luckham, "The Military, Militarization and Democratization in Africa: A Survey of Literature and Issues," *African Studies Review* 37, no. 2 (1994): 26, https://doi.org/10.2307/524766.
[69] Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
[70] This dissertation is explicitly focused on the TSCTP countries of the Sahel. Therefore, any references by the author to 'the Sahel' are limited to an examination of Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal. Nic Cheeseman, ed., *Institutions and Democracy in Africa: How the Rules of the Game Shape Political Developments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316562888.

By the 1980s, authoritarian rulers across the Sahel's patrimonial regimes faced a crisis of political legitimacy. Nepotism and corruption mounted to epic proportions. Deepening economic crises elevated grievances, and governments reacted with heavy-handed tactics. Civil unrest gathered steam and joined previously independent groups under a coalition banner to protest and insist on political change. Widespread protests took off in the early 1990s and ushered in a third wave of democratization across the continent. Burgeoning civil society pressured unelected governments to hold national conferences, which created newfound accountability of leaders and demanded new constitutions that enshrined multi-party democracy. As a result, the continent's political landscape experienced political liberalization and fundamentally changed the relationship between civilian and military elites.[71] There were clear advances with expanded political participation and competition, the creation of opposition groups, the development of freedom of the press, and the convening of competitive, multi-party elections.[72] But the evolution of civil–military relations throughout the subregion was inconsistent.

Institutionalizing Democracy vs. Democratic Backsliding

The struggle for democracy in the Sahel has been affected since independence by two lasting attributes of French governance. First, governments are centralized with great power invested in the executive at the expense of the legislature, which is systematically disempowered. Second, government is inherently militarist.[73] While Sahelian nations inherited the French model of democracy, at the same time, they live with stark Sahelian social realities. Frustrations have grown over the past twenty years regarding ineffective decentralization processes, insufficient economic growth, conflicting notions of core national identities, and the role of the inherited French concept of *laïcité* (French principle of secularism) in the modern Sahelian state.[74] It is, therefore, unsurprising that Sahel countries have consistently

[71] Michael Bratton and Nicholas Van De Walle, "Africa's Divergent Transitions, 1990-94," in *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective*, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 108, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139174657.
[72] Nic Cheeseman, *Democracy in Africa: Successes, Failures, and the Struggle for Political Reform*, New Approaches to African History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139030892.
[73] Mann, "French Colonialism and The Making of the Modern Sahel," 40.
[74] Bodian and Villalón, "The Democratic Struggle in the Sahel."

ranked at the bottom of the Fragile States Index's annual analysis of the different pressures 179 countries face that impact their level of fragility.[75]

However, concrete democratic advances can be identified. Significant electoral reform has improved the quality of elections throughout the region in terms of procedures and institutions. An independent press exists in each country with the capacity to openly challenge, question, and criticize. Despite questions regarding the relationship of religion to democracy, regional religious actors have come to embrace democratic institutions. Legal provisions have been instituted in six of the seven countries, establishing gender quotas in national legislation and electoral systems to mandate women's representation in decision-making bodies.[76]

From 2000 to 2020, a noticeable shift towards civilian governance emerged across the Sahel. However, since 2020, a number of current challenges threaten to reverse this trend as more and more Sahelian countries have constituted so-called hybrid regimes.[77] These states can be classified neither as democracies nor as autocracies.[78]

Sahelian State Sovereignty[79]

Most Sahelian states cannot be classified as "Weberian states" as they do not maintain a complete monopoly over the legitimate use of force across their territory. As Jeffrey Herbst captured in The Challenge of State-Building in Africa, "African states have never had the security imperative to physically control the hinterlands in the face of competition from hostile neighbors,' as was the case in Europe.[80] However, they cannot be classified as total

[75] In order of worst to best, Chad ranked 9th, Mali 13th, Nigeria 15th, Burkina Faso 21st, Niger 24th, Mauritania 37th, and Senegal 80th out of 179 different countries in 2023. "Fragile States Index 2023" (Washington, DC: Thr Fund for Peace, n.d.), https://fragilestatesindex.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/FSI-2023-Report_final.pdf.
[76] Bodian and Villalón, "The Democratic Struggle in the Sahel."
[77] Elischer, "Militaries in Sahelian Politics," 424.
[78] Matthijs Bogaards, "How to Classify Hybrid Regimes? Defective Democracy and Electoral Authoritarianism," *Democratization* 16, no. 2 (April 2009): 399–423, https://doi.org/10.1080/13510340902777800.
[79] Ibrahim Yahaya Ibrahim, "The Wave of Jihadist Insurgency in West Africa: Global Ideology, Local Context, Individual Motivations," West African Papers, vol. 7, West African Papers (OECD Publishing, July 28, 2017), 10, https://doi.org/10.1787/eb95c0a9-en.
[80] The academic literature has overwhelmingly focused on the European development of the nation-state, even though European countries represent a small percentage of the history of state formation around the globe. The

"ungoverned territories" or "failed states." Sahelian nations possess varied levels of statehood. Their ability to project force and their ability to make and enforce policies is not consistent throughout their territories.[81] Instead, they maintain a combination of "consolidated statehood," possessing military and administrative capacities to regulate social behavior and resolve conflict in their state capitals, and "limited statehood" in remote areas.

Each government struggled to exercise control over its territory and to create viable democratic institutions and has, at some point, grappled with a contender for state authority. Additional challenges to consolidating democracy include the growing phenomena of unconstitutional changes of government, the refusal of incumbents to yield power, and the recent resurgence of military coups. Finally, the recruitment of political elites in the region remains confined to a narrow social base whose main political goal is to remain in power indefinitely.[82] Access to power in the Sahel, according to Stephen Elischer, remains the privilege of a "small, elusive, urban, secular, francophone, and wealthy elite."[83]

A pervasive sense of dissatisfaction with national governments continues to permeate the region. Sahelian states are confronted with widespread popular distrust and increasingly fierce skepticism and criticism of national political elites and their legacy of state capture and failed governance methods.[84]

The Sahel's Conflict Mosaic[85]

Each country in the Sahel struggles under the weight of overlapping development, governance, and security drivers of instability. Epicenters of conflict throughout the region reflect several

largest reason for this is that it has been the best documented, though this has negative comparative side effects when examining the African continent's trajectory. Herbst, "The Challenge of State-Building in Africa," 21.
[81] Jeffrey Herbst, "Chiefs, States, and the Land," in *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 173–97; Stephen D. Krasner and Thomas Risse, "External Actors, State-Building, and Service Provision in Areas of Limited Statehood: Introduction," *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions* 27, no. 4 (October 2014): 545–67.
[82] Nic Cheeseman, ed., *Institutions and Democracy in Africa: How the Rules of the Game Shape Political Developments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316562888.
[83] "The Sahel," 3.
[84] Olivier de Sardan, "The Construction of States and Societies in the Sahel," 52.
[85] Morten Bøås and Liv Elin Torheim, "The Trouble in Mali—Corruption, Collusion, Resistance," *Third World Quarterly* 34, no. 7 (August 1, 2013): 1281, https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2013.824647.

notable underlying dynamics. The Sahel's trajectory to democratization and sustained socio-economic development since independence has been hamstrung by several cycles of persistent violence, showcasing conflict by and through interstate rivalries, military juntas, and non-state actors (since the 1990s) that asserted pro-independence, self-government, or religious ideals.[86] Each country is endowed with porous borders and varied levels of statehood.[87] Rather than an 'ungoverned space,' the Sahel is a contested space. Constant competition exists over migration rights, movement, resources (both licit and illicit), territory, and political power.

Several factors have led to a dramatically deteriorated security environment over the past 15 years and have fueled the current crisis. The main internal security challenges include socio-economic and governance weaknesses discussed earlier in this chapter, mainly poverty, structural food insecurity, and unaddressed economic and social grievances, as well as corruption, institutional weakness, and protracted crises derived from territorial and ethnic competition. Security challenges from organized criminal enterprises, Islamist radicalization, and terrorism, in addition to the presence of external actors and the effects of global economic shocks, have also had an effect.

In response to these threats, Sahelian governments have built up their military capabilities, engaged in regional security collaboration agreements, and accepted training and support from foreign powers who have established military bases on their soil.[88] Despite this effort, Sahelian nations and their partners have been unable to defuse these groups. Instead, the level of armed violence has skyrocketed, enabling jihadist recruitment to expand significantly.[89] Local governments have exacerbated the situation with botched responses or even colluding with

[86] Erik Melender, Therése Pettersson, and Lotta Themnér, "Organized Violence, 1989–2015," *Journal of Peace Research* 53, no. 5 (September 2016): 727–42, https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343316663032.
[87] Amel Boubekeur, "Salafism and Radical Politics in Postconflict Algeria," n.d., 9.
[88] Morten Bøås, "Rival Priorities in the Sahel - Finding the Balance between Security and Development" (Nordic Africa Institute, April 2018), https://reliefweb.int/report/mali/rival-priorities-sahel-finding-balance-between-security-and-development-policy-note-no; Sharkdam Wapmuk, "ECOWAS: Emerging Architecture for Regional Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency in West Africa," in *The Routledge Handbook of Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency in Africa*, ed. Usman A. Tar (Oxford, United Kingdom: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2021), 315–29.
[89] Hamza Cherbib, "Jihadism in the Sahel: Exploiting Local Disorders" (European Institute of the Mediterranean), 264, accessed February 9, 2024, https://www.iemed.org/publication/jihadism-in-the-sahel-exploiting-local-disorders/.

criminal networks, Islamist militants, and/or ethnic dissidents.[90] The ability of various armed groups, at times, to ensure security, uphold the rule of law, and deliver justice stands in stark contrast to the decades-long failure of states to provide these fundamental elements of governance.

Transnational Organized Crime

Transnational organized crime plays a central role in the Sahel. Highly coordinated networks of traffickers move sizeable quantities of goods across vast areas without being forced to transit official border crossings. As the post-9/11 security apparatus made all kinds of border transit more official and challenging, Latin American drug cartels had to seek out new routes to European markets. Escalating insecurity coupled with a range of opportunist actors (criminal networks, armed groups, bandits, and terrorist groups)[91] resulted in a widespread increase in trafficking (drugs, arms, human beings, fuel, medication, and gold) along the routes connecting the Sahel (especially Mali and Niger) to both West and North Africa in the late 2000s.[92] In addition to the groups mentioned above, border communities and a mix of government actors served as "*coupeurs de routes*" (road blockers), establishing checkpoints to levy fees from traders or travelers for guaranteed safe passage.[93] Corruption persisted at high levels in the administrations of the Sahel, promoting 'arrangements' between public officials and holders of illicit products.[94]

There is little to support allegations of a formalized partnership between terrorist organizations and smugglers. While it is plausible that distinct terrorist groups (as with other armed groups in northern Mali) have imposed transit fees on smugglers or lent their

[90] Anouar Boukhars and Frederic Wehrey, "Conclusion - Perilous Desert; Insecurity in the Sahara," in *Perilous Desert*, ed. Frederic Wehrey and Anouar Boukhars, Insecurity in the Sahara (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2013), 185–96, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt6wpjcm.12; RFI, "Mali: La Force Barkhane Annonce Avoir Neutralisé 60 Jihadistes En Un Mois," *RFI*, March 15, 2018, sec. afrique, https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20180315-mali-barkhane-annonce-avoir-neutralise-60-jihadistes-mois.
[91] Olajide O. Akanji, "Sub-Regional Security Challenge: ECOWAS and the War on Terrorism in West Africa," *Insight on Africa* 11, no. 1 (January 1, 2019): 94–112, https://doi.org/10.1177/0975087818805842.
[92] "Trafficking in the Sahel: Guns, Gas, and Gold," UN News, May 20, 2023, https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/05/1136847.
[93] Fiona Mangan and Matthias Nowak, "The West Africa-Sahel Connection; Mapping Cross-Border Arms Trafficking," Briefing Paper (Small Arms Survey, December 2019), 10, https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/SAS-BP-West-Africa-Sahel-Connection.pdf.
[94] Wolfram Lacher, ed., "Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region" (Brookings Institution Press, 2012), 8, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt6wpjcm.

protection to smuggling convoys, they do not appear to have been involved in reported clashes at points in time between drug smugglers in the region.[95]

Communal Violence

While rural areas experience only 'limited statehood,' they are traditionally known for enhanced stability that results from strong local justice systems, traditional leadership, and healthy and active conflict resolution mechanisms. However, since 2000, the authority and legitimacy of these historical and traditional leadership structures have waned with the advent of decentralization.[96]

Fragile Sahelian states cannot monitor their borders, maintain a monopoly on the legitimate use of force, and, in effect, provide effective security for their citizens. This has raised stark questions about whether these states can fulfill their responsibility for human security in the Sahel. The UN General Assembly resolution 66/290 specified that "governments retain the primary role and responsibility for ensuring the survival, livelihood, and dignity of their citizens."[97] New actors have emerged who vie for control amidst these power vacuums, which have exacerbated tensions and fueled conflict in communities where there are mixed religions or ethnicities.[98]

Furthermore, throughout the Sahel, there has been a significant increase in "livelihood" struggles, where access to once uncontested–but now increasingly more limited–natural resources (land, pasture, and water) fuels disputes and competition over political leadership between pastoralist and agriculturalist communities as the climate crisis worsens throughout the region.[99] In 2018, one in four people in the Sahel lived in a conflict area.[100] Disputes are becoming increasingly more violent and lethal due to a range of factors. First, areas where

[95] Lacher, 8.
[96] Ibrahim, "The Wave of Jihadist Insurgency in West Africa," 7:10.
[97] UN General Assembly, "Follow-Up to Paragraph 143 on Human Security of the 2005 World Summit Outcome," UN General Assembly Resolution (New York, NY: United Nations, October 25, 2012), https://www.un.org/humansecurity/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/N1147622.pdf.
[98] Barrios, "Security Provision and Counterterrorism in the Sahel," 441.
[99] Scott Straus, "Wars Do End! Changing Patterns of Political Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa," *African Affairs* 111, no. 443 (April 2012): 179–201.
[100] World Food Programme, "Scaling up for Resilient Individuals, Communities and Systems in the Sahel," 5.

extremist or rebel groups are present have seen increased levels of communal violence. Second, the state is not able to safeguard many communities, forcing them to form communal or ethnic militias for self-protection.[101] Third, increased access to small arms and light weapons throughout the subregion–a product of so many military coups and other conflicts since independence–has meant that while any group has ready access to arms to protect itself, levels of inter-communal violence have skyrocketed. Finally, government counterterrorism responses have perpetrated retaliatory violence against civilians. This, yet again, calls into question state legitimacy in the eyes of its people. These factors together demonstrate increased levels of communal violence in the Sahel. [102]

Islamist Radicalization in the Sahel

In 2020, 53 percent of the people in the seven Sahelian countries identified as Muslim (157 million out of 293 million people), 37 percent as Christian, and nine percent as ethnic religionists. Except for Mauritania, which has existed as an Islamic republic since independence, each of the other seven countries in the trans-Sahara TSCTP region are secular states (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal). Nigeria has one of the world's largest Muslim populations (84 million) and makes up almost half of the Muslim population in the region. Both Islam and Christianity were religions imported into the Sahel. Islam arrived via the trans-Saharan trade and commerce with North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula between the eighth and thirteenth centuries.[103] Christianity was imparted when Britain and France assumed control over their colonial territories at the end of the nineteenth century.[104] Traditional African religious beliefs and practices, referred to below as ethnic religions, have, for the most part, coexisted peacefully with Islam and Christianity until this current wave of conflict (post-2012).

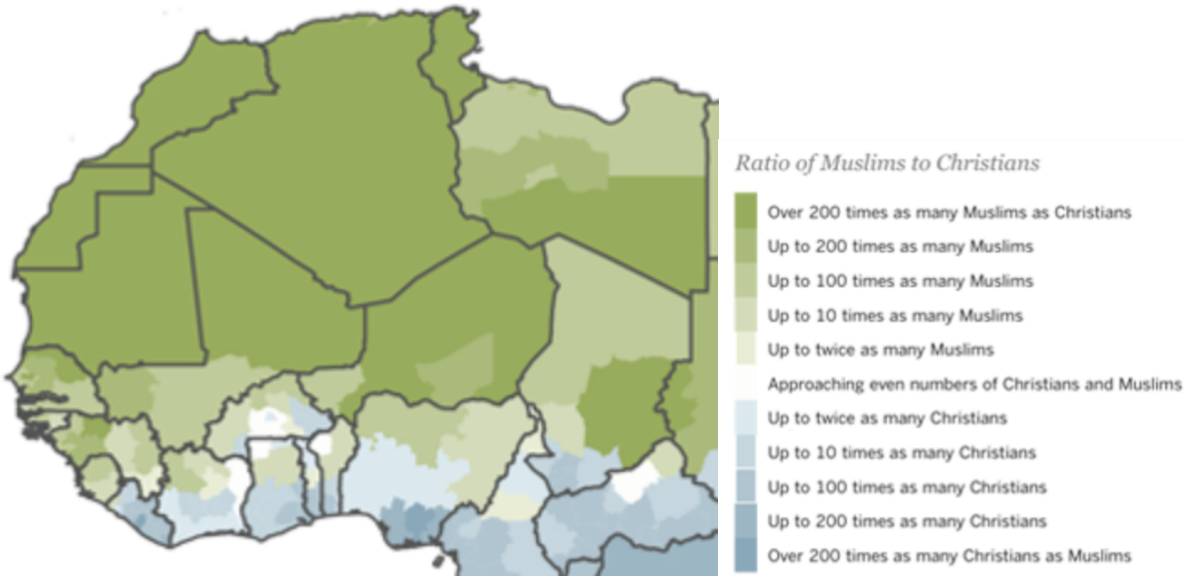
[101] UNOWAS, "Pastoralism and Security in West Africa and the Sahel; Towards Peaceful Coexistence" (UNOWAS, August 2018), https://unowas.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/rapport_pastoralisme_eng-april_2019_-_online.pdf.
[102] Barrios, "Security Provision and Counterterrorism in the Sahel," 441.
[103] Margari Hill, "The Spread of Islam in West Africa: Containment, Mixing, and Reform from the Eighth to the Twentieth Century," *Spice Digest*, January 2009, https://fsi9-prod.s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/Islam.pdf.
[104] Louis Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge: Religion, Power, and Schooling in a West African Muslim Society* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2001), https://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb02567.0001.001; Barbara M. Cooper, *Evangelical Christians in the Muslim Sahel* (Indiana University Press, 2006), https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/stable/j.ctvswx7xc.

Table 3.2 Religious Demographics within the TSCTP Countries of the Sahel[105]

	Muslim Population	% Muslim	Christian Population	% Christian	Ethnic Religionist	% Ethnic Religionist	Total Population
Burkina Faso	9,755,645	55%	4,173,835	23%	3,860,752	22%	17,890,419
Cameroon	4,721,185	20%	13,962,356	60%	4,452,139	19%	23,395,368
Chad	7,743,068	56%	4,838,902	35%	10,327	0%	13,750,786
Mali	14,189,170	88%	378,614	2%	1,520,901	9%	16,111,241
Mauritania	4,040,569	99%	9,369	0%	18,738	0%	4,073,565
Niger	18,413,699	96%	50,126	0%	792,381	4%	19,279,341
Nigeria	84,228,800	46%	84,835,027	46%	14,016,701	8%	183,705,125
Senegal	13,694,009	91%	773,911	5%	531,499	4%	15,056,634
Total	**156,786,144**	**53%**	**109,022,139**	**37%**	**25,203,438**	**9%**	**293,262,479**

Source: Author compilation of data from the World Religion Dataset, 2020

Figure 3.2 The Contemporary Religious Composition of the Sahel (2010)[106]



Source: Pew Research Center, Religion and Public Life Project (2010)

[105] Z. Moaz and E. Henderson, "World Religion Project - Global Religion Dataset," The Association of Religion Data Archives, August 13, 2019, https://www.thearda.com/world-religion/np-sort?var=ADH_495.
[106] Pew Research Center, "Tolerance and Tension: Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project* (blog), April 15, 2010, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2010/04/15/executive-summary-islam-and-christianity-in-sub-saharan-africa/.

The trans-Saharan trade initially brought Muslim merchants and traders to West Africa as early as the 8th century. Islam as a religion spread slowly throughout the subregion, dispersing with it support for religious pluralism, an emphasis on education, the Arabic language, and more centralized notions of governance.[107] The majority of African Muslims in the Sahel are Sunni and belong to the Maliki school, one of four major legal schools of Islam. Mystical Sufi brotherhood orders spread throughout the region as early as the 12th century. Still, a more mainstream popular transition began after the 18th century, and Sufi affiliation became "a more collective phenomenon."[108] Sufism focuses on the mystical elements of Islam, with central goals of "piety and mysticism."[109] It believes in the principle of *marabouts,* or spiritual guides, which act as intermediaries between believers and God.[110] In the 19th century, they became the most important Islamic institution in the Sahel.[111]

The history of Islamic radicalization and the development of Jihadi Salafi terrorism in the Sahel occurred concurrently with the growth of these elements globally. While the region has experienced a growing contemporary wave of religious extremism since the early 2000s, the concept of *jihad*, a struggle "to convert unbelievers" or to support "the moral betterment of the Islamic community," is not new.[112] A series of Sufi religious wars were waged throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in opposition to slave raiding and a large spectrum of social and economic grievances.[113] They resulted in the creation of new nations

[107] Hill, "The Spread of Islam in West Africa: Containment, Mixing, and Reform from the Eighth to the Twentieth Century."
[108] Benjamin Soares, "Islam and Muslim Societies in the Contemporary Sahel," in *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel*, by Benjamin Soares, ed. Leonardo A. Villalón (Oxford University Press, 2021), 553, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198816959.013.32.
[109] Knut S. Vikør, "Sufi Brotherhoods in Africa," in *The History of Islam in Africa* (Ohio University Press, 2000), 441–76, https://illiad.library.tufts.edu/illiad/TFF/illiad.dll?Action=10&Form=75&Value=940694.
[110] "The Spread of Islam in West Africa: Containment, Mixing, and Reform from the Eighth to the Twentieth Century," *Spice Digest*, Spring 2009, https://fsi9-prod.s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/Islam.pdf.
[111] Sheldon Gellar, "Varieties of Religious Doctrines and Institutions in Africa and Their Impact on Democratization Processes" (International Conference on Religious Ideas and Institutions and Transitions to Demcoracy in Africa, Los Angeles, CA, May 18, 2007), 6, https://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/dlc/bitstream/handle/10535/4171/W07-9_Gellar_DLC.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.
[112] Esposito and Popal, "The Oxford Dictionary of Islam."
[113] Roman Loimeier, "Dynamics of Jihād in the Bilād Al-Sūdān," in *Muslim Societies in Africa*, A Historical Anthropology (Indiana University Press, 2013), 108–34, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt16gz74b.10.

and empires governed for the first time by Muslim religious scholars (the Sokoto Caliphate (1804–1903), Macina (1820–1862), and the polity of al-Hajj Umar Tall (1848–1893).[114]

In this past century, Islam across the continent has changed significantly. The Muslim empires mentioned above each ended with the advent of colonialism at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. *Salafism* (al-Salafiyya in Arabic), a tradition that encourages followers to return to a more traditional version of Islam, emerged during the twentieth century. It repudiates any kind of religious practice (e.g., Sufi rituals), belief (e.g., Saints), or behavior (e.g., Customary law) not directly cited in the Quran (the Muslim holy book).[115] *Wahhabism* takes these concepts even further. It derives from the 18th-century Saudi reformer Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, who encouraged a return to the fundamentals of Islam, captured in the Quran's depiction of the daily life of the Prophet Muhammad. Wahhabism became the state-sanctioned ideology of Saudi Arabia in 1932. Saudi's oil boom in the 1970s provided the Kingdom with such wealth that it started exporting Wahhabi ideology overseas by building mosques and Islamic centers and supporting Islamic education [e.g., building *madrasas* (religious schools) or providing scholarships for students]. Following the 1979 Shiite Islamic revolution in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Saudi regime began supporting the spread of Wahhabism around the world. Through support to Afghanistan and Pakistan, they sponsored the creation of the Taliban.[116] Abdrahmane Ben Essayouti, the imam of the Djingareiber Mosque in Timbuktu noted in 2004, "Wahhabis come here from Saudi Arabia. They have means. They give money and build mosques and schools and buy books. If you don't have means, you cannot stop them. And if we don't pay attention, they will use the students against us."[117]

In the middle of the 20th century, Salafism and Wahhabism began to exert greater influence worldwide through the construction of Islamic institutions, such as the University of Medina, and the creation of the Muslim World League. Salafism began to make inroads throughout

[114] Paul Lovejoy, *Jihad in West Africa during the Age of the Revolutions* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2016).
[115] Denoeux, "The Forgotten Swamp," 59–60.
[116] Soares, "Islam and Muslim Societies in the Contemporary Sahel," 555.
[117] Lisa Anderson, "Democracy, Islam Share Home in Mali," *Knight Ridder Tribune Business News*, December 15, 2004.

the Sahel as Saudi-influenced leaders surfaced, challenging the dominance of the Sufi orders. King Faysal even visited the Sahel in 1966 on a six-stop tour to Mali, Chad, Niger, Mauritania, Senegal, and Uganda. Swelling oil coffers enabled the Saudis to begin offering aid globally in the 1970s, and Sahelian presidents hungrily accepted such aid relief at a time when they were reeling under the weight of local droughts and the effects of botched structural adjustment programs. Saudi-funded Gulf NGOs also became active throughout the region and focused their humanitarian aid on health and education programs.[118] Many religious schools and Salafist community organizations were privately funded and constructed in the 1990s and increased rapidly after 2001.[119]

The political liberalization of the early 1990s brought a mixed bag for Muslim clerics and activists. The war in Afghanistan ended, bringing home many militants who embraced Salafism and believed jihad was the way to change their societies.[120] Islam took on a more prominent place in everyday public life, from the extended reach of new religious broadcast media throughout rural regions (print and radio) to the creation of new Muslim community associations to newfound jockeying for power among religious leaders. As David Gutelius notes, "leaders from both nomadic and sedentary communities increasingly used public representations of Islam as a way of differentiating themselves from other leaders and by extension their communities."[121] Additional funding from Gulf NGOs funded local Muslim social service organizations and education in areas of low government presence.[122] Missionaries promoting Dawa al Tabligh and Wahhabi views made significant inroads in northern Mali in the early 2000s. Both groups possessed substantial financial resources, which they used to build mosques, madrassahs, community projects, and educational scholarships in the Gulf. This investment was highly visible and provided a stark contrast to negative public sentiment towards the government in Bamako, which northerners did not feel

[118] Mayke Kaag, "Islamic Charities from the Arab World in Africa," ed. Volker Heins, Kai Koddenbrock, and Christine Unrau (New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, n.d.).
[119] David Gutelius, "Islam in Northern Mali and the War on Terror," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 25, no. 1 (October 25, 2007): 66.
[120] Joshua Meservey, "Sahelian Islam's Shift Towards Salafism and Its Implications for Regional Terrorism," The Heritage Foundation, September 24, 2021, https://www.heritage.org/africa/commentary/sahelian-islams-shift-towards-salafism-and-its-implications-regional-terrorism.
[121] Gutelius, "Islam in Northern Mali and the War on Terror," 62.
[122] Gutelius, 63.

was prioritizing development efforts in the north.[123] At the same time, political leaders chose to uphold and reinforce the post-colonial concept of laïcité throughout the region's newly penned constitutions.[124]

Radical Islamist groups typically fall into one of two categories. The majority possess nationalist, country-specific goals and agendas [e.g., Hezbollah (Lebanon), Hamas (Palestine), and Gamaa Islamiyaa (Egypt)]. The second are groups with a transnational focus. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 were a galvanizing moment, and AQ was able to capitalize on the US's response. The immediate reaction of American President George W. Bush, who verbalized his intention to launch a 'crusade,' a 'war on terrorism,'[125] and to give each nation in the world the stark decision of being either 'with [the US] or…with the terrorists,'[126] sparked intense debate amongst Muslim scholars. It connected Sahelian perspectives and grievances against the West to a larger Muslim community. It also sparked interest in some of these localized groups to join the transnational AQ movement.

A final group are Jihadi Salafists, who believe in a strict, literal interpretation of Islam, and support jihad as the only viable mechanism to return societies to a more pious world. They are quick to denounce other Muslims because they fail to adhere to the tenets of Islam according to their understanding of the religion. Their targets vary; some focus on the 'infidel regimes' that govern their countries (or society) for impious behavior or for failing to side with their cause, such as the GIA in Algeria. Others focus on the US for its support of Israel within the Middle East.[127] Salafi Jihadism rose to newfound success during the 1980s and 1990s thanks to the same trends mentioned above, buoyed by the financial support of Gulf regimes and the returning *mujahideen,* anti-Soviet guerrilla fighters who had traveled to Afghanistan to participate during the Soviet-Afghan War, emboldened by their battlefield

[123] William B Farrell and Carla M Komich, "USAID/DCHA/CMM Assessment: Northern Mali" (Washington, DC: US Agency for International Development, June 17, 2004), 4–5, https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADC966.pdf.
[124] Except for the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, which did not have such a principal in its constitution. Alexander Thurston, "Wahhabi Compromises and 'Soft Salafization' in the Sahel," in *Wahhabism and the World*, ed. Peter Mandaville (Oxford University Press, 2022), 243, https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197532560.003.0012.
[125] George W. Bush, "President: Today We Mourned, Tomorrow We Work," The White House, September 16, 2001, https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010916-2.html.
[126] George W Bush, "Transcript of President Bush's Address," CNN, September 21, 2001, https://edition.cnn.com/2001/US/09/20/gen.bush.transcript/.
[127] Denoeux, "The Forgotten Swamp," 69.

success and looking for a new cause. Al Qaeda was created in 1988 amidst this timeline of events, promoting a global Salafi jihadist agenda that has appealed to Muslims in many corners of the world, including the Sahel.

Within the Sahel, the adoption of Salafi jihadi ideas has occurred over time. While considered 'radical,' these ideas have become appealing to growing segments of the population. Salafi jihadism "offers the promise of imagining alternatives to a political and social system that is deeply corrupt and unjust."[128] Intense local frustration with the various socio-economic, governance, and security challenges identified in this chapter combined with systemic corruption, increased literacy and access to Islamic doctrine by the general public, and the potential for silent, complicit support of opportunists who benefit from the situation, have all given rise to the increased appeal of Salafi jihadist ideas regionwide.[129]

The Salafi Jihadi Landscape in the Sahel

Two principal pockets of Islamist violence have been established in the Sahel and share three common traits. They have developed in countries where there is a history of pre-existing violent conflict, where there has been an enlargement or intensification of marginalization through key activating events, and where concentrated economic, political, and institutional grievances exist among Muslim populations.[130] The two epicenters began in northern Mali, which has expanded into neighboring Niger and Burkina Faso, and in Northeastern Nigeria, which has expanded to the greater Lake Chad Basin (Niger, Chad, and Cameroon).

Two types of terrorist groups have been active throughout the region: the first has focused on local issues, justifying their motives and activity through an ethnic-nationalist-religious paradigm, and the second has been transnational jihadi groups (al Qaeda and the Islamic State and affiliates of the Islamic State). The aspiration of the groups began as seeking to

[128] Anouar Boukhars, "The Paradox of Modern Jihadi Insurgencies: The Case of the Sahel and Maghreb" (Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, July 15, 2018), 5, https://www.academia.edu/37087068/The_Paradox_of_Modern_Jihadi_Insurgencies_The_Case_of_the_Sahel_and_Maghreb_July_2018_.
[129] Soares, "Islam and Muslim Societies in the Contemporary Sahel," 564.
[130] Caitriona Dowd, "Grievances, Governance and Islamist Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 53, no. 4 (December 2015): 527, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X15000737.

return to a more conservative version of Islamic law in their countries and has shifted since 2013 to also include driving out foreign forces from the broader Sahel. Each group seeks to capitalize on communal tensions and resentment against the local governments to embed itself more securely in the local landscape.[131]

The GSPC officially pledged its allegiance to AQ in 2006 and became al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in 2007. While the merger marked the first transnational jihadist presence in the region, it was a calculated, symbolic move. The group had suffered several setbacks and had been on a declining path operationally. Still, the merger enabled it to bolster legitimacy, change its brand, broaden its priorities, and strengthen its jihadi appeal. Once AQIM, the group could frame its movement within a larger global ideological, theological, political, and social movement. Over time, AQIM imported tactics utilized by AQ in other theaters (including suicide bombing). However, despite the internationalization and affiliation with the larger AQ franchise, AQIM safeguarded its operational focus on Algeria and the Sahel.

Most significantly, Algeria became an increasingly inhospitable operating environment, and over the next 10 years, the organization shifted its geographic focus to the Sahara/Sahel.[132] AQIM's goal was to create a space where they could both operate and, at times, govern territory. They succeeded over time by developing long-term local relationships, instituting basic governance, and applying military pressure.[133] A merger with AQ was a symbolically motivated change, intended to generate immediate local and international impact. The former GSPC had experienced many losses and was viewed as diminishing, both operationally and in its local support. The merger immediately elevated its status, strengthened its power, and broadened the group's priorities.

[131] Ibrahim, "The Wave of Jihadist Insurgency in West Africa."
[132] The Algerian state was able to quickly improve its counterterrorism capacity against AQIM's imported suicide tactics and greatly strengthened its border security. The government also benefitted from an increase in oil revenue (thanks to increasing global prices), which diminished jihadi grievances amongst the local population. Dario Cristiani, "Ten Years of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb: Evolution and Prospects," Jamestown 15, no. 9 (May 5, 2016): 9.
[133] Andrew Lebovich, "Mapping Armed Groups in Mali and the Sahel" (Brussels, Belgium: European Council on Foreign Relations, May 2019), https://ecfr.eu/special/sahel_mapping/european_union.

The regional security environment has continuously evolved as new groups have surfaced and others have merged in response to local, regional, and international counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations. The February Revolution in Libya led to the toppling of President Muammar al-Qaddafi in October 2011. An exodus of, by some estimates, 2,000 battle-hardened Tuareg mercenaries, with the proliferation of unquantifiable arms and ammunitions from Libyan military depots, flooded into Mali and the greater Sahel, unrestrained by the collapse of the Libyan state.

Mali became one of the epicenters of Salafi Jihadism when it devolved into a complex crisis in 2012. A separatist-extremist uprising was launched and swiftly took calculated control of the northern half of Mali, triggering a military coup. The aggressors' possession of heavy weapons — "antitank, antiaircraft, mortars, and powerful machine guns"— served as a game changer, enabling them to directly attack the Malian Army. It transformed the Tuareg campaign from yet another dispute over northern development and other grievances into a robust armed Islamist movement with "serious military and logistical capabilities."[134] Seizing an opportune moment to create an independent Azawad, the Tuareg allied themselves (briefly and problematically) with various jihadi groups, quickly defeating the Malian military and occupying two-thirds of the country.

With an AQ-affiliated group at the helm, it was the transnational aspect of the movement that prompted a quick international response. Multiple security interventions were launched to stop the jihadist offensive, take back control of Mali's lost territory, and enforce peace.[135] At the request of the Malian government, a French and African military intervention (Operation Serval) successfully displaced and degraded the jihadi groups, but they were not

[134] The Tuareg-Jihadist alliance included Ansar al Din (Tuareg separatists group), al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (an AQIM splinter group). Alexander Thurston and Andrew Lebovich, "A Handbook on Mali's 2012-2013 Crisis," *Working Paper No. 13-001*, n.d., 1; Adam Nossiter, "Qaddafi's Weapons, Taken by Old Allies, Reinvigorate an Insurgent Army in Mali," *The New York Times*, February 5, 2012, sec. World, https://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/06/world/africa/tuaregs-use-qaddafis-arms-for-rebellion-in-mali.html.
[135] Rémi Carayol, "Guerre au Mali : la Misma, faible force," *JeuneAfrique.com*, avril 2013, https://www.jeuneafrique.com/137695/politique/guerre-au-mali-la-misma-faible-force/.

eliminated.[136] Having lost hundreds of fighters and multiple leaders, the insurgents retreated from the major cities, moving to rural areas, Libya, and neighboring countries. It was at this point that they launched an all-out insurgency.[137]

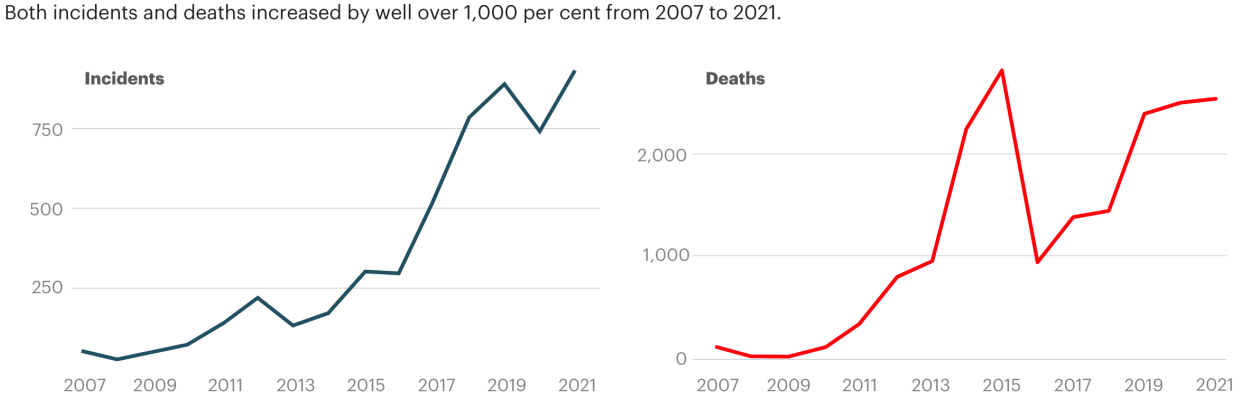
The creation of the Islamic State (IS) and its emergence in the region had clear implications for the terrorist groups in the Sahel. It led to the splintering of existing groups, ensuing inter-group rivalries, and multiple years of aftershocks with skyrocketing, staggering violence.[138] Following Al-Baghdadi's declaration of the Islamic Caliphate in June 2014, IS quickly sought to establish a presence in North Africa and the Sahel, demanding allegiance from all existing radical jihadi groups. The effort failed in its attempt to take the Maghreb, with the governments of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia successfully able to contain its expansion efforts. The IS substantiated itself in Libya and then spread into the Sahel, revealing the continued weaknesses of the Libyan-Sahelian security continuum.[139] An ensuing rivalry developed between IS- and AQ-affiliated groups in the Sahel, which quickly became characterized by extreme violence and competition between the two groups and excessive violence towards the local populations.[140]

Since 2015, jihadi groups have expanded their activities southward into Central Mali, eastward into Niger, and south into northern and eastern Burkina Faso. Over the past decade, the longstanding conflict in Libya between various factions, tribes, and ethnic groups, which had been suppressed under the strongman leadership of Gaddafi, has not been resolved. Its southwestern territory exists as a power vacuum enabling jihadi groups active in Mali to use

[136] Sergei Boeke and Bart Schuurman, "Operation Serval: The French Intervention in Mali," Leiden Security and Global Affairs Blog, July 28, 2015, https://www.leidensecurityandglobalaffairs.nl/articles/operation-serval-the-french-intervention-in-mali.
[137] Djallil Lounnas, "Jihadist Groups in North Africa and the Sahel: Between Disintegration, Reconfiguration and Resilience," MENARA Working Paper (Middle East and North Africa Regional Architecture (MENARA), October 2018), 11, https://www.academia.edu/37686285/Jihadist_Groups_in_North_Africa_and_the_Sahel_Between_Disintegration_Reconfiguration_and_Resilience.
[138] Héni Nsaibia and Caleb Weiss, "The End of the Sahelian Anomaly: How the Global Conflict between the Islamic State and al-Qa`ida Finally Came to West Africa," *CTC Sentinel* 13, no. 7 (July 31, 2020): 1–14.
[139] Raphaël Lefèvre, "Is the Islamic State on the Rise in North Africa?," *The Journal of North African Studies* 19, no. 5 (October 20, 2014): 852–56, https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2014.977617.
[140] Thomas Joscelyn and Caleb Weiss, "Analysis: Islamic State Claims Al Qaeda Started a War in West Africa," *FDD's Long War Journal* (blog), May 8, 2020, https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2020/05/analysis-islamic-state-claims-al-qaeda-started-a-war-in-west-africa.php.

it as a recurrent sanctuary.[141] It also offers Malian ethnic militias linkages to "more powerful and ethnically ambitious armed groups in the north".[142] Unrestrained access to weapons flowing from Libya fueled the conflict and greatly destabilized Mali and the sub-region.

Figure 3.3 Incidents and Deaths from Terrorism in the Sahel (2007-2021)[143]



Source: Global Terrorism Index (2022)

While worldwide deaths from terrorism have declined since 2020, as of 2018, the Global Terrorism Index classified the Sahel as an "epicenter of jihadist terrorism."[144] The region has seen steadily increasing deaths from conflict since 2011, with attacks more than doubling since 2016.[145] Violence in Central Mali reached unprecedented levels in 2018 when the aggressive tactics of the jihadi groups mixed with violence perpetrated by ethnic militias and retaliatory attacks carried out by the Malian military on entire villages and communities.[146] Terrorist activity threatened the legitimacy and territorial integrity of multiple states throughout the Sahel.

---

[141] Scott Shaw, "Fallout in the Sahel: The Geographic Spread of Conflict from Libya to Mali," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 19, no. 2 (June 1, 2013): 199–210, https://doi.org/10.1080/11926422.2013.805153.
[142] Djallil Lounnas and Virginie Collombier, "The Libyan Security Continuum: The Impact of the Libyan Crisis on the North African/Sahelian Regional System" (Middle East and North Africa Regional Architecture, October 2018), https://www.cidob.org/publicaciones/serie_de_publicacion/project_papers/menara_papers/working_papers/the_libyan_security_continuum_the_impact_of_the_libyan_crisis_on_the_north_african_sahelian_regional_system.
[143] "Global Terrorism Index 2022; Measuring the Impact of Terrorism" (Institute for Economics & Peace, March 2022), 46, https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/GTI-2022-web-04112022.pdf.
[144] Institute for Economics and Peace, "Global Terrorism Index 2020: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism" (Sydney, November 2020), 34, https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GTI-2020-web-2.pdf.
[145] "Global Terrorism Index 2022; Measuring the Impact of Terrorism."
[146] Corinne Dufka, "'How Much More Blood Must Be Spilled?,'" *Human Rights Watch*, February 10, 2020, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/mali0220_web.pdf.

Powerful Outside Interests Involved in the Sahel

While the crisis in the Sahel was in part triggered by regional dynamics, there has been a legacy of regional and international involvement in the Sahel. Each actor has maintained different interests and agendas, which have encumbered rather than strengthened the different countries and conflicts. Regional powers Algeria, Morocco, and Libya have played large roles to date. International partners have also played influential roles. France, as the former principal colonial power, the US, increasing its participation steadily since 9/11, China, in search of precious materials and markets, and most recently, Russia, in pursuit of a new leverage for global competition. Multinational organizations have additionally played a part, but due to the security situation, their inflated budgets and sequestered staff have served as a cause for more outrage from, rather than support to, local populations. While the Sahel has long been marked by very high levels of outside intervention, this recent response has produced a complete industry of "democracy promotion."

Overall, international efforts have been mostly militarily focused and have been unable to alter the trajectory of the conflict. As a result of the Malian government and international community's inability to address the skyrocketing violence from 2018 to 2020, Mali experienced a military coup in April 2020 and then a second coup in May 2021. Despite augmented efforts by the EU and France to focus on counterterrorism, the military junta began working more closely with Russian mercenaries, leading to rapidly deteriorating Mali-France (and Mali-US) relations.

Regional Geopolitical Rivalries

Algeria, Mali's northern neighbor, has always played a unique role in Sahelian dynamics. It is the regional hegemon, maintaining the strongest military and intelligence capabilities, yet it has maintained a strict policy of non-military intervention.[147] It has, however, intervened politically. Algeria has traditionally mediated past Malian peace processes (the Tamanrasset Accords in 1990, the National Pact in the mid-1990s, the Algiers Accord in 2006, and the

[147] Anouar Boukhars, "Reassessing the Power of Regional Security Providers: The Case of Algeria and Morocco," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, accessed March 4, 2024, https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/02/27/reassessing-power-of-regional-security-providers-case-of-algeria-and-morocco-pub-78482.

Algiers Agreement in 2015).[148] Mali is in Algeria's backyard, and Algeria also has a Tuareg population. Given that the GSPC was born out of Algerian national security concerns, many believe Algeria should have played a larger role in the current conflict. However, Algeria has accused the Government of Mali of leaking intelligence, failing to share crucial intelligence on terrorist groups, and retaining a questionable relationship at times with Mali's prominent Islamist leader, Iyad ag Ghali.[149] The Algerian security services maintain a granular level of visibility into the situation in Northern Mali and have been known to develop relationships with various players involved in the conflict (armed groups, traffickers, etc.) to ensure continued market access in northern Mali and to counterbalance France's influence in the Sahel.

Algeria and Morocco have existed in a cloud of mutual distrust due to a historical dispute over the Western Sahara.[150] This impediment has not only generated competition over power and influence in the region, but it has greatly impacted the potential for regional cooperation and as a result, regional stabilization efforts.[151] Morocco has become increasingly involved in the Sahel and Mali through soft power engagement. It has served as a cultural and religious educational exchange for Malian students and imams and views itself as an alternative to Wahhabi and Salafist ideologies emanating from the Gulf.[152]

Mauritania and Algeria, which neighbor Mali to the West and North, were both in opposition to the initial Economic Coalition of West African States (ECOWAS) response force after the initial coup and jihadi onslaught. The spread of the conflict to neighboring states Niger and Burkina Faso in 2014 led to the creation of an alternate sub-regional entity, the Group of Five

[148] Anouar Boukhars, "The Paranoid Neighbor; Algeria and the Conflict in Mali" (Washington, DC: The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 2012), https://carnegieendowment.org/2012/10/22/paranoid-neighbor-algeria-and-conflict-in-mali-pub-49756.
[149] Wolfram Lacher, "The Malian Crisis and the Challenge of Regional Cooperation," *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 2, no. 2 (June 12, 2013): 1–5, https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.bg.
[150] Marina Caparini, "The Mali Crisis and Responses by Regional Actors" (Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, September 28, 2015), https://nupi.brage.unit.no/nupi-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/302501/NUPI_WP_849%2bMarina%2bCaparini.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y.
[151] Djallil Lounnas and Nizar Messari, "Algeria–Morocco Relations and Their Impact on the Maghrebi Regional System," Working Papers (Rome, Italy: Middle East and North Africa Regional Architecture, October 2018), 11, https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/menara_wp_20.pdf.
[152] Vish Sakthivel, "Morocco's Move in Mali; What Rabat Gained in the Battle against Islamic Extremism," January 14, 2014, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/africa/2014-01-14/moroccos-move-mali.

for the Sahel (G5 Sahel: Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger).[153] The goal of the G5 Sahel was to ensure that a balanced, strategic framework was established to include development and security approaches to address the conflict. On February 6, 2017, the G5 Sahel set up the Joint Force-G5 Sahel (JF-G5S) to address the security component of the effort. Its goals were to contribute to the restoration of state authority by fighting terrorism, trafficking, and organized crime in its member states. It also facilitated the distribution of humanitarian assistance and assisted with development efforts.[154]

Multilateral Crisis Response

Initially, international assets were assembled to confront the jihadist situation in northern Mali. In December 2012, United Nations Security Council Resolution 2085 authorized the deployment of an African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) under a Chapter VII peacekeeping mandate, which deployed 1,400 ECOWAS troops throughout February 2013.[155] However, a joint Tuareg separatist Salafi-jihadi offensive in early January of that year sought to expand the alliance's northern territory into central Mali, threatening the viability of the state. In response to the Malian transitional government's request for international military intervention, France launched Operation Serval (supported by Malian and 2,250 Chadian forces) on January 11, 2013.[156] Serval accomplished each of its three objectives in rapid order. It halted the jihadist advance, destroyed the terrorist sanctuaries

[153] The force was authorized by the African Union Peace and Security Council in April 2017 and was strengthened by the adoption of UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2359 in June 2017. "Convention Portant Creation du G5 Sahel," June 2, 2017, https://web.archive.org/web/20170602170931/http://www.g5sahel.org/images/convention.pdf; "The G5 Sahel," April 28, 2020, https://www.g5sahel.org/le-g5-sahel-2/.

[154] "Resolution N 00-01/2017 Relative a La Creation d'une Force Conjointe Du G5 Sahel" (Bamako, Mali: G5 Sahel Secretariat Permanent, février 2017), https://www.g5sahel.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/images_Docs_Resolutions_force_conjointe__05_02_20171.pdf.

[155] Troops came from Niger, Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Senegal, Burkina Faso, and Chad. The UN invokes Chapter VII peacekeeping mandates in unstable post-conflict settings where the state cannot maintain security and public order. It allows the mission to "determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression" and to take military and nonmilitary action to "restore international peace and security". "Mandates and the Legal Basis for Peacekeeping," United Nations Peacekeeping, accessed March 1, 2024, https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mandates-and-legal-basis-peacekeeping; allafrica.com, "U.S. State Department Daily Press Briefing: Mali," *allAfrica.Com*, January 31, 2013, Gale Academic OneFile.

[156] Michael Shurkin, "France's War in Mali: Lessons for an Expeditionary Army" (RAND Corporation, October 17, 2014), 16, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR770.html.

(liberating the three main cities in Mali's north and restoring the sovereignty of the Malian state), and transferred its mission to AFISMA.[157]

Unfortunately, AFISMA was immediately assessed as "incapable" of accomplishing its mission, given the inconsistency of the capacities of the various national forces and all troops' general unpreparedness for a counterterrorism mission. Furthermore, it experienced significant airlift and logistical challenges in staffing and outfitting its mission.[158] Under significant pressure from the French, who wanted to end Serval as soon as possible, the UN re-hatted the AU forces as a UN operation.

On July 1st, after less than six months of operation, the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) took over from AFISMA.[159] MINUSMA was the first UN multidimensional peacekeeping mission to deploy in an active terrorism zone, where countering terrorism was a component of its mission. Its principal objective was stabilizing Mali's north by reestablishing and extending the state's authority.[160] Starting in 2013, this was initially in the North, but in 2018, its mission was expanded to the Central region. Ensuing mandates also included supporting and assisting with the Algiers Agreement, which successfully turned into the Algiers Accord (political process) and a range of additional, less prominent responsibilities.[161]

---

[157] Operation Serval neutralized several hundred terrorists, seized 200 tons of weapons and ammunition and 21 tons of ammonium nitrate (used to make mines), flew 13,000 hours over 7,500 sorties, and delivered 300 bombs. International partners including Germany, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Great Britain, Spain, the US, and the Netherlands supported France providing air transport, in-flight refueling or intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assistance. Maj Gen Olivier Tramond and Philippe Seigneur, "Early Lessons From France's Operation Serval In Mali," *Army*, June 2013, 40–43; "Operation Barkhane," December 19, 2014, https://web.archive.org/web/20141219063245/http://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/sahel/dossier-de-presentation-de-l-operation-barkhane/operation-barkhane.

[158] Over the five months of its deployment (January-May 2013), AFISMA was unable to secure Mali's north, nor were Malian troops (Gendarmerie, National Police, and National Guard) Carayol, "Guerre au Mali."

[159]MINUSMA's operation was mandated under Security Council Resolution 2100 (25 April 2013) and became operational on July 1, 2013. World Peace Foundation, "Mali Mission Brief" (Medford, Massachusetts: World Peace Foundation, 2016), https://sites.tufts.edu/wpf/files/2017/07/Mali-brief.pdf.

[160] Walter Lotze, "United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)," in *The Oxford Handbook of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*, ed. Joachim A. Koops et al. (Oxford University Press, 2015), 854–64, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199686049.013.72.

[161] These aspects included the protection of civilians and UN personnel; promotion and protection of human rights (including the deployment of human rights observers); supporting humanitarian assistance and the preservation and protection of cultural and historical sites; and assisting in bringing to justice, either in Mali or through the International Criminal Court, those guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity. UN Security Council (68th,

While MINUSMA contributed to the restoration of constitutional order and the initial stabilization of major urban centers, the Mission's soldiers quickly became the prime target of the jihadi groups. They came under attack from the insurgency via improvised explosive devices (IEDs), mines, suicide bombers, and rocket and mortar attacks.[162] As violence and terrorist activity descended into Central and Southern Mali and inter-communal violence increased, the Mission faced decreasing local support as citizens felt it was not doing enough to protect them.[163] After 2016, MINUSMA's stabilization mission and its ability to protect Malian civilians was significantly impaired, greatly affecting the credibility and legitimacy of its mission. The necessity of conducting security patrols to protect civilians was in stark contrast with balancing the security of its personnel. It was assessed that safeguarding major population centers in the north (establishing a 5 to 20km radius) consumed 80 percent of MINUSMA's operating budget.[164] At its height, the Mission had more than 16,000 personnel in the country.[165]

International Actors

France has consistently been the dominant actor in the Sahel, given its historical involvement as the dominant former colonial power. The country's continued intervention in the Sahel since decolonization, otherwise known as *Françafrique,* has been what Marchal describes as the "close personal, economic, and political interests that tie France to the leadership of its

"Resolution 2100 (2013) /: Adopted by the Security Council at Its 6952nd Meeting, on 25 April 2013," April 25, 2013, 11; Jaïr van der Lijn, "Assessing the Effectiveness of the United Nations Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)" (Oslo, Norway: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2019), 51, https://effectivepeaceops.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/EPON-MINUSMA-Report.pdf.

[162] Un Secretary-General, "Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Mali," September 22, 2014, 9–10, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/780163.

[163] One of the Malian public's initial experiences with MINUSMA was sexual exploitation and abuse. Several women were raped by Chadian soldiers from MINUSMA in September 2013. "UN's MINUSMA Troops 'Sexually Assaulted Mali Woman,'" *BBC News*, September 26, 2013, sec. Africa, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-24272839; Erin Weir, "Northern Mali Risks Becoming Forgotten Protection Crisis," Non-Governmental Organization, *Norwegian Refugee Council* (blog), June 20, 2014, https://www.nrc.no/news/2014/june/northern-mali-risks-becoming-forgotten-protection-crisis-/.

[164] "Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Mali," June 6, 2018, 912, https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n18/163/95/pdf/n1816395.pdf?token=M9AlLmPyzNBFuveWdU&fe=true.

[165] Economist, "The West's New Front against Jihadism Is in the Sahel," *The Economist*, May 2, 2019, https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2019/05/02/the-wests-new-front-against-jihadism-is-in-the-sahel.

former colonies, in a relationship described as corrupt and neocolonial."[166] Militarily, the post-colonial relationship followed a Gaullist policy aimed at maintaining strong French influence over former colonies, leading to a pattern of frequent military interventions by the French army (and the public) across the continent. In its 2013 National Security Strategy (Le livre blanc sur la défense et la sécurité nationale), the Sahel was identified as a 'priority interest' for France, illustrating 'the importance of the region and the severity of the threats developing there.'[167] While Malians generally welcomed France's military intervention in 2013 and efforts to prevent the collapse of the government, they tended to view France's involvement as protecting its economic interests in the region.[168]

After 18 months, France officially ended Operation Serval in July 2014, replacing it with a broader regional counterterrorism effort, Operation Barkhane. With joint headquarters located in Niger and Chad, Barkhane's mission was to support the armed forces of partner countries in their efforts to counter terrorism and prevent the reconstitution of terrorist sanctuaries throughout the region. Barkhane spread out its soldiers from Serval throughout the Sahel (into Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger) to target terrorist groups in support of African forces.[169] At the height of the operation, Barkhane maintained 2,400 officers in Mali and 4,300 regionally.[170] While Barkhane proved critical in preventing the collapse of the Malian state, as counterterror operations increased from 2018 to 2019, the effort increasingly came under attack for not doing more to prioritize the lives of Malian citizens. This worsened as inter-ethnic community violence coupled with skyrocketing security force human rights violations.

[166] Roland Marchal, "French Interventions in the Sahel," in *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel*, by Roland Marchal, ed. Leonardo A. Villalón (Oxford University Press, 2021), 473, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198816959.013.29.
[167] François Hollande, France, and France, eds., *Défense et sécurité nationale 2013: livre blanc* (Paris: Documentation française, 2013), 54–55, https://ccdcoe.org/uploads/2018/10/Livre-blanc-sur-la-Defense-et-la-Securite-nationale-2013-2.pdf.
[168] van der Lijn, "Assessing the Effectiveness of the United Nations Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)," 46.
[169] "SAHEL: Operation Barkhane," *Africa Research Bulletin: Political, Social and Cultural Series* 51, no. 7 (2014): 20223A-20224B, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-825X.2014.05817.x.
[170] Isabelle King, "How France Failed Mali: The End of Operation Barkhane," *Harvard International Review* 43, no. 4 (Fall 2022): 6–10.

The European Union (EU) has been active in the Sahel crisis since 2012. Its principal goal has been restoring Malian state authority to stem the refugee flows from Mali (and the greater region) to Europe. It launched a massive effort to train and reform the Malian military in 2012 and became the key donor (after France) to the G5 Sahel's Joint Force. The EU provided capacity-building programs for Mali's military through its EU Training Mission-Mali (EUTM, 581 personnel) and Mali's internal security (police) and justice agencies through the EU Capacity Building Mission (EUCAP Mali).[171] While EUTM and EUCAP trained thousands at fixed locations, France and the EU created Task Force Takuba to enable European special forces units to have the autonomy to "advise, assist, and accompany" Malian forces into combat in the Liptako-Gourma tri-bordered region (Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger).[172] Deployed during the summer of 2020, the initiative involved up to 600 European special operations forces at its height.[173] The US supported by providing intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance as well as airlift and air refueling support.[174]

The US's global focus on countering terrorism in the aftermath of 9/11 is what prompted initial engagement in 2002 through the PSI, the TSCTI, and then the TSCTP. After PSI, both TSCTI and TSCTP had a multi-faceted approach, with assistance that sought to improve governance, enhance the professionalism and effectiveness of security forces, and diminish the appeal of extremism and militancy. The military component of the programs focused on tactical capacity building support, accompanying infrastructure enhancements, and support equipment to units in each nation responsible for counterterrorism operations. Mali also receives critical support from multiple international and regional organizations, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the African Development Bank.

---

[171] "Council Decision 2014/219/CFSP of 15 April 2014 on the European Union CSDP Mission in Mali (EUCAP Sahel Mali)" (Brussels, Belgium, April 15, 2014), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:02014D0219-20150115.

[172] *Takuba: In Mali with the European Special Forces* (Paris, France: Ministère des Armées, 2021), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wjN91f0Vq28.

[173] Nicolas Gros Verheyde, Behind the Scenes of the Takuba Task Force, July 14, 2021, https://www.bruxelles2.eu/en/2021/07/the-takuba-at-work-ltt-col-francois/.

[174] Jean-Loup Samaan, "Gulf Countries and the Stabilization Efforts in the Sahel," AGDA Insight, Research and Analysis, November 2021, 6, chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.agda.ac.ae/docs/default-source/Publications/dr-jean-loup-samaan-english-01.pdf?sfvrsn=4.

The Rising Powers

As the Sahelian security situation has worsened since 2012, the international response has predominantly been led by the West (France and the EU). However, multiple rising powers–such as Russia, China, Turkey, and the Gulf states–have all tried to present themselves as possible alternate security partners. They see the continent and region as a mechanism to increase their geopolitical heft, increasingly augmenting their regional roles through various mechanisms (trade, aid, infrastructure, and cultural exchange). With the end of the French (2022), EU (2022), and MINUSMA (June 2023) presence, international concern has mounted that these new partners will provide aid while not mandating the same governance conditions and requirements, which will lead to a continued decline in not only democratic values but respect for human rights throughout the region.[175] As a result of the engagement of these new actors, a geopolitical shift has taken place. While China and Russia may be at their limit in terms of engagement potential, the door may be opening to other non-Western actors such as Turkey and the Gulf states.

Russia

Russia is attempting to reshape global geopolitics, using the continent of Africa as a strategic theater for great power competition. Moscow is using irregular warfare–a strategy incorporating special operations forces, intelligence units, private military contractors (PMCs), and other governmental and non-governmental organizations–to expand its influence, build the capacity of its partners, and increase economic opportunities for Russia.[176] Russia couples fake news and disinformation campaigns against France, as the former colonial power, and the West, more broadly. It also

[175] The French military finished Barkhane's exit of Mali in mid-August 2022. The EU announced its pause of EUTM-Mali in April 2022. MINUSMA's mandate ended June 2023 and it withdrew all personnel by December 31, 2023. David Doukhan, "The End of Operation Barkhane" (International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, November 27, 2022), 4, https://ict.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Doukhan_End-of-Operation-Barkhane_2022_11_27.pdf; "Security Council Ends MINUSMA Mandate, Adopts Withdrawal Resolution," United Nations Peacekeeping, June 30, 2023, https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/security-council-ends-minusma-mandate-adopts-withdrawal-resolution; RFI, "EU to End Military Training Mission in Mali," News, RFI, April 12, 2022, https://www.rfi.fr/en/africa/20220412-eu-to-end-military-training-mission-in-mali; Marie Sandnes and Ilaria Carrozza, "Russia, China and New Power Dynamics in the Sahel Region" (Oslo, Norway: Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), January 16, 2023), https://blogs.prio.org/2023/01/russia-china-and-new-power-dynamics-in-the-sahel-region/.

[176] Samuel Ramani, "Russia Has Big Plans for Africa," *Foreign Affairs*, February 17, 2022, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/africa/2022-02-17/russia-has-big-plans-africa.

provides military aid and, in return, takes payment via its access to mining and extractive industries.[177] It has pursued its security interests through various formal defense and security agreements throughout the Sahel. These pacts include military-technical cooperation agreements, arms and weapons sales, training and professional military education (PME), and selling PMC services to countries experiencing conflict.[178] Its most significant influence over the sub-region has been through the Wagner Group, a Russian-owned, "independent" (though Kremlin-linked) PMC that conducts bilateral security force training, among other activities. Using PMCs for functions beyond typical security cooperation activities (training, advising, and assisting) has enabled Moscow to claim plausible deniability for Wagner's actions. Security training has provided a cover for Wagner's subsequent missions and potential participation in the conflict (on-the-ground fighting, dispersing anti-government protests, etc.).[179] Despite the group's participation in Libya, Mozambique, the Central African Republic, Sudan, and Mali, it has had no kinetic success in the Sahel. Rather, it has a "dubious operational record and reputation for collateral damage."[180] Not only does Wagner's model of "shoot first, ask questions later" risk perpetual human rights violations, it obstructs investigations and accountability and threatens the safety and security of UN personnel throughout the continent.

China

Historically, China's engagement has largely focused on the economic, financial, and industrial sectors (natural resources and minerals). However, given the crowded competitor field, it has been getting involved in security affairs for the first time. Beijing's security priorities safeguard its economic and commercial interests and the ever-increasing number of Chinese workers throughout the region.[181] China contributed a

[177] Raphael Parens, "The Wagner Group's Playbook in Africa: Mali" (Philadelphia: Foreign Policy Research Institute, March 18, 2022), https://www.fpri.org/article/2022/03/the-wagner-groups-playbook-in-africa-mali/.
[178] Scorpio, "Exclusive: Advance into Africa — an Audit of Russia's Growing Economic and Military Footprint on the Continent," Daily Maverick, November 15, 2019, https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2019-11-15-exclusive-advance-into-africa-an-audit-of-russias-growing-economic-and-military-footprint-on-the-continent/.
[179] Colin P. Clarke et al., "Is Wagner Pivoting Back to Africa?," *Foreign Affairs*, November 5, 2023, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/africa/ukraine-wagner-pivoting-back-africa.
[180] Sarah Daly, "Russia's Influence in Africa, a Security Perspective" (Washington, DC: The Atlantic Council, February 23, 2023), 13, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/russias-influence-in-africa-a-security-perspective/.
[181] Sandnes and Carrozza, "Russia, China and New Power Dynamics in the Sahel Region."

large detachment of personnel to MINUSMA and enhanced the mission with ground combat forces (its second mission ever).[182] China's bilateral military-to-military ties to countries in the region are based on arms sales, equipment donations, and training and education programs. Beijing became the second largest arms supplier to sub-Saharan Africa, focusing mainly on light arms but has expanded to more sophisticated systems (including tanks, aircraft, and combat drones).[183] It has provided military equipment such as military aircraft, supplies (uniforms and shoes), protection equipment (counter-improvised explosive devices), and also helped with upgrades to different defense sector buildings.[184] It participates in military exchange programs and training across the region, maintains a small PME exchange program, and has contributed $45.56 million to the G5 Sahel-JF.[185] Finally, China utilizes private military security contractors (PMSCs) to safeguard its economic interests in the Sahel (which include mining facilities, ports, and infrastructure projects).[186]

Turkey

Turkey's role in the Sahel is similar to Morocco's, concentrated on soft-power projection through development support and commercial engagement. While overall efforts appear opportunistic rather than strategic, Turkey's main goal has been to focus on its common religious identity to advance its economic interests of increasing its exports to the region.[187] Over the past 15 years, Turkey has employed a multi-faceted approach, enhancing relations across the region diplomatically, economically, developmentally, and via security cooperation. Ankara has focused on increasing its diplomatic presence

[182] Jean-Pierre Cabestan, "China's Evolving Role as a U.N. Peacekeeper in Mali," United States Institute of Peace, September 26, 2018, https://www.usip.org/publications/2018/09/chinas-evolving-role-un-peacekeeper-mali.
[183] Asia Jane Leigh, "The Dragon's Game in the Sahel," *ACCORD*, accessed March 6, 2024, https://www.accord.org.za/analysis/the-dragons-game-in-the-sahel/.
[184] Mathieu Duchâtel, Richard Gowan, and Manuel Lafont Rapnouil, "Into Africa: China's Global Security Shift," Policy Brief (Brussels, Belgium: European Council on Foreign Relations, 2016).
[185] Cabestan, "China's Evolving Role as a U.N. Peacekeeper in Mali."
[186] Cortney Weinbaum, "China's Security Contractors Have Avoided the Fate of Russia's Military Contractors, So Far" (The RAND Corporation, March 11, 2022), https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2022/03/chinas-security-contractors-have-avoided-the-fate-of.html; Paul Nantulya, "Chinese Security Contractors in Africa," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, October 8, 2020, https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/10/08/chinese-security-contractors-in-africa-pub-82916; Jingdong Yuan, "China's Private Security Companies and the Protection of Chinese Economic Interests Abroad," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 33, no. 1–2 (2022): 173–95, https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2021.1940646.
[187] Hannah Armstrong, "Turkey in the Sahel" (International Crisis Group, July 27, 2021), https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/turkey-sahel.

throughout the region by opening embassies in Bamako (2010), Ouagadougou (2012), and Niamey (2012) and providing support to Mali's Algiers process. It also provided much-needed assistance in health care, water, and education to cultivate public support.[188] It also secured contracts for Turkish construction, energy, and mining companies.[189] Regarding security, Turkey took part in EUTM-Mali and supported the G5 Sahel force with a $5 million contribution.[190] In 2018, it began training Malian military and police officers at Turkey's War College and supplied Mali's army with light weapons and ammunition. It has also participated in military sales of armored vehicles and drones.[191] It has instituted new bilateral defense pacts throughout the region, which include intelligence sharing, capacity building, and military training agreements. It also played a large role in counterbalancing Russia in Libya in 2020. The chief danger is that by expanding its presence, Ankara will prompt other Gulf states that have not been engaged to become involved in an already overly militarized region.[192]

The Gulf States

The Gulf states have increased their involvement in sub-Saharan Africa to bolster their economic and security interests and advance their international foreign policy standing. Migrant labor is an important component of the relationship between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states and the region. A growing number of Sahelians reside on the Arabian Peninsula. By 2017, 77 percent of African migration to Asia was directed toward the GCC countries, amounting to roughly 3.4 million African migrants—about 12 percent of the total migrant population—who primarily supplied low-cost, unskilled labor. Migration was driven by better living conditions (increased security, job prospects,

[188] Turkey built a mosque for the High Islamic Council of Mali in Bamako, revitalized the mosque in Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta's (IBK) hometown of Koutiala, and renovated the Grand Mosque and the Sultan of Aïr in Niger. It built hospitals in Bamako (2018) and in Niamey (2019), as well as furnished mobile clinics in Koulikoro and Sikasso.
[189] Armstrong, "Turkey in the Sahel."
[190] AP, "Turkey Announces $5m for Sahel Anti-Terrorist Force," Gulf News, March 1, 2018, https://gulfnews.com/world/mena/turkey-announces-5m-for-sahel-anti-terrorist-force-1.2181246.T
[191] Andrew Lebovich and Nienke van Heukelingen, "Unravelling Turkish Involvement in the Sahel; Geopolitics and Local Impact," Policy Brief (Clingendael, July 2023), https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/Policy_brief_Unravelling_Turkish_involvement_in_the_Sahel.pdf.
[192] Federico Donelli, "Turkey's Way for Development," in *Turkey in Africa: Turkey's Strategic Involvement in Sub-Saharan Africa*, First (London, 2021), 99–129, http://www.bloomsburycollections.com/collections/monograph-detail.

and educational opportunities).[193] GCC countries have made significant development pledges to the Sahel in recent years. Dubai has hosted the Africa Global Business Forum since 2013, and Kuwait and Saudi maintain Funds (Kuwait's Fund for Arab Economic Development, with $21.7 million in 2021, and Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, with $200 million euros in 2020), which loan money to Sahelian countries for development and infrastructure projects.[194] A security imperative exists for Gulf countries to try to prevent the collapse of Sahelian states. GCC security priorities on the continent improve their countries' international standing by enabling them to project power and protect their economic interests. Iran has maintained religious, economic, and security ties in the region since the 1980s. Countering Iranian influence is a top focus for Saudi Arabia.[195] Gulf states have made significant financial contributions to the G5 Sahel (Saudi pledged $118 million and the United Arab Emirates [UAE] $35.4 million) to stand up the joint force. They have also expanded bilateral relationships with Mauritania, Chad, and Burkina Faso.[196] Military education initiatives have been another focus of engagement. Saudi Arabia began sending six officers a year to attend the G5 Sahel's Defense College, located on a new military base constructed with funds from the UAE. Qatar is also involved, using the Sahel as an opportunity to promote its Islamist agenda and compete for global influence against Saudi Arabia.[197] Sadou Diallo, the mayor of Gao, confirmed in 2013 "The French government knows perfectly well who is supporting these terrorists. Qatar, for example, continues to send so-called aid and food every day to the airports of Gao and Timbuktu" and has long-standing relationships with schools,

[193] Kennedy Atong, Emmanuel Mayah, and Akhator Odigie, "African Labour Migration to the GCC States: The Case of Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda" (African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-AFRICA), 2018).
[194] "Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development," accessed May 15, 2024, https://www.kuwait-fund.org/en/web/kfund/maps; Rawad Taha, "Saudi Arabia's PIF Launches an Initiative of 200 Mln Euros to Develop Africa's Sahel," Al Arabiya English, May 18, 2021, https://english.alarabiya.net/business/economy/2021/05/18/Saudi-Arabia-s-PIF-launches-an-initiative-of-200-mln-Euros-to-develop-Africa-s-Sahel-.
[195] Javad Heiran-Nia and Somayeh Khomarbaghi, "Saudi Arabia and Iran Compete in the Sahel," February 8, 2018, https://lobelog.com/saudi-arabia-and-iran-compete-in-the-sahel/.
[196] "S. Arabia Pledges $100 Million and UAE $30 Million for Sahel Anti-Terror Force," France 24, December 13, 2017, https://www.france24.com/en/20171213-africa-counter-terrorism-sahel-saudi-arabia-pledges-100-million-uae-g5-macron.
[197] David Roberts, "Behind Qatar's Intervention In Libya," *Foreign Affairs*, September 28, 2011, https://www-foreignaffairs-com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/articles/libya/2011-09-28/behind-qatars-intervention-libya?page=show.

madrassas, and charities dating back to the 1980s.[198] Doha may try to position itself as a potential mediator in the conflict moving forward.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the regional dynamics that form the backdrop for understanding Mali's security trajectory. By examining the persistent development, governance, and security challenges facing the broader Sahel, it has highlighted the structural vulnerabilities that have shaped state fragility and enabled the spread of violent extremism. These challenges are not unique to Mali but are part of a regional pattern of weak institutions, marginalization, and contested authority. The chapter also assessed the role of external actors in the Sahel, underscoring how international involvement—particularly from the United States, France, and multilateral organizations—has both shaped the regional security architecture and, at times, complicated local political dynamics. Finally, it reviewed the role of relatively new, rising international players in the Sahel (Russia, China, Turkey, and the Gulf States). The convergence of international security priorities with fragile domestic contexts has played a significant role in determining the effectiveness and consequences of external interventions. Together, these regional and global factors provide critical context for understanding the case of Mali. The following chapters will narrow the focus to examine US security cooperation with Mali in greater detail, beginning with an analysis of the strategic intent and design of US counterterrorism programs, followed by an assessment of their implementation and impact.

[198] Ségolène Allemandou, "Is Qatar Fuelling the Crisis in North Mali?," France 24, January 23, 2013, https://www.france24.com/en/20130121-qatar-mali-france-ansar-dine-mnla-al-qaeda-sunni-islam-doha.

CHAPTER FOUR

REGIONAL SECURITY THREAT ENVIRONMENT

To understand the trajectory of US counterterrorism engagement in the Sahel, it is essential to examine what was known about terrorist threats in the region before the September 11th attacks. This chapter seeks to establish that baseline by presenting a summary and analysis of open-source information available in 2000 regarding terrorist groups operating in North and West Africa. It then offers a comparative assessment using data from 2018 to trace the evolution of terrorist activity over the intervening period. By examining changes in group presence, activity, and threat perception, this chapter provides critical context for evaluating the rationale and effectiveness of U.S. counterterrorism programming in the region.

Data Constraints and Limitations

The author would like to begin by again highlighting that the academic community's collective knowledge about armed conflicts in Africa is weak. This is mainly based on challenges in defining, collecting, and validating indicators and instances of armed conflict. Conflicting opinions exist on classifying primary indicators of armed conflict, difficulty abounds in collecting data as violence often occurs in remote regions, and reporting often lacks consistency, impartiality, and verification.[1]

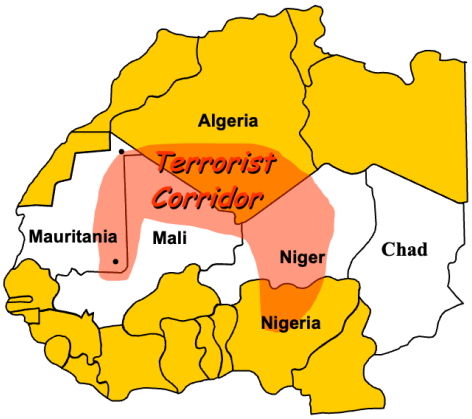
There are specific challenges researchers face in collecting data on terrorism in comparison to other types of criminal violence.[2] In criminology, "official" data on illegal violence is collected by legal agents, victim data is collected by the general population, and self-report data is collected from offenders.[3] However, no standardized mechanism exists to collect this kind of data consistently and uniformly across the international spectrum. Given the rarity of terrorist events, the collection of victimization data and self-report data faces serious limitations.[4] Data

[1] Raleigh et al., "Introducing ACLED: An Armed Conflict Location and Event Dataset - Clionadh Raleigh, Rew Linke, Håvard Hegre, Joakim Karlsen, 2010."
[2] Gary LaFree and Laura Dugan, "Introducing the Global Terrorism Database," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 2 (April 6, 2007): 182, https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550701246817.
[3] Legal agents include the police, Federal Bureau of Investigation, the International Criminal Police Organization, a global intergovernmental organization, the United Nations, or the World Health Organization, among others.
[4] While detailed official data is routinely produced by the criminal justice system on common crimes, this is not true for terrorism. Terrorism is much rarer than violent crime and few individuals have been terrorist victims, or legal

derived from public sources does not include classified government information; however, those are the limits of open-source research.

The principal way quantitative and qualitative studies of terrorism (in both academic and policy circles) track terrorism group activity is through open-source terrorism event databases.[5] Their principal metric–terrorist attacks (launched plots)–are gleaned from and verified by independent news sources. They do not include attacks prevented by authorities (foiled plots), unsuccessful attacks, or ones in regions with less media penetration. Furthermore, when the media is unable to identify a perpetrator (which is a common challenge), it is often difficult to classify incidents as terrorism because an event's terrorism classification is dependent on specific motives. A new Jihadi Plots in Europe Dataset, which captures both launched and foiled plots for the first time, demonstrates that databases limited to attack data may contain only 41.8 percent of total terrorist activity.[6] While geographically limited to Europe, these new findings prove that the scale of terrorism has been grossly underestimated and distorted, which has greatly affected causal analyses.[7]

Figure 4.1 GSPC Area of Operations (2003-2004)[8]



agents investigating terrorists. Finally, primary contact with suspected or actual terrorists is extremely rare. LaFree and Dugan, 183.

[5] LaFree and Dugan, 183.

[6] JPEDs data determines that as many as 58.2 percent of plots are foiled. Petter Nesser, "Introducing the Jihadi Plots in Europe Dataset (JPED)," *Journal of Peace Research*, February 21, 2023, 1, https://doi.org/10.1177/00223433221123360.

[7] Nesser, 1.

[8] As the GSPC was solely targeting Algeria in 2000, this is one of (if not the first) regional map documenting its territorial reach. C.D. Jr Smith, "EUCOM Pan-Sahel Initiative Brief 2003" (EUCOM Briefing, Stuttgart, Germany, 2003), https://www.almendron.com/tribuna/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Col-CD-Smith-Jr.ppt.

Source: C.D. Jr Smith, "Pan-Sahel Initiative Brief," (EUCOM, 2003)

Regional Security Threat Environment in 2000

Between 1990 and 1999, Algeria experienced the highest levels of Islamist terrorism worldwide. Dominique Reynié identified that more than a third (34.6 percent) of global attacks during this time were in Algeria (542 attacks and at least 2,390 deaths), causing it to be referred to as the 'black decade.' These figures represented more than half (51.4 percent) of the victims of Islamist terrorism in the world during this time.[9]

In North Africa, a total of 1,060 terrorist incidents occurred (7,184 deaths) in the six years before the 9/11 attacks. Ninety-nine percent of these attacks were in Algeria. Morocco and Tunisia each

Table 4.1 Terrorist Attack and Casualty Rates in North Africa (1995-2000)[10]

Country	Attacks	Group	Deaths
Algeria	1,050	126 GIA, 20 GSPC, 653 unknown, 229 Islamist extremists, and 22 other	7,160
Libya	5	4 unknown, 1 Islamist group	12
Morocco	3	1 was by an Islamist group	0
Tunisia	2	1 unknown, 1 GIA	12
NA Total	**1,060**		**7,184**

Source: Author compilation from the Global Terrorism Database, University of Maryland (2019)

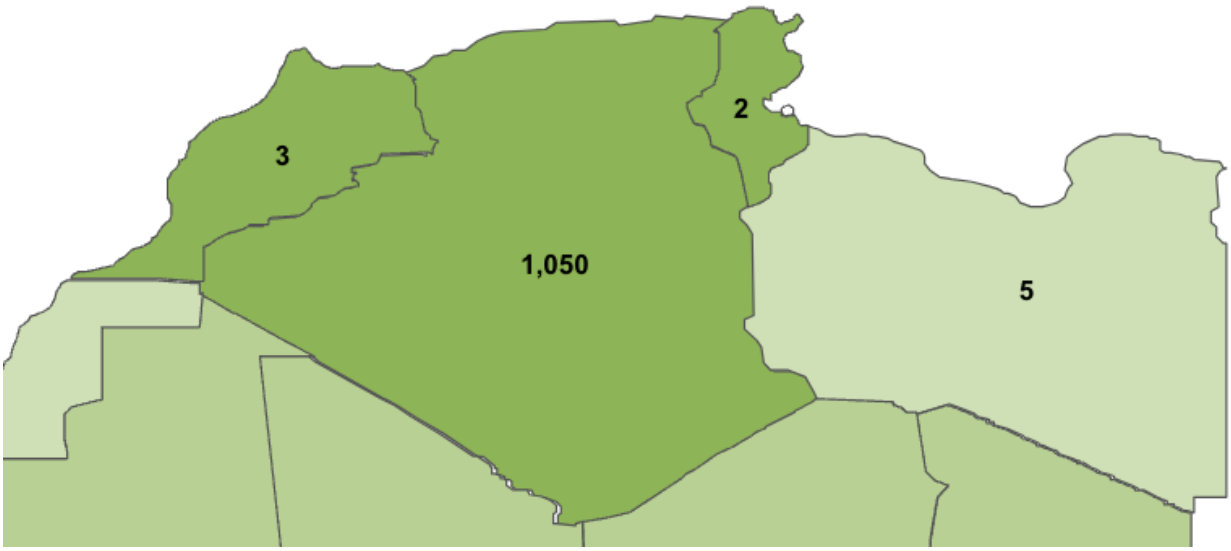
successfully contained the threat of terrorism in the 1990s via different counterterrorism strategies and did not experience terrorism on a similar scale as Algeria. From 1995 to 2000, Morocco experienced three terrorist attacks, Tunisia experienced two attacks, and Libya

[9] Dominique Reynié, "Islamist Terrorist Attacks in the World 1979-2021" (Fondation pour l'Innovation Politique, September 2021), https://www.fondapol.org/app/uploads/2021/09/fondapol-study-islamist-terrorist-attacks-in-the-world-1979-2021-11-2021.pdf.

[10] A note to point out that this table reflects total terrorist incidents and groups throughout the region and not just Islamist terrorist incidents and groups. "The Global Terrorism Database (GTD)."

experienced five attacks.[11] A mixture of rebel, separatist, and ethnic groups, as well as unknown perpetrators, utilized terrorism as a technique or mechanism to pursue their own group goals.

Figure 4.2 Terrorist Attacks in North Africa (1995-2000)[12]



Source: Author compilation from the Global Terrorism Database, University of Maryland (2019)

In West Africa, there were 120 terrorist attacks during the period from 1995 to 2000 (541 deaths). These incidents were not perpetrated by Islamist terrorist groups. Most of these attacks occurred in Nigeria (57), where a militant group attempted to affect government oil production, and in Senegal (40), where there was an ongoing active separatist movement.[13]

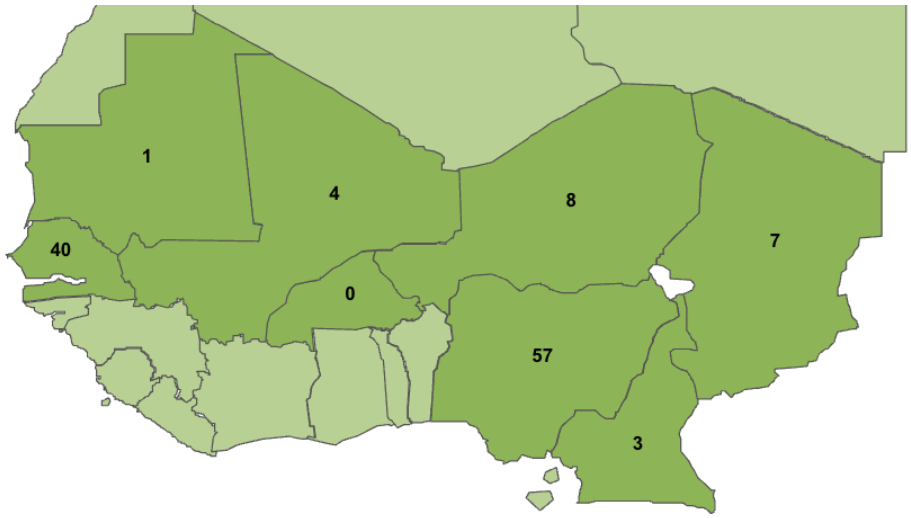
[11] Morocco: 1 Egyptians, 1 Al-Adl Wal Ihsane, 1 unknown; Libya: Islamic Movement of Martyrs. "Global Terrorism Index 2022; Measuring the Impact of Terrorism" (Institute for Economics & Peace, March 2022), https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/GTI-2022-web-04112022.pdf.
[12] "Global Terrorism Database," in *National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START)* (University of Maryland, 2019), https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd.
[13] Specific rebel groups by country included: Chad: 1 Armed Forces for a Federal Republic (FARF), 1 Union of Democratic Forces, 1 Movement for Democracy and Justice in Chad (MDJT)); Mali: 3 Saharan Revolutionary Armed Front (FARS), 2 Democratic Front for Renewal (FDR); Nigeria: 6 Modakeke Ethnics, 4 Ijaw extremists, 2 Egbese Youths of Bayelsa, 1 Association of Mobil Spill Affected Communities, and 1 Odua Peoples' Congress; Senegal 28 Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance. "Global Terrorism Index 2022; Measuring the Impact of Terrorism."

Table 4.2 Terrorist Attack and Casualty Rates in West Africa (1995-2000)[14]

Country	Attacks	Group	Deaths
Burkina Faso	0	-	0
Cameroon	3	2 unknown, 1 tribal clash	5
Chad	7	3 unknown, 4 rebel groups	80
Mali	4	1 unknown, 3 Tuareg extremists	2
Mauritania	1	1 unknown	0
Niger	8	3 unknown, 5 rebel groups	60
Nigeria	57	43 unknown, 14 ethnic/extremist/rebel groups	275
Senegal	40	12 unknown, 28 separatist group	119
WA Total	**120**		**541**

Source: Author compilation from the Global Terrorism Database, University of Maryland (2019)

Figure 4.3 Terrorist Attacks in West Africa (1995-2000)[15]



Source: Author compilation from the Global Terrorism Database, University of Maryland (2019)

In 2000, there were two principal Islamist terrorist groups operating in the North and West African subregions. Between 1996 and 1998, the GSPC splintered off from what had been the

[14] A note to point out that this table reflects total terrorist incidents and groups throughout the region and not just Islamist terrorist incidents and groups. "The Global Terrorism Database (GTD)."
[15] "The Global Terrorism Database (GTD)."

largest and most active terrorist group in Algeria and the larger Maghreb, the GIA.[16] In addition to posing a domestic threat, Algerian Islamist terrorist groups also had a presence in Europe.

The Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat (GSPC)

Group Origins

Radical Islamist violence erupted in Algeria in 1992 after the first Islamic political party, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), was allowed to participate in an election. As it became clear that a sweeping electoral victory for the FIS was likely, the military stepped in and nullified the election. The Islamists refuted the legitimacy of newly elected Algerian President Bouteflika's secular democratic government and sought to replace it with an Islamic state that adhered to a strict interpretation of Islam.[17] During Algeria's "Black Decade" from 1992 to 2002, it is estimated that between 150,000 and 200,000 Algerian lives were lost to terrorism and related violence (government and armed group-initiated losses).[18] From 1996 to 1999, the massacre of civilians soared to terrifying heights. A new leader of the GIA issued fatwas condoning attacks against any civilians who did not explicitly join or aid the GIA against the government.[19] This increasing use of civilian targets caused public support for the group and its 'distorted jihad' after a decade of carnage to plummet.[20]

Hassan Hattab, also known as Abu Hamza, a Commander of one of the GIA's subregions, led the harakat al-naqimin (movement of those who are angry) within the GIA who disagreed with the group's indiscriminate civilian killing.[21] He branched out on his own, taking with him approximately 700 guerrillas, and established the GSPC as the GIA's violence peaked.[22] Official estimates of the group's splinter date identify 1996 as the year Hattab began

[16] In Arabic, its name is al-Jamaah al-Salafiyyah li-al-Dawah wal Qital. Richard Philippe Chelin, "From the Islamic State of Algeria to the Economic Caliphate of the Sahel: The Transformation of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 32, no. 6 (2020): 1190.
[17] Hugh Roberts, *The Battlefield; Algeria 1988-2002 Studies in a Broken Polity* (London, UK: Verso, 2003).
[18] Reynié, "Islamist Terrorist Attacks in the World 1979-2021."
[19] Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Centrifugal Tendencies in the Algerian Civil War," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (Summer 2001): 69, https://go-gale-com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=mlin_m_tufts&id=GALE%7CA78804226&v=2.1&it=r&ugroup=outside.
[20] Carol Migdalovitz, "Algeria: Current Issues," *CRS Report*, April 24, 2006, 6.
[21] Wiktorowicz, "Centrifugal Tendencies in the Algerian Civil War," Summer 2001, 77.
[22] Botha, Anneli, "Terrorism in Algeria," in *Terrorism in the Maghreb The Transnationalisation of Domestic Terrorism* (Ch.2, 2008), 61, https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/MONO144CHAP2.PDF.

positioning himself as the strongest alternative to the GIA's tactics.[23] The group became official after it issued its first official Communiqué on September 14, 1998, and began operations.[24] The GSPC quickly proved itself by starkly increasing in size and co-opting the European support and logistics networks previously controlled by the GIA.[25] The GSPC eclipsed the GIA as of 1998, becoming Algeria's most effective armed group.[26]

Ideology and Political Platform

Abu Omar Abdul Birr, the GSPC's media Director, stated in March 1999: "The GSPC is a military organization, following the Salafist creed and ideology, fighting in jihad against the Algerian regime which has abandoned Islam and its masters among the Jews and Christians [in order] to restore the rightly guided Caliphate and to implement Shariah and remove the oppression and humiliation from the shoulders of our oppressed brothers."[27]

From the beginning, the GSPC publicly condemned the GIA's targeting and massacres of Muslim civilians and promised to confine the group's attacks to the Algerian government and security forces.[28] As a result, the group steadily leached members from the GIA and was one of the only groups that declined to participate in President Bouteflika's widespread amnesty program for Islamic militants.[29] At this time, the group distanced itself from global efforts to connect it to an international terrorist agenda.

---

[23] Alexander Thurston, ed., "Algeria: The GIA from Incorporation to Tyranny," in *Jihadists of North Africa and the Sahel: Local Politics and Rebel Groups* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 27–62, https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108771160.002; Wiktorowicz, "Centrifugal Tendencies in the Algerian Civil War," Summer 2001, 78; Mohammed M. Hafez, "Armed Islamist Movements and Political Violence in Algeria," *The Middle East Journal* 54, no. 4 (Autumn 2000): 589; Encyclopedia.com, "Salafist Group for Call and Combat," September 23, 2021, https://www.encyclopedia.com/politics/legal-and-political-magazines/salafist-group-call-and-combat.

[24] "Algeria: Hattab Faction Announces Split From GIA," *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, September 17, 1998, No. 9-18 edition, https://wnc-eastview-com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/wnc/article?id=37102060.

[25] Evan F Kohlmann, "Two Decades of Jihad in Algeria: The GIA, the GSPC, and Al-Qaida," May 2007, 28.

[26] Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, "Patterns of Global Terrorism 2000" (U.S. Department of State, April 30, 2001), https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2000/index.htm.

[27] Kohlmann, "Two Decades of Jihad in Algeria: The GIA, the GSPC, and Al-Qaida.", p.28.

[28] International Crisis Group, "Islamism, Violence and Reform in Algeria: Turning the Page," Middle East Report (International Crisis Group, July 30, 2004), https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/29-islamism-violence-and-reform-in-algeria-turning-the-page.pdf.

[29] The GSPC gained membership from members who did not want to take part in the amnesty and did want to keep fighting.

It should be noted that the GSPC was not one of the signatories to AQ's fatwa issued on February 23, 1998. This could have been likely since the group didn't officially launch until September 1998. Given the GSPC's presence and networks in Europe, an open alignment with AQ might have also attracted the unwanted attention of domestic and foreign security services at this early time.[30]

Leadership, Organizational Structure, and Size

Hassan Hattab, who had been the emir of the GIA's second Zone in the Kabylia region, was one of the founding members and the first real leader of the GSPC from 1998 until 2003.[31] He pledged to refocus the Algerian jihad on the Algerian state and away from the Algerian people.

The GSPC was organized as a decentralized, loose confederation of independent cells under a national commander, or emir, and supported by a shura (consultative religious council) of senior members of the group. The group was divided into nine regional zones, roughly aligning with Algeria's nine military districts. The zones were largely compartmentalized, each led by a local emir who operated autonomously and supported the objectives and ideology of the group.[32] The central leadership was based in northern Algeria and left implementation and approach to the field commanders. This allowed field commanders to generate great authority and become leaders within local political and economic networks.

Regarding organizational strength, the GSPC was initially comprised of 700 fighters at the time of the group's founding in 1998.[33] It amassed hundreds of ISF and GIA defectors under what Evan Kohlmann referred to as a "*restored and purified banner of jihad*,[34] rapidly expanding within two years to approximately 3,000 fighters.[35]

---

[30] Boutha, Anneli. "Terrorism in Algeria," 61. Ch.2, 2008; https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/MONO144CHAP2.PDF.
[31] The first official commander was Abdelimajid Dishu (Abu Musab), who was killed in a fratricidal ambush by dissident mujahideen. Kohlmann, "Two Decades of Jihad in Algeria: The GIA, the GSPC, and Al-Qaida," 13.
[32] Boutha, Anneli, "Terrorism in Algeria."
[33] Boutha, Anneli. "Terrorism in Algeria," 61. Ch.2, 2008.
[34] Kohlmann, "Two Decades of Jihad in Algeria: The GIA, the GSPC, and Al-Qaida," 28.
[35] It should be noted that this growth occurred due to two main reasons in the 1997 to 1998 time frame: 1) fighters left the GIA due to its radicalism and indiscriminate tactics yet still wanted to wage jihad, and 2) the AIS and many smaller groups accepted the government's amnesty program and voluntarily surrendered, the GSPC offered fighters who did not want to surrender an opportunity to continue fighting. While thousands of former fighters were

Tactics, Operational Capacity, and Communications

The GSPC advocated for conducting attacks and killing Algerian government officials while condemning the targeting of civilians for death or injury. The data generally reflects that the government (military, police, and government convoys) comprised the bulk of casualties from "attack" operations rather than civilians.[36] These rural, guerrilla-style operations included ambushes, clashes, raids, and assassinations. The group typically utilized bombs, small arms, and false roadblocks for these attacks.[37]

Incidents involving the GSPC, as captured in an operational analysis study conducted from 1996 through 2000, reveal that the group conducted local, regional, and international operations.[38] Within Algeria, the group approached each region differently, allowing the Emirs to set up their own criminal networks or enter into alliances (where possible) with local, established smuggling networks.[39] Operational responsibilities were handed over to brigade (katiba) commanders, who operated with considerable autonomy. The group shifted its focus southward into the Sahara, engaging in commercial, tribal/ethnic, and political activities across the Sahel, particularly in northern Mali.[40] Belmokhtar, who oversaw the southern zone, effectively established a stronghold in northern Mali by forging alliances and marital ties with influential Tuareg tribes such as the Ifoghas.[41] These political arrangements

demobilized, the GSPC was one of the only groups that aggressively rejected the government's program and targeted any GSPC fighters published on subsequent amnesty lists. Kohlmann, 77; Cliff Gyves and Chris Wyckoff, "Algerian Groupe Salafiste de La Predication et Le Combat (Salafi Group for Call and Combat, GSPC): An Operational Analysis," *Strategic Insights* 5, no. 8 (November 2006): 55; Lianne K. Boudali, "The GSPC: Newest Franchise in al-Qa'ida's Global Jihad" (Fort Belvoir, VA: Defense Technical Information Center, April 2007), https://doi.org/10.21236/ADA466539.

[36] Gyves and Wyckoff, "Algerian Groupe Salafiste de La Predication et Le Combat (Salafi Group for Call and Combat, GSPC): An Operational Analysis," 50.

[37] Roga, Hanna. "Violent Trends in Algeria Since 9/11." *CTC Sentinel* 1, no. 12 (November 2008): 3. https://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Vol1Iss12-Art6.pdf.

[38] Unclassified sources were utilized to analyze the GSPC's operations descriptively. The Oklahoma City National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT) database and the Open Source Center (OSC, formerly the Foreign Broadcast Information Service) were used to gather the initial data about GSPC operations from 1996-2006.

[39] "GSPC (Group Salafite Pour La Predication et Le Combat (Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat)," in *The Columbia World Dictionary of Islamism*, 2007, 49.

[40] Alexander Thurston, ed., "The GSPC/AQIM: Schism, Coup, and a Broken Triangle in the Sahara," in *Jihadists of North Africa and the Sahel: Local Politics and Rebel Groups* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 66, https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108771160.003.

[41] Matthew Rose and Yssouf Traoré, "Game of Tribes: Getting Counterterrorism Right," U.S. Army War College, *War Room* (blog), December 13, 2017, https://warroom.armywarcollege.edu/articles/game-tribes-counterterrorism-policy-development-tribal-analysis/.

evolved gradually and were far more intricate than the simplistic 'crime-terror nexus' often cited in superficial analyses of AQIM.[42]

The GSPC was also involved in resource-generating and support operations outside of Algeria. The GSPC did not identify international targets in Algeria, but they did have a base of operations in Europe. In 1998, the GSPC took over the GIA's European financial and logistical networks in France, Belgium, Spain, Italy, the United Kingdom (UK), the Netherlands, Germany, and Luxembourg, which supported their Algerian operations.[43] These networks carried out "insurgency-support activities" such as fundraising, recruitment, arms smuggling, propaganda, and moving and sheltering recruits.[44] They also took part in operations against Western interests, providing ancillary support to other Islamist militants engaged in other theaters of conflict (Chechnya, etc.). These European cells worked to procure weapons and explosives, falsify or sell identification documents, facilitate clandestine immigration, recruit sympathizers, and dispatch fighters to other conflict areas.[45] While no successful attacks occurred, they demonstrated "the capability to organize effectively."[46]

The GSPC did not explicitly threaten to attack Europe or the US before 2000.[47] A multi-national European police raid on May 26, 1998, however, arrested multiple Algerian

[42] Chelin, "From the Islamic State of Algeria to the Economic Caliphate of the Sahel"; Peng Wang, "The Crime-Terror Nexus: Transformation, Alliance, Convergence," *Asian Social Science* 6, no. 6 (May 18, 2010): p11, https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v6n6p11.
[43] Wiktorowicz, "Centrifugal Tendencies in the Algerian Civil War," Summer 2001, 77; Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, "Patterns of Global Terrorism 2000"; "GSPC (Group Salafite Pour La Predication et Le Combat (Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat)," 49.
[44] Rohan Gunaratna, "The Post-Madrid Face of Al Qaeda," *The Washington Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (Summer 2004): 91–100, https://doi.org/10.1162/016366004323090278; Christian Nellemann et al., eds., *World Atlas of Illicit Flows* (Oslo: RHIPTO Norwegian Center for Global Analyses, 2018), https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Atlas-Illicit-Flows-FINAL-WEB-VERSION-copia-compressed.pdf.
[45] Public Prosecutor's Office; Dr. Stefano Dambruoso. Apprehension of a Suspect of a Crime; Indictment of Tarek Maaroufi, Essid Sami Ben Khemais, et al. (April 2, 2001). https://tunisianjihadism.files.wordpress.com/2020/07/ita-al-mohajiroun-1.pdf.
[46] Rollie Lal, ed., "The Maghreb," in *The Muslim World after 9/11*, Rand Corporation Monograph Series (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2004), 172, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2004/RAND_MG246.pdf.
[47] According to one account, Hassan Hattab in charge of the GIA groups in Boumerdes and Dellys broke away from Zouabri's GIA in September 1996. See B Izel, J. S. Wafa & W Issac, "What is the GIA?" in Youcef Bedjaoui, Abbas Aroua & Méziane Aït-Larbi (eds.) An Inquiry into the Algerian Massacres (Geneve: Hoggar, 1999), pp.382.

individuals with confirmed links to Hattab.[48] In 2000 the GSPC began releasing a newsletter called Sada al-Qital (The Echo of Combat).[49]

Major Incidents

The GSPC began perpetrating local attacks after the group's official launch in September 1998. They launched one attack in December 1998 in Tizi Ouzou, east of Algiers. In 1999, during its first full year of official operations, the GSPC completed 23 attacks: 16 against government targets and seven against civilians.[50] Fifty-seven percent of attacks took place in Tizi Ouzou and 30 percent in Boumerdes (both east of Algiers). In 2000, the GSPC conducted 23 attacks within Algeria. Twenty-six attacks were against government targets and nine against civilians, killing 15 and injuring one.[51] No foreign nationals were killed in Algeria during 2000. In March, the GSPC bombed an oil pipeline in Der Chouyoukh, Algeria, damaging the oil pipeline and many trucks.[52]

The GSPC also launched multiple operations throughout the region. In January 2000, the group planned an attack against the Paris-Dakar Road Rally, a road race from Dakar, Senegal, to Cairo, Egypt, over 7,863 kilometers of desert.[53] When the French government alerted organizers that the five-day Niger component was at "serious risk of an external terrorist attack," the organizers airlifted 2,000 participants and over 500 vehicles over 1,500

[48] The raid was carried out in France, Italy, Belgium, Germany, and the UK.p.42. "Hattab Faction Officially Announces Its Split from Armed Islamic Group, Chooses New Name," Al-Sharq al-Awsat 17 September 1998, via FBIS (FBIS-TOT-98-260); Editor, "GSPC," in *Dictionnaire Mondial de L'Islamisme* (France: Plon, 2002).
[49] Alexander Thurston, "Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM): An Al-Qaeda Affiliate Case Study" (Center for Naval Analysis, October 27, 2017), 10, https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/DIM-2017-U-016119-2Rev.pdf.
[50] Gyves, Cliff, and Chris Wyckoff. "Algerian Groupe Salafiste de La Predication et Le Combat (Salafi Group for Call and Combat, GSPC): An Operational Analysis." *Strategic Insights* 5, no. 8 (November 2006): 55. Alexander Thurston, "Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM): An Al-Qaeda Affiliate Case Study" (Center for Naval Analysis, October 27, 2017), 10, https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/DIM-2017-U-016119-2Rev.pdf.https://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/11195/Algerian%20Groupe%20Salafiste%20de%20la%20Predication%20et%20le%20Combat.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.
[51] *National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START)*. University of Maryland, 2019. The Global Terrorism Database (GTD)
[52] Encyclopedia.com. "Salafist Group for Call and Combat," September 23, 2021. https://www.encyclopedia.com/politics/legal-and-political-magazines/salafist-group-call-and-combat.
[53] U.S. Department of State. "Patterns of Global Terrorism 2000." U.S. Department of State, April 30, 2001. https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2000/index.htm.

km from Niamey, Niger to Sabha, southern Libya.[54] In May 2000, GSPC fighters transited the border with Tunisia, attacking an outpost and killing three border guards.[55]

Internationally, the GSPC was very active in Europe. Italian police arrested several suspects linked to a GSPC cell in Milan on April 4, 2000.[56] In December 2000, four members of a GSPC cell were arrested by police in France and Germany when their plans to bomb a Christmas market in Strasbourg were uncovered.[57] Two months later, in February 2001, in London, more GSPC agents were arrested[58] and the UK drafted its Terrorism Act of 2000, which designated the GSPC as one of 21 'proscribed organizations.'[59]

Although this research specifically examines the year 2000,[60] many terrorism-related incidents and events happened in the first eight months of 2001 that the author feels should be noted. In 2001, the GSPC launched 61 attacks on Algerian soil, 22 of which occurred before the September 11th attacks in the US.[61] Violent operations were reported during 2001 in 36 out of 48 provinces.[62] France and Algeria signed an accord on February 5, 2001, to enhance cooperation in fighting terrorism. Finally, in June 2001, Mohammad Bensakhria, who was believed to be a GSPC leader and AQ's most senior representative in Europe, was arrested in Spain.

Economic Motivation

Domestically, the GSPC was known to have generated funds through a mixture of voluntary contributions and extortion. The group earned income from the Kabylia region, the epicenter

[54] BBC World Service, "Terrorist Threat on Paris-Dakar Rally," January 11, 2000, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/598917.stm; "Terror Threat Forces Dakar Airlift," *BBC News Africa*, accessed October 25, 2023, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/598753.stm.
[55] Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, "Patterns of Global Terrorism 2000."
[56] Jonathan Schanzer. "Algeria's GSPC and America's 'War on Terror.'" *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy* 666 (October 2, 2002). https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/pdf/view/9160/en.
[57] Jonathan Schanzer. "Algeria's GSPC and America's 'War on Terror.'" *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy* 666 (October 2, 2002). https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/pdf/view/9160/en.
[58] "GSPC (Group Salafite Pour La Predication et Le Combat (Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat)," 49.
[59] The act didn't come into effect until February 19th, 2001. United Kingdom. "Terrorism Act 2000." Text. Statute Law Database, July 20, 2000. https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/11/contents.
[60] The year 2000 was designated the base year rather than 2001, so that the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, do not skew the 2001 data in terms of increased follow-on attacks
[61] Gyves and Wyckoff, "Algerian Groupe Salafiste de La Predication et Le Combat (Salafi Group for Call and Combat, GSPC): An Operational Analysis."
[62] Rogan, Hanna. "Violent Trends in Algeria Since 9/11." *CTC Sentinel* 1, no. 12 (November 2008): 3. https://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Vol1Iss12-Art6.pdf.

of its operations, where the GSPC demanded 'zakat,' or mandatory religious charitable donation,[63] under the retaliatory threat of ruining crops or kidnapping wealthy individuals.[64]

Civilians, tourists, and imams were targeted for missions aimed at acquiring specific resources, such as cash, weapons, food, and supplies. Activities like setting up roadblocks, conducting raids, extortion, and kidnappings primarily served as means of generating funds and securing logistical support. Roadblocks were extensively used with the dual purpose of shaking down private citizens for money and equipment or executing police, militia, and soldier,s and confiscating their weapons and equipment.[65]

The GSPC also set up smuggling operations between Algeria and Tunisia and through Algeria's Southern regions, where the GSPC partnered with local smugglers trafficking in cigarettes, drugs, vehicles, and arms.[66] It remains uncertain at what levels the group was funded by Algerians living abroad and other nations such as Iran and Sudan.[67]

The GSPC's European support networks generated "a significant source of income," enabling the group to remain largely financially self-sufficient.[68] The cells raised funds through "triangular trade" activities trafficked between Europe, Africa, and the Americas, such as drugs, weapons, and people (narcotics, contraband goods, arms), criminal activities (identity theft and credit card fraud), and collecting charity money or zakat from the larger community in Europe.[69]

[63] "Zakat Facts – Who Is Eligible And When Is Payment Due?," Muslim Aid, accessed December 20, 2023, https://www.muslimaid.org/what-we-do/religious-dues/ramadan/zakat-facts/.
[64] Michael Jonsson, and Christian Nils Larson. "Illegal Tender - Funding Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb." Jane's Intelligence Review, September 16, 2008. https://customer-janes-com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/Janes/Display/jir10478-jir-2008.
[65] Jonathan Schanzer, *Al-Qaeda's Armies* (The Washington Institute for Near East Policy: Specialist Press International, 2004), 105, https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/media/3537.
[66] "GSPC (Group Salafite Pour La Predication et Le Combat (Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat)," 49.
[67] U.S. Department of State. "Patterns of Global Terrorism 2000." U.S. Department of State, April 30, 2001. https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2000/index.htm.
[68] Courtney C Walsh, "Italian Police Explore Al Qaeda Links in Cyanide Plot," *Christian Science Monitor*, March 7, 2002.
[69] Mili, Hayder. "Tangled Webs: Terrorist and Organized Crime Groups." Jamestown, January 12, 2006. https://jamestown.org/program/tangled-webs-terrorist-and-organized-crime-groups/.

Geographic Territory

In Algeria, GSPC operations leading up to 2000 were concentrated in northeast Algeria between the capital of Algiers and the border with Tunisia and the southern deserts.[70] These were the weakest areas of government control, underdeveloped, and militants could operate freely.[71] Regionally, while the group may have engaged in smuggling operations in southern Algeria, even at times transiting into other countries, they did not hold external territory or maintain bases of operations.

While France was the first choice for Algerian immigrants and Islamists fleeing prosecution in their countries of origin in 1998, cells were operational in France, Belgium, Spain, Italy, the UK, the Netherlands, Germany, and Luxembourg. While the insurgency benefited from maintaining financial and logistical networks in Europe, early GSPC leaders Hattab and Sahraoui believed that focusing attacks on Europe would have been counterproductive to the struggle in Algeria.[72]

Foreign Sponsorship and Partners

Conflicting perspectives exist concerning the potential connection, communication, and support that existed between Osama bin Laden, AQ, and the GSPC before 9/11. The first perspective believes there was a long-standing, consistent connection and shared vision. The second believes that the GSPC operated independently of AQ and had different goals.[73]

The first viewpoint posits that AQ was instrumental in the creation of Islamist groups in Algeria in the 1990s and remained so up until 9/11. Excluded from meaningful representation in Algeria's political landscape, the GSPC turned to external jihadi networks for support for legitimation (training, ideological influence, combat experience, and financing). In 1980, an

[70] Boudali, Lianne K. "The GSPC: Newest Franchise in al-Qa'ida's Global Jihad." Fort Belvoir, VA: Defense Technical Information Center, April 2007. https://ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Kennedy_GSPC_041207_update.pdf.
[71] Schanzer, Jonathan. *Al-Qaeda's Armies*. The Washington Institute for Near East Policy: Specialist Press International, 2004. https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/media/3537.
[72] Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Centrifugal Tendencies in the Algerian Civil War," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (2001): 77; Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, "Patterns of Global Terrorism 2000"; "GSPC (Group Salafiste Pour La Predication et Le Combat (Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat)," 49; Petter Nesser, "The Algeria Factor (1994-2000)," in *Islamist Terrorism in Europe: A History* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2015), 86.
[73] "Algeria and Terrorism; A Complex Web," *Strategic Comments* 9, no. 3 (May 2003): 2, https://doi.org/1356-7888.

estimated 3,000 to 4,000 Algerians were sent to Afghanistan and Pakistan to train and fight against the Soviet Union.[74] After the Soviets pulled out in 1989, 1,000 to 1,500 'Algerian Afghans,' hardcore foreign mujahideen veterans, returned and settled in Algeria, and an estimated 1,000 continued to wage jihad in Chechnya.[75] While those who returned to Algeria had little actual combat experience, they did have ties to bin Laden's group and brought home hardline fundamentalist ideologies, which nurtured the GIA (and later the GSPC).[76] Despite a lack of understanding of exactly how many GIA fighters trained in AQ camps (and then joined the ranks of the GSPC), it is known that approximately 2,800 Algerians used Afghan training camps until 2001, and many personal connections were established.[77] Many of those who defected from the GIA to join the GSPC were veterans of the Afghan war, with established connections to bin Laden forged during their fight against the Soviet Union.[78] Evan Kohlmann points out that while "significant numbers of commanders, operatives, and supporters from both the GSPC and AQ" have shared frontline combat experiences in zones such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Caucuses, and Iraq,[79] the degree of command and control that AQ held over GSPC networks remains unclear.[80]

AQ kept its main training camps regionally focused to encourage the intermingling of its fighters. Algerians training at the Al-Sadda camp, along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, which was "activated and funded by Usama bin Laden" until 2001.[81] There is speculation

[74] Malek, Redha. "Islamist Terrorism in Algeria: An Experience to Ponder." In *Voices of Terror: Manifestos, Writings, and Manuals of al Qaeda, Hamas, and Other Terrorists from around the World and Throughout the Ages*, 439–46. Reed Press, 2004.
[75] Kohlmann, Evan F. "Two Decades of Jihad in Algeria: The GIA, the GSPC, and Al-Qaida," May 2007, 28. http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/world/moss_algeria_kohlman.pdf. Boutha, Anneli, "Terrorism in Algeria," p.32
[76] Compass Media. "Arab Veterans of Afghanistan War Lead New Islamic Holy War," October 28, 1994. https://irp.fas.org/news/1994/afghan_war_vetrans.html.
[77] Boutha, Anneli. "Terrorism in Algeria," 61. Ch.2, 2008; p.43. https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/MONO144CHAP2.PDF.
[78] Sara Daly. "The Algerian Salafist Group for Call and Combat: A Dossier." *Terrorism Monitor* 3, no. 5 (May 5, 2005). https://jamestown.org/program/the-algerian-salafist-group-for-call-and-combat-a-dossier/.
[79] Kohlmann, Evan F. "Two Decades of Jihad in Algeria: The GIA, the GSPC, and Al-Qaida," May 2007, 28. http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/world/moss_algeria_kohlman.pdf.
[80] Sara Daly. "The Algerian Salafist Group for Call and Combat: A Dossier." *Terrorism Monitor* 3, no. 5 (May 5, 2005). https://jamestown.org/program/the-algerian-salafist-group-for-call-and-combat-a-dossier/.
[81] Kohlmann, "Two Decades of Jihad in Algeria: The GIA, the GSPC, and Al-Qaida"; Boutha, Anneli, "Terrorism in Algeria," 63.

that Algerian terrorists used AQ camps in Sudan as well during the 1990s, which were for those willing to participate in the conflict in Algeria.[82]

It is believed that bin Laden established initial contact with Algerian jihadists following the outbreak of the insurgency in 1992, sending envoys to meet with GIA leadership in Algeria around 1995.[83] He was in contact with GIA commanders during these years until he withdrew his support for the GIA. In 1996, he encouraged Hattab to break away from the GIA in an attempt to portray a "better image of the Jihad" against the secular government.[84] In May 1998, it is believed that Qamar al-Din Kharban, leader of the Algerian Afghans, received logistical and financial support from bin Laden to help consolidate Hattab's faction.[85] Bin Laden may have even suggested the group's name.[86] A Western intelligence agency reported that Abdelmajid Dichou, a central GSPC emir, traveled to Afghanistan to meet with Osama bin Laden in either 1999 or 2000.[87] Finally, Belmokhtar, emir of the 9th zone, which is the southernmost region of Algeria bordering Mali, hosted the extended visit of an AQ envoy through multiple Sahelian countries (Niger, Mali, and Algeria) in the 2000 to 2001 time frame.[88]

From 1996 to 2000, Hattab remained ambivalent towards global jihad, preferring to prioritize the group's national goals. As a result, the GSPC's operations in Europe were limited to support roles and activism, without involvement in planning or carrying out terrorist attacks.[89] It's extensive support cells in Europe, however, forged documents and expedited the passage of both GSPC fighters and fighters of other groups, such as AQ, to conflict zones.[90] It is said that AQ benefited from its relationship with the GSPC by extending the

[82] Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror* (Columbia University Press, 2002), https://doi.org/10.7312/guna12692; Boutha, Anneli, "Terrorism in Algeria," 63.
[83] Osman Tasgart, "Report on Bin Laden's Sleeper Networks in Europe," Al-Majallah, November 4, 2001 (FBIS). Also see: Jason Burke, Al-Qaeda: Casting a Shadow of Terror, (NY: I.B. Taurus, 2003), p.196. (cited in Schanzer, Al-Qaeda's Armies, p.103)
[84] Kohlmann, "Two Decades of Jihad in Algeria: The GIA, the GSPC, and Al-Qaida," 12; Boudali, "The GSPC," 2.
[85] Wiktorowicz, "Centrifugal Tendencies in the Algerian Civil War," 2001, 77.
[86] Wiktorowicz, 78.
[87] Gunaratna, Rohan. *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*. Columbia University Press, 2002. https://doi.org/10.7312/guna12692.
[88] Thurston, "The GSPC/AQIM," 70; Boudali, "The GSPC," 5.
[89] Maria Ressa, *Seeds of Terror: An Eyewitness Account of al-Qaeda's Newest Center of Operations in Southeast Asia* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2003); Nesser, "The Algeria Factor (1994-2000)," 86.
[90] Boutha, Anneli. "Terrorism in Algeria," 61. Ch.2, 2008; p.43. https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/MONO144CHAP2.PDF.

group's reach into European francophone countries. The connection between al-Qaeda and the GSPC became more evident following the arrest of several prominent figures who held roles in both organizations. For instance, Mohammad Bensakhria—thought to be a leading figure in the GSPC and al-Qaeda's top representative in Europe—was apprehended in Spain in June 2001.[91]

The GSPC's reach and influence also extended beyond North Africa and Europe. The group maintained links with other Islamists, such as Egyptian, Libyan, Lebanese, and other groups in the Middle East and Central and South Asia. After the US Embassy bombings in Kampala and Nairobi in August 1998, bin Laden contacted Hattab, tasking him to create Algerian training camps for Southeast Asian fighters.[92] In 1999, two Algerian GSPC members were arrested in the Philippines after visiting the Moro Islamic Liberation Front's (MILF) training camps. One of the men surrendered training materials that he provided to the MILF (supposedly at AQ's request), which contained "course outlines for combat, explosives, weapons, jungle survival techniques, communication, military tactics, security, and how to deal with civilians."[93]

Logistical and financial support was provided, and GSPC networks in Europe expanded AQ's reach into the heart of Europe. French and US intelligence agencies publicly reported monitoring phone calls between the two discussing operations.[94] The Algerian government claimed that "the international dimensions of the Algerian terrorist groups became proven facts, as cells with links to Iran, Afghanistan or Bosnia were identified or dismantled in France, Italy, Belgium, Spain, Germany, and the United Kingdom."[95] Hattab himself denied

[91] "Bin Laden Associate Arrested in Spain," June 22, 2001. http://www.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/europe/06/22/spain.arrest/.
[92] Ressa, *Seeds of Terror: An Eyewitness Account of al-Qaeda's Newest Center of Operations in Southeast Asia*, 133.
[93] Ressa, Maria. *Seeds of Terror: An Eyewitness Account of Al-Qaeda's Newest Center of Operations in Southeast Asia*. Free press, 2011. https://go-gale-com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=mlin_m_tufts&id=GALE|A111465473&v=2.1&it=r&password=NostimonHmar&ugroup=outside.
[94] Gunaratna, Rohan. *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*. Columbia University Press, n.d. https://doi.org/10.7312/guna12692 stated that the intelligence community monitored phone calls between bin Laden and Hattab in 1999. Also, Jonathan Schanzer stated that "French intelligence recently confirmed just how tightly the two groups have worked together" in "Algeria's GSPC and America's 'War on Terror,'" Policy Analysis, Policy Watch (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, October 2, 2002), https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/algerias-gspc-and-americas-war-terror.
[95] "The Situation in Algeria" (Subcommittee on Africa: 105th Congress, February 5, 1998), 45.

this; however, it is believed that his public denial was made when he hoped to ensure reconciliation talks between the GSPC and the Algerian government were not affected.

There is also strong evidence to support a second viewpoint, which believes that the GSPC remained purposefully independent of AQ, having a more substantial and long-established connection with the black economy. Most importantly, the GSPC did not adopt AQ's agenda and did not engage in any terrorist activity against US, Israeli, or European targets.[96] Hattab did not want to weaken the focus of the GSPC's local jihad, which he believed would invariably occur if the group aligned itself with AQ's global network against the West. Despite the possibility of an alliance with AQ, the struggle in Algeria took precedence for the GSPC.[97]

The text announcing the GSPC's creation and goals did not mention any organizational link with AQ or its mission.[98] The GSPC was not one of the signatories to bin Laden's fatwa issued on 23 February 1998, which urged jihad against Americans globally and announced a united front between AQ and several regional Islamic militant groups.[99] It is assumed this was because the GSPC was not yet officially established until September 14, 1998,[100] and because, given its reach into Europe, an open association with AQ might have attracted the unwanted attention of both domestic and foreign security services.[101]

A significant trait of the GSPC was its symbiotic relationship with 'la mafia du sable' (local desert mafia groups), which exploited the absence of the state's reach to engage in illicit smuggling and contraband activities. Livestock and containers were controlled on the border with Tunisia, and cigarettes, arms, and drugs were smuggled across the Tigharghar Mountains on the southern border between Algeria and Mali. Within academic and diplomatic communities, it was widely believed that before 9/11, the groups in the Sahara

[96] Until the 2003 tourist kidnapping. Ressa, *Seeds of Terror: An Eyewitness Account of al-Qaeda's Newest Center of Operations in Southeast Asia*; Nesser, "The Algeria Factor (1994-2000)," 86.
[97] Nesser, "The Algeria Factor (1994-2000)," 86.
[98] This site initially was www.jihad-algeria.com, which existed intermittently. In September 2007 it changed to www.qmagreb.org. GSPC communiques were more often circulated via jihadi forums or in local newspapers.
[99] "Text of Fatwa Urging Jihad Against Americans," Al Quds Al Arabi (London), Feb. 23, 1998. Signatories included Egypt's Islamic Jihad, Pakistan's Jamiat-ul-Ulema, and the Jihad Movement in Bangladesh.
[100] "Algeria: Hattab Faction Announces Split from GIA," *Ash-Sharq al-Awsat,* September 17, 1998 (FBIS).
[101] Gunaratna, Rohan. *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*. Columbia University Press, n.d. https://doi.org/10.7312/guna12692.

were better described as what Stephen Ellis called "bandit groups, seeking refuge in the Sahara, rather than the tentacles of a centralized organ of AQ."[102] Leading French analysts regarded the links between the domestic Algerian struggle and Algerian terrorism in Europe as "rather loose."[103] They identified the terrorism-related activities of Algerians in Europe as stemming from the complicated and fraught way Algerian immigrants existed in European societies (including a high probability of radicalization) rather than deriving from the more traditional diaspora concerns that would have concentrated on conditions in Algeria proper. Countless Algerian migrants in Europe during these years were denied official work status as they awaited protracted asylum proceedings or avoided detection by the authorities. As a result, petty crime was their only option for survival. Algerians arrested in Europe in the lead-up to 9/11 or shortly thereafter followed this profile, and few were directly linked to the armed Islamist struggle in Algeria.[104]

Financially, the GSPC was initially largely self-sufficient, obtaining most of its funds from credit cards, passport fraud, and diaspora contributions in Europe and its smuggling networks in southern Algeria.[105] Before the merger in 2007, there was a lack of reporting on financial flows from AQ to the GSPC.

It should be noted that a third viewpoint (speculation) existed that the Algerian security services had extensively infiltrated the GIA, given that numerous key GIA military commanders had claimed to have served in the Algerian military. Similar questions surrounded the existence of the GSPC. This perspective posited that the regime used the group's violent record as a tool to generate domestic (and international) support for necessary Algerian security countermeasures.[106] Additionally, the regime's security services were accused of complicity in multiple civilian massacres in 1997.[107] Widespread suspicion existed across the FIS and other opposition groups, former military and intelligence secret

[102] Ellis, Stephen. "Briefing: The Pan-Sahel Initiative." *African Affairs* 103, no. 412 (July 1, 2004): 459–64. https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adh067.
[103] "Algeria and Terrorism; A Complex Web."
[104] "Algeria and Terrorism; A Complex Web."
[105] Peter Chalk. *Encyclopedia of Terrorism [2 Volumes]*. ABC-CLIO, 2012. https://books.google.com/books?id=czK7lIU7m1oC.
[106] Boudali, "The GSPC"; Wiktorowicz, "Centrifugal Tendencies in the Algerian Civil War," 2001.
[107] "The Algerian Crisis: Not Over Yet," October 20, 2000, 2, https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/24-the-algerian-crisis-not-over-yet.pdf.

agents, foreign media, and members of the diplomatic community in Algiers.[108] A Congressional Research Service (CRS) report published in 1998 posited that some incidents the Algerian government attributed to the GIA "may have been perpetrated by marauders, vengeance seekers, those with an agenda related to land privatization, criminals, or members of the security forces or local militias."[109] US Congressional hearings also noted the "credibility [of] the argument that the more extreme elements within the government are exacerbating the violence for political purposes."[110] The security services were accused on multiple occasions of delayed response and lack of intervention despite the proximity of security forces and the extended duration of the massacres.[111]

Effects on Algerian/Regional Local Population

By the time the GSPC was founded, the Algerian population had survived more than a decade of carnal slaughter. They were more focused on rebuilding their lives and stability than supporting the group's resolve to overturn the Algerian government.[112] Unfortunately, given the country and government's closed nature, no public opinion surveys and very little data from Algeria in general were available from the 2000s time frame.[113]

Regional Security Threat Environment in 2018

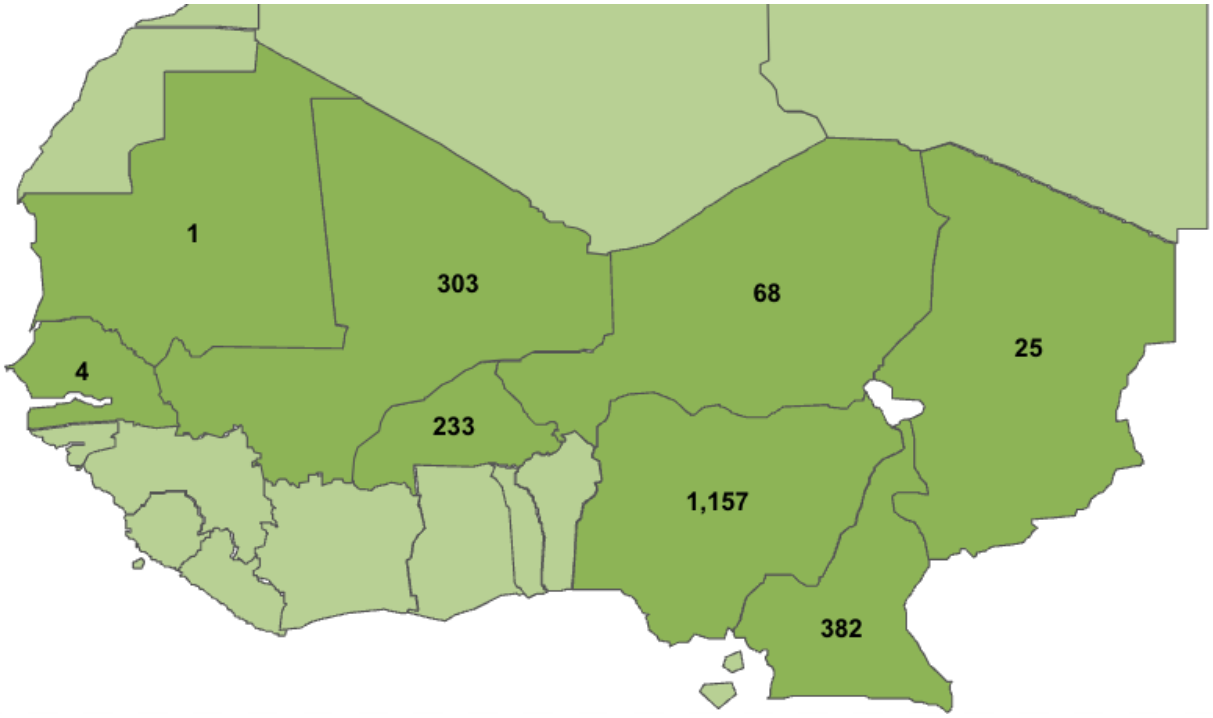
As discussed in Chapter 3, Regional Outlook, the Sahel region faced particularly severe challenges throughout 2018. Ongoing rural insurgencies expanded across large parts of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. Multiple jihadi groups were active, exploiting local conflicts and attracting new recruits. Localized ethnic militias were formed in some areas to defend their communities and in others to conduct criminal activities. Sahelian states, supported by Western

[108] "War-Torn Algeria," *Strategic Comments*, March 2000, https://doi.org/10.1080/1356788000624; "No Solution to Algeria's Endemic Violence," *Strategic Comments* 3, no. 10 (December 1997): 2, https://doi.org/10.1080/1356788973103.
[109] "Algeria: Developments and Dilemmas," n.d., 2.
[110] "The Situation in Algeria"; US House of Representatives, "House Resolution 374; The Ongoing Violence in Algeria," Pub. L. No. HR 374, H2357 (1998), https://www.congress.gov/crec/1998/04/28/CREC-1998-04-28.pdf.
[111] "No Solution to Algeria's Endemic Violence."
[112] "Algeria and Terrorism; A Complex Web."
[113] Arab Barometer is a nonpartisan research network that provides insight into the social, political, and economic attitudes and values of ordinary citizens across the Arab world. They have been conducting public opinion surveys in North Africa since 2006. The first survey conducted in Algeria was in 2006. "About Arab Barometer – Arab Barometer," Public Opinion Survey, accessed January 8, 2024, https://www.arabbarometer.org/about/.

powers, relied more than ever on the use of force as they struggled to contain the spiraling violence.

The year of 2018 was filled with soaring jihadi, inter-communal, and state-based violence across the Sahel. The global rise of the Islamic State, in effect, democratized jihad across the Sahel. A myriad of armed groups operated in both conflict centers and rural areas. They developed inter-group relationships as well as linkages with criminal groups. Some groups had common–and some different–goals and territories.[114]

Figure 4.4 Terrorist Attacks in West Africa (2018)[115]



Source: Author compilation from the Global Terrorism Database, University of Maryland (2019)

In West Africa, there were 2,173 attacks in 2018 (7,991 deaths). Eighteen percent of the attacks (383) throughout the region and 30 percent of the deaths (1,432) were perpetrated by Fulani

[114] "Ten Conflicts to Worry about in 2019" (ACLED, February 1, 2019), https://acleddata.com/acleddatanew/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/ACLED_TenConflicts2019_Final-1.pdf.
[115] "The Global Terrorism Database (GTD)."

extremists.[116] Most incidents and deaths throughout the area were located in Nigeria (53 percent of incidents and 54 percent of deaths). Cameroon shows as having the second highest number of incidents, as they were also affected by an ongoing separatist movement that accounted for 49 percent of attacks (189) and 37 percent of casualties (226).[117]

Table 4.3 Terrorist Attack and Casualty Rates in West Africa (2018)[118]

Country	Total Attacks	Total Deaths
Burkina Faso	233	920
Cameroon	382	614
Chad	25	295
Mali	294	1263
Mauritania	1	0
Niger	68	439
Nigeria	1,157	4,295
Senegal	4	18
TSCTP WA Regional Total	**2,173**	**7,991**

Source: Author compilation from the Global Terrorism Database, University of Maryland (2019)

The declaration of the Islamic State's (IS) Caliphate in 2015 prompted deep divisions between the original terrorist groups that held long-term affiliations with AQ and those who decided to

[116] Fulani extremists have been involved in herder-farmer clashes throughout the Middle Belt, Northwest, and North Central regions driven by resource competition, ethnic tensions, environmental changes, and political factors. The violence has significantly deteriorated since 2010. "Nigeria — North-Central and North-West Displacement Report 11" (Abuja, Nigeria: International Organization for Migration, March 2023), https://dtm.iom.int/reports/nigeria-north-central-and-north-west-displacement-report-11-march-2023.

[117] Cameroon's separatist movement is also known as the 'Anglophone Crisis.' Armed separatist groups seek independence for the country's minority Anglophone regions due to historic grievances. Cultural and linguistic differences, economic marginalization, and political underrepresentation dating back to the Colonial era have led to a demand for greater autonomy and independence from the central government. Human Rights Watch, "Cameroon: Events of 2022," World Report 2023, January 12, 2023, https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/cameroon.

[118] "The Global Terrorism Database (GTD)."

join IS. The formation of the new factions at this time can be traced to the quest for new allegiances and competition for leadership within AQIM.

In the Sahel, there were two developments during this time: the continuing collaboration of certain jihadist groups and their gradual descent from the Sahara to the Sahel. The central and northern regions of Mali experienced unrelenting jihadi violence, which also expanded into Burkina Faso's north and eastern regions. Lower levels of violence were reported in the Maghrebian countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia), reflecting their superior border control and ability to contain jihadi groups, versus the weaker and collapsed ones (the Sahel and Libya), which were unable to reign in the various groups operating on their territories.

Friction, infighting, and even some collaboration existed between the different groups during 2018.[119] Inter-communal violence debilitated communities, as communal militias perpetrated significant violence throughout central Mali's 'middle belt.'[120] Conflicts were often described as religious or ethnic confrontations but, in reality, they were driven by political issues such as control over access to resources.[121] Government responses and policies were often damaging, pitting agrarian communities against nomadic herder groups. Rather than disarming ethnic militias, governments sometimes patrolled with and utilized them to advance their interests.[122] Finally, government forces routinely committed retaliatory abuses with impunity.[123]

[119] Daniel Eizenga and Wendy Williams, "The Puzzle of JNIM and Militant Islamist Groups in the Sahel," Africa Security Brief (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, December 1, 2020), https://africacenter.org/publication/puzzle-jnim-militant-islamist-groups-sahel/.
[120] Katarina Hoije, "Death Toll from Mali Attacks Climbs to 160, Government Says," News, *Bloomberg.Com* (blog), March 26, 2019, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-03-26/death-toll-from-mali-attacks-climbs-to-160-government-says.
[121] International Crisis Group, "Central Mali: An Uprising in the Making?" (Brussels, Belgium: International Crisis Group, July 6, 2016), 2–3, https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/mali/central-mali-uprising-making.
[122] The Economist, "States in the Sahel Have Unleashed Ethnic Gangs with Guns," *The Economist*, May 2, 2019, https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2019/05/02/states-in-the-sahel-have-unleashed-ethnic-gangs-with-guns.
[123] Heni Nsaibia, "State Atrocities in the Sahel: The Impetus for Counterinsurgency Results Is Fueling Government Attacks on Civilians," ACLED, May 20, 2020, https://acleddata.com/2020/05/20/state-atrocities-in-the-sahel-the-impetus-for-counter-insurgency-results-is-fueling-government-attacks-on-civilians/; Rémi Carayol, "Au Sahel, les massacres s'amplifient malgré le Covid-19," Orient XXI, April 28, 2020, https://orientxxi.info/magazine/au-sahel-les-massacres-s-amplifient-malgre-le-covid-19,3830.

The IS began expanding into North Africa and the Sahel as of July 2014, soon after al-Baghdadi proclaimed himself the IS Caliphate. A small organization, Jund al-Khilafah, split from AQIM and gave its allegiance to IS. Other organizations in Tunisia, Libya, and the Sahel followed suit in May 2015.[124] As IS's strongholds collapsed in Iraq, Syria, and Libya in 2017, the Sahel's plethora of jihadi factions became an alternate destination for fighters fleeing the Middle East.[125] Al-Baghdadi publicly welcomed the pledges of allegiance of Sahel groups, the Islamic State-West Africa Province (ISWAP) in March 2015, and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) in October 2016. He praised the 10,000 people (mostly civilians) who were killed in jihadi-related violence in Africa, which in 2018, was almost as many casualties as were inflicted in Iraq and Syria combined.[126]

In 2018, violence committed by communal militias against civilians skyrocketed, increasing from 50 to 66 percent of all violence committed by these groups the year prior.[127] A final group trend in 2018 was strengthened linkages between militancy and banditry, which Barnett, Rufa'i, and Abdulaziz called the 'jihadization of banditry.'[128] Militants appropriated existing criminal networks by supplementing their weaponry and helping to expand their operational zone.[129]

Jama'at Nusrat al Islam waal Muslimeen (JNIM)

Group Origins

In a move to capitalize on their combined strength, four AQ-linked militant Islamist groups in the Sahel–Ansar al-Dine (AAD), Macina Liberation Front (FLM or Front du Libération du

[124] Djallil Lounnas, "Jihadist Groups in North Africa and the Sahel: Between Disintegration, Reconfiguration and Resilience," MENARA Working Paper (Middle East and North Africa Regional Architecture (MENARA), October 2018), https://www.academia.edu/37686285/Jihadist_Groups_in_North_Africa_and_the_Sahel_Between_Disintegration_Reconfiguration_and_Resilience.
[125] "Timeline: The Rise, Spread, and Fall of the Islamic State" (Wilson Center, October 28, 2019), https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/timeline-the-rise-spread-and-fall-the-islamic-state; Economist, "The West's New Front against Jihadism Is in the Sahel," *The Economist*, May 2, 2019, https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2019/05/02/the-wests-new-front-against-jihadism-is-in-the-sahel.
[126] "The West Is Fighting a Forgotten War against Jihadists in Africa," *The Economist*, accessed February 13, 2024, https://www.economist.com/leaders/2019/05/02/the-west-is-fighting-a-forgotten-war-against-jihadists-in-africa.
[127] "Ten Conflicts to Worry about in 2019," 2.
[128] James Barnett, Murtala Ahmed Rufa'i, and Abdulaziz Abdulaziz, "Northwestern Nigeria: A Jihadization of Banditry, or a 'Banditization' of Jihad?," *CTC Sentinel* 15, no. 1 (January 27, 2022): 46–67.
[129] Héni Nsaibia, "Insecurity in Southwestern Burkina Faso in the Context of an Expanding Insurgency," *ACLED* (blog), January 17, 2019, https://acleddata.com/2019/01/17/insecurity-in-southwestern-burkina-faso-in-the-context-of-an-expanding-insurgency/.

Macina), al Mourabitoun, and the Sahara Emirate of al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM Sahara)–merged together in March 2017 under what leader Iyad Ag Ghali entitled "one banner, one group, one emir" to form Jama'at Nusrat al Islam waal Muslimeen (JNIM or the Group for Support of Islam and Muslims). The new leaders pledged allegiance to the emirs of AQIM, AQ, and the Taliban.[130] The merger symbolized 10 years of AQ's presence in the Sahel, where it had created a deep, regional network. The merger was a calculated, operationalized move, while the Islamic State made inroads into the region. It ensured the retention of experienced jihadist fighters, key religious authorities, and representatives from other key ethnic constituencies in northern Mali as the group expanded throughout the larger region.[131] Finally, it allowed the coalition to apply the resources and strategies they had implemented in Mali throughout the larger region.

While JNIM did not have the capacity to establish a Salafi-jihadist state in 2018, it represented the most powerful, asymmetric, and hybrid threat of all the terrorist groups throughout the region. Its goal was to strike 'locally with a global impact,'[132] mixing jihadist operations with criminal activities that bolstered its finances and furthered its ultimate goals of fighting both near (regional governments) and traditional far enemies (the West). Over its first two years, local and international forces conducted numerous operations to arrest and/or target JNIM senior leadership. Despite these setbacks, the group was successful in notably increasing its geographic territory and zone of operations across the Sahel and offering a viable foe to the Islamic State.[133] The US designated the group as a foreign terrorist organization (FTO) in 2018.[134]

---

[130] Standford University, "Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam Wal Muslimeen," Mapping Militant Organizations (Stanford University: Center for Internation al Security and Cooperation (CISAC), July 2018), https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/jamaat-nusrat-al-islam-wal-muslimeen.
[131] Héni Nsaibia, Eleanor Beevor, and Flore Berger, "Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam Wal-Muslimin (JNIM)," Non-State Armed Groups and Illicit Economies in West Africa, October 2023, 12, https://acleddata.com/acleddatanew/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/JNIM-Non-state-armed-groups-and-illicit-economiesin-wWest-Africa-GI-TOC-ACLED-October-2023.pdf.
[132] Dario Cristiani, "Ten Years of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb: Evolution and Prospects," *Jamestown* 15, no. 9 (May 5, 2016): 10.
[133] Jared Thompson, "Examining Extremism: Jama'at Nasr al-Islam Wal Muslimin | Examining Extremism | CSIS," July 15, 2021, 2, https://www.csis.org/blogs/examining-extremism/examining-extremism-jamaat-nasr-al-islam-wal-muslimin.
[134] John W. Rollins, "Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO)," In Focus (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, February 8, 2024), https://sgp.fas.org/crs/terror/IF10613.pdf.

Ideology and Political Platform

JNIM's ideology was aligned with AQ. The group adhered to the Salafi-jihadi tradition and sought to unite Muslims in North and West Africa, dismantling regional governments and implementing Sharia as it restored its caliphate.[135] The coalition's formation reflects AQ's emphasis on unity, which JNIM believed would enable it to expand its geographic territory and zone of operations and train more militants against JNIM's enemies (France, the West, and the apostate governments) while preserving relations with local communities.[136] He condemned the 'Crusader campaign in the region,' the 'war against Islam,' France, their 'historic enemy' and 'agents who occupy our lands, attack our religion,' and 'the theft of the riches of Africa.'[137] Ag Ghali issued a list of 'enemy' countries, including many in the West (the US, Germany, France, Netherlands, and Sweden) and multiple local nations in and surrounding the Sahel (Chad, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Senegal, and Niger).[138]

Leadership, Organizational Structure, and Size

By 2018, JNIM had formed through the merger of several armed factions or 'cells.' It was represented by leaders of two of the original four groups—AAD's Iyad Ag Ghali and FLM's Amadou Koufa—and a less active FLM offshoot, Katiba Serma, led by Abu Jalil al Fulani. The FLM's activities and influence extended to northern Burkina Faso through connections with Ansaroul Islam, a Burkinabé militant Islamist group started by one of Koufa's protégés, Ibrahim Dicko.

---

[135]Yonas Dembele, "Africa: Mapping Islamic Militancy - Past, Present and Future" (Netherlands: Open Doors, July 2019), https://opendoorsanalytical.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Africa-Mapping-Islamic-militancy-July-2019-FINAL.pdf.

[136] Lina Raafat, "The Schism of Jihadism in the Sahel: How Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State Are Battling for Legitimacy in the Sahelian Context," Middle East Institute, accessed November 23, 2021, https://www.mei.edu/sites/default/files/2021-10/The%20Schism%20of%20Jihadism%20in%20the%20Sahel%20-%20How%20Al-Qaeda%20and%20the%20Islamic%20State%20are%20Battling%20for%20Legitimacy%20in%20the%20Sahelian%20Context.pdf.

[137] Quotes are from Iyad Ag Ghali in an interview in al-Qaeda in Yemen's weekly publication al-Massar on April 3, 2019 in Malek Bachir, "France Is Our First Enemy, Says 'Emir' of New al-Qaeda Affiliate," News, *Middle East Eye* (blog), April 7, 2017, https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/france-our-first-enemy-says-emir-new-al-qaeda-affiliate; and in the Al-Andalus Foundation for Media Production, "Statement About 'Burkina Faso Attack,' When Muslim Africa Avenges its Victims," January 17, 2016, cited in Andrew Lebovich, "The Hotel Attacks and Militant Realignment in the Sahara-Sahel Region," *CTC Sentinel* 9, no. 1 (January 2016): 23 and no longer available online.

[138] Bachir, "France Is Our First Enemy, Says 'Emir' of New al-Qaeda Affiliate."

The different leaders represent a spectrum of various ethnic and geographic populations throughout the region–Tuareg, Fulani, and Arab jihadists from the Sahel and Maghreb. The composition created a strong perception of a united group with expanding influence. While Ag Ghali and Koufa were the sole figureheads of the coalition in 2018, it was unclear how much sway either leader held over the different JNIM components dispersed across the region, as each acted relatively autonomously during this time. A structured hierarchy emerged wherein AQIM provided oversight to allied militant groups, offering strategic direction, operational commands, and financial resources.[139] However, each component group possessed its own shifting interests, territorial influence, and motivations.[140] By presenting a unified front, the JNIM coalition concealed numerous challenges faced by its constituent groups, creating the illusion of organizational cohesion, effective command and control, and resilience against coordinated attacks.[141] It was estimated that the group had approximately 3,500 to 4,500 overall fighters.[142]

Tactics, Organizational Capacity, and Communications

In 2018, JNIM existed as a hybrid organization and had gained considerable strength from its merger. Certain subsidiaries (for example, Al-Mourabitoun) were more experienced in various technical areas (explosives, manufacturing, etc.) and were able to share and spread this expertise with other younger elements like FLM.[143]

All JNIM's constituent groups conducted guerrilla warfare, utilizing typical insurgent tactics such as ambushes, hit-and-run attacks, and explosives [IEDs, vehicle born IEDs (VBIEDs),

[139] Thomas Joscelyn, "Analysis: Al Qaeda Groups Reorganize in West Africa," *FDD's Long War Journal*, March 13, 2017, https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/03/analysis-al-qaeda-groups-reorganize-in-west-africa.php; Béligh Nabli, "L'unification Du Djihadisme Sahelien," IRIS, March 6, 2017, https://www.iris-france.org/90157-lunification-du-djihadisme-sahelien/.
[140] Alexander Thurston, ed., "Northern Mali: Dialectics of Local Support," in *Jihadists of North Africa and the Sahel: Local Politics and Rebel Groups* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 102–46, https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108771160.004.
[141] Eizenga and Williams, "The Puzzle of JNIM and Militant Islamist Groups in the Sahel," 2.
[142] Christian Nellemann, Jurgen Stock, and Mark Shaw, "World Atlas of Illicit Flows: A RHIPTO-INTERPOL-GI Assessment" (RHIPTO Norwegian Center for Global Analyses, 2018), 92, http://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Atlas-Illicit-Flows-FINAL-WEB-VERSION-copia-compressed.pdf.
[143] William Assanvo and Ibrahim Maiga, "Mali's Jihadist Merger: Desperate or Dangerous?," *ISS Africa*, April 3, 2017, https://issafrica.org/iss-today/malis-jihadist-merger-desperate-or-dangerous.

and suicide-VBIEDs (SVBIEDs)]. They accrued sophisticated military equipment from raids on military posts and police stations. Al-Mourabitoun was the group that conducted the more complex attacks, assassinations, suicide bombings, and kidnapping for ransom (tourists, aid workers, and diplomats).[144] While the group did at times attack civilians in Mali, Chad, and Burkina Faso, Western private companies (mostly French), and foreign hotels, its main targets were security forces (the UN, French, and local forces).[145]

Its focus on jihad was balanced by a prioritization of income-generating illicit activities (kidnappings, smuggling, safe passage). Kidnapping was used principally for financial gain, such as the high-profile kidnapping of French humanitarian worker Sophie Petronin in 2016.[146] Lower-profile kidnappings were used to establish and retain influence over local populations as a tool for intimidation, intelligence gathering, vetting, and voluntary/forced recruitment.[147]

The group boasted a complex organizational structure. Its alliance-based nature enabled it to benefit from maintaining operational coordination amongst its affiliate groups. JNIM's governance efforts supported the group's priority of strengthening relations and influence with the local communities that it controlled. The group implemented justice initiatives (anti-banditry operations, arbitration over robberies, gang activity, and other crimes, and the return of stolen property), which gained support from local populations. JNIM used NGOs to their benefit, embodying what Nsaibia, Beevor, and Berger refer to as a mixture of "permissiveness and predation."[148] It tolerated NGOs operating and sustaining basic community needs in places where the state was absent, which also meant that it, as a group,

[144] Dembele, "Africa: Mapping Islamic Militancy - Past, Present and Future."
[145] Andrew Lebovich, "Mapping Armed Groups in Mali and the Sahel" (Brussels, Belgium: European Council on Foreign Relations, May 2019), https://ecfr.eu/special/sahel_mapping/european_union; Kairat Umarov, "Letter Dated 16 July 2018 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee Pursuant to Resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) Concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and Associated Individuals, Groups, Undertakings and Entities Addressed to the President of the Security Council" (New York, NY: United Nations Security Council, July 27, 2018), 12, https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n18/201/01/pdf/n1820101.pdf?token=FLYbB9D9d5vDkxlRt4&fe=true.
[146] "French Aid Worker Sophie Petronin Kidnapped in Mali," France 24, December 25, 2016, https://www.france24.com/en/20161225-female-french-aid-worker-kidnapped-mali-sophie-petronin.
[147] Counter Extremism Project, "Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam Wal Muslimeen (JNIM)," n.d., 17.
[148] Nsaibia, Beevor, and Berger, "Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam Wal-Muslimin (JNIM)," 33.

wasn't required to fill these functions. JNIM also opened many schools in areas under their control, seeking to "transform society in accordance with the group's teachings."[149]

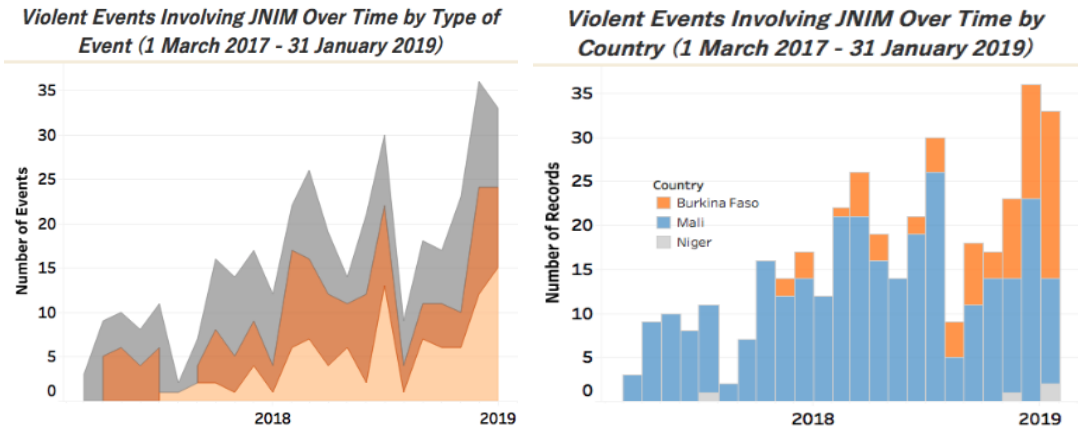
With the standing up of JNIM, the group established a formal, independent media arm, the Al-Zallaqa Media Foundation, which enabled it to regularly claim responsibility for attacks throughout the Sahel.[150] The IS' copious use of the media and its strong brand fueled intense competition and forced AQIM to adapt some of its media strategies.[151] The FLM component of JNIM recruited and constructed outreach efforts based on the discontent of local Peul populations, the lack of local justice mechanisms, and underlying social tensions with other Dogon groups and militias.[152] Through its media operations, it could appeal to multiple ethnic constituencies (Tuareg, Arab, Fulani, Songhai, and Bambara) and other ethnic groups such as the Dogon and Minyanka. Prioritizing the use of different languages in JNIM media products reinforced the group's perception of inclusivity and seeking out widespread communal support.[153]

Major Incidents

Between 2018 and 2019, JNIM progressively intensified its operational activities and enhanced the complexity of its attacks. More attacks and more complex strikes yielded higher casualty results, making it the most active terrorist group in the region.

[149] Dian Triansyah Djani, "Letter Dated 15 July 2019 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee Pursuant to Resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) Concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and Associated Individuals, Groups, Undertakings and Entities Addressed to the President of the Security Council," S/2019/570, July 15, 2019, 10, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2019_570.pdf.
[150] Joscelyn, "Analysis."
[151] Cristiani, "Ten Years of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb," 11.
[152] Lebovich, "Mapping Armed Groups in Mali and the Sahel."
[153] Nsaibia, Beevor, and Berger, "Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam Wal-Muslimin (JNIM)," 12.

Figure 4.5 JNIM Violent Events (2017-2019)[154]



Source: JNIM: A Rising Threat to Stability in the Sahel, ACLED (2019)

Major incidents during this time included the March 2018 joint attack against the French embassy and Burkinabe army headquarters in Ouagadougou (eight killed, 80 wounded).[155] In the very advanced but unsuccessful April 2018 Timbuktu airport attack, four SVBIEDs penetrated the airport, followed by an armed assault, which resulted in the loss of a UN peacekeeper (16+ killed, 17 wounded).[156] In June 2018, JNIM attacked the Malian headquarters of the G5 Sahel Joint Forces in Sévaré, Mali (four killed, unknown wounded).[157] In July 2018, it attacked a French military base and MINUSMA forces in Aguelhok, Mali. A public statement released by the group said the attack was a message to France that "the war between us will not end until the last soldier from the soldiers of Crusader France evacuates the Muslim land of Mali, and until the Shariah of Allah governs this dear land."[158] Finally, in September 2019, the group simultaneously attacked two

[154] Hilary Matfess, "JNIM: A Rising Threat to Stability in the Sahel," *ACLED* (blog), February 1, 2019, Matr.
[155] Caleb Weiss, "Al Qaeda Branch in Mali Claims Burkina Faso Attacks," March 3, 2018, https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/03/al-qaeda-branch-in-mali-reportedly-claims-burkina-faso-attacks.php.
[156] Caleb Weiss, "Al Qaeda's JNIM Claims Suicide Assault in Timbuktu," *FDD's Long War Journal*, April 20, 2018, https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/04/al-qaedas-jnim-claims-suicide-assault-in-timbuktu.php.
[157] AfricaNews, "Al-Qaeda-Linked Support Group Claimed Attack on Mali HQ of G5 Sahel Force," Africanews, June 30, 2018, https://www.africanews.com/2018/06/30/al-qaeda-linked-support-group-claimed-attack-on-mali-hq-of-g5-sahel-force/.
[158] SITE Intelligence Group, "Al-Qaeda's Mali Branch Claims Attack on French Forces Before Malian Elections," *SITE Intelligence Group*, July 29, 2018, https://ent.siteintelgroup.com/jihadist-threat/643-siteintelgroup-07-29-2018-nim-mali-presidentelection/file.html.

military camps in northern Burkina Faso (Nassoumbou and Baraboulé) in opposition to the ECOWAS summit taking place in Ouagadougou (25 killed, unknown wounded).[159]

Economic Motivation

JNIM had extensive ties to criminal enterprises throughout the Sahel. Analysts estimate that JNIM-affiliated groups generated between $18 million and $35 million in 2018.[160] Primary sources of funding for JNIM included (in order of income earning power) extortion of licit (fuel, medicine, food) and illicit (arms, cigarettes, drugs, migrants) supply chains under their control, communities engaged in artisanal gold mining, kidnapping for ransom, livestock theft, and zakat (Islamic giving).[161] Kidnapping for ransom provided the major portion of the group's funding, estimated to be $8 million for JNIM in 2017 alone.[162] The group leveraged these resources to bolster its legitimacy and garner popular support, thereby advancing its strategic and governance objectives. It's also noteworthy that, to date, there is no publicly available evidence indicating that Belmokhtar shared the proceeds from his kidnapping operations with Bin Laden or Zawahiri.[163]

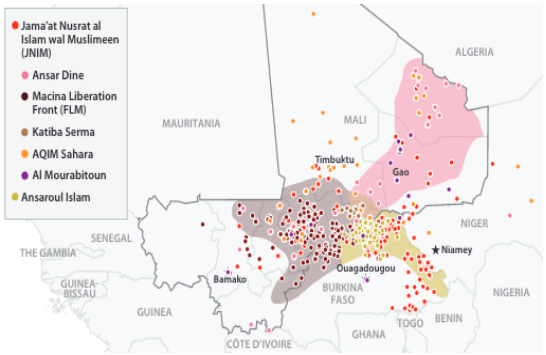
Geographic Territory

JNIM commanded a deep, regional network. Its core area of operations in 2018 was northern Mali, but the group also operated in Mauritania, southwest Libya, Algeria, Niger, and Burkina Faso.[164] The group maintained three distinct areas of operation in addition to expanding its influence into the Gulf of Guinea (Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Togo).

[159] AfricaNews, "Al-Qaeda-Linked Support Group Claimed Attack on Mali HQ of G5 Sahel Force."
[160] Nellemann, Stock, and Shaw, "World Atlas of Illicit Flows: A RHIPTO-INTERPOL-GI Assessment," 8.
[161] AQIM Sahara and al-Mourabitoun both had well-established smuggling operations across the region going into the merger, which generated significant revenue for JNIM in the areas of cigarette and drug smuggling, illicit taxation, protection money, and return from investments in migrant smugglers (e.g. trucks and finance).
[162] Rukmini Callimachi, "Paying Ransoms, Europe Bankrolls Qaeda Terror," *The New York Times*, July 29, 2014, sec. World, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/30/world/africa/ransoming-citizens-europe-becomes-al-qaedas-patron.html; Nellemann, Stock, and Shaw, "World Atlas of Illicit Flows: A RHIPTO-INTERPOL-GI Assessment," 134.
[163] Guido Steinberg and Annette Weber, "Jihadism in Africa: Local Causes, Regional Expansion, International Alliances," *SWP Research Paper*, June 2015, 82.
[164] Eizenga and Williams, "The Puzzle of JNIM and Militant Islamist Groups in the Sahel," 5.

AAD became a central player in northern Mali and southern Algeria.[165] The FLM operated from its base in central Mali and expanded into northern and other parts of Burkina Faso.[166] JNIM events in Burkina Faso in 2018 aimed to dominate artisanal gold mining and commercial routes in the eastern part of the country. Control over these revenues represented a lucrative source of income.[167]

Figure 4.6 Violent Events Linked to JNIM Component Groups (2015-2019)[168]



Source: The Puzzle of JNIM and Militant Islamist Groups in the Sahel, ACSS (2020)

Foreign Sponsorship and Partners

JNIM pledged allegiance to AQ emir Zawahiri and AQIM emir Droukdel in March 2017.[169] The Gulf states actively influenced JNIM by supporting NGOs throughout the region, which spread JNIM's ideology.[170]

[165] Djani, "24th Report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team," July 15, 2019; Peter Tinti, "Drug Trafficking in Northern Mali," Research Paper (Enhancing Africa's Repsonse to Transnational Organized Crime, September 2020), https://enact-africa.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/2020-09-17-mali-drugs-research-paper.pdf.
[166] Eizenga and Williams, "The Puzzle of JNIM and Militant Islamist Groups in the Sahel," 4.
[167] Artisanal sites in the area could have produced over 725 kg of gold ($34 million USD annually). David Lewis and Ryan McNeill, "How Jihadists Struck Gold in Africa's Sahel," *Reuters*, November 22, 2019, https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/gold-africa-islamists/.
[168] Eizenga and Williams, "The Puzzle of JNIM and Militant Islamist Groups in the Sahel," 5.
[169] Joscelyn, "Analysis."
[170] Dian Triansyah Djani, "Letter Dated 20 January 2020 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee Pursuant to Resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) Concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and Associated Individuals, Groups, Undertakings and Entities Addressed to the President of the Security Council," S/2020/53, January 20, 2020, 10, https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n19/439/92/pdf/n1943992.pdf?token=HLZBLyKx8pexMvc9CY&fe=true.

JNIM and ISGS also joined efforts and coordinated some attacks.[171] The groups' operational effectiveness and high-profile attacks were enhanced thanks to this deconfliction and collaboration effort. This behavior was also consistent between the groups in their efforts to traffic illicit materials throughout the region.[172] JNIM also worked closely with Ansarul Islam in Burkina Faso, though they remained independent. A goal during 2018-2019 was replacing fallen core JNIM leadership with weathered fighters from Libya.[173]

Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS)

Group Origins

Former Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (Mouvement pour l'Unicité et le Jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest or MUJAO) commander Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahraoui declared his adherence to the Islamic State in May 2015. IS Central leader al-Baghdadi only formally recognized ISGS's pledge of allegiance in October 2016.[174] From 2016 to 2019, IS remained silent, not publishing or claiming any of the group's attacks as their own. A 'Sahelian Anomaly' followed, where ISGS peacefully coexisted with JNIM, with the two groups communicating and possibly coordinating on attacks and activity.[175] This ended promptly, however, when IS Central's "Wilayah West Africa" announced that ISGS was elevated in status in March 2019 and became an official sub-unit of its West Africa province as the Islamic State West Africa Province-Greater Sahara (ISWAP-GS).[176] "Shortly thereafter, the group exhibited a significant escalation in both the frequency and lethality of its operations,

[171] Dian Triansyah Djani, "Letter Dated 15 January 2019 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee Pursuant to Resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) Concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and Associated Individuals, Groups, Undertakings and Entities Addressed to the President of the Security Council," S/2019/50, January 15, 2019, 11.
[172] Djani, "25th Report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team," January 20, 2020, 10.
[173] Djani, "24th Report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team," July 15, 2019, 10.
[174] IS Central's Amaq News Agency released a short statement acknowledging Sahrawi's oath, as well as a video of him reading his pledge. Thomas Joscelyn and Caleb Weiss, "Islamic State Recognizes Oath of Allegiance from Jihadists in Mali," *FDD's Long War Journal*, October 13, 2016, https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/10/islamic-state-recognizes-oath-of-allegiance-from-jihadists-in-west-africa.php.
[175] Héni Nsaibia and Caleb Weiss, "The End of the Sahelian Anomaly: How the Global Conflict between the Islamic State and al-Qa`ida Finally Came to West Africa," *CTC Sentinel* 13, no. 7 (July 31, 2020): 1–14.
[176] Tomasz Rolbiecki and @TomaszRolbiecki, "Important Development: ISIS' 'Wilayah West Africa' Released a Photo Showing 'Soldiers of Caliphate' in Burkina Faso.," Tweet, *Twitter*, March 22, 2019, https://twitter.com/TomaszRolbiecki/status/1109138079447687168.

responding to an April 2019 call to action from ISIS Central leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.[177] This ended the period of peaceful existence between the two groups, entering them into open warfare.[178] The US designated the group as a FTO in 2018.[179]

Ideology and Political Platform

In 2018 and 2019, ISGS was a "sovereign subordinate" of IS, operating in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso.[180] ISGS's goal was to replace governments throughout the region with an Islamic state. It focused principally on its violent insurgency than it did on governing or administering its territory. ISGS governance practices were rarely documented, though individual references to judicial, fiduciary, intimidation, and forced eviction practices could be found.[181]

An interview with Abdoul Wahid, a member of the Nigerien National Guard who was held captive by ISGS for three months before being released, documented ISGS attempts to indoctrinate him in jihad, while at the same time, the militants he encountered were impious.[182]

Leadership, Organizational Structure, and Size

The group's founder, Abu Walid al Sahrawi, had been a former commander within al-Murabitoun. Al Sahrawi oversaw the group in 2018. He made the decision to proclaim the group's allegiance to IS in May 2015, taking anywhere from a few dozen to a hundred

[177] Al-Baghdadi appeared in a video where he again accepted pledges of allegiance from Mali and Burkina Faso, praised al-Sahraoui as an important sub-regional leader, and called on fighters across the region to intensify their efforts against the "Crusader and Apostate regimes". *New Video Message from the Islamic State's Shaykh Abu Bakr al-Qussayni al-Qurayshi al-Baghdadi: 'In the Hospitality of the Leader of the Faithful*, 2019, https://jihadology.net.
[178] Nsaibia and Weiss, "The End of the Sahelian Anomaly."
[179] Rollins, "Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO)."
[180] Jason Warner et al., *The Islamic State in Africa: The Emergence, Evolution, and Future of the Next Jihadist Battlefront*, 1st ed. (Oxford University Press, 2022), 197, https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197639320.001.0001.
[181] Warner et al., 185.
[182] Ruth Maclean, "Niger Islamic State Hostage: 'They Want to Kill Foreign Soldiers,'" *The Guardian*, June 5, 2018, sec. World news, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/05/hostage-niger-islamic-state-group-they-want-to-kill-foreign-soldiers.

fighters with him. ISGS's declaration of fealty wasn't accepted and recognized by IS until 18 months later (October 2016).[183]

ISGS originally consisted of al-Sahrawi and a small group of defectors from al-Mourabitoun; however, the group grew steadily over time. It quickly expanded the group's network and operational reach by recruiting fighters from multiple groups throughout the region (Fulanis, Bozos, Bambara, and Mossi), and incorporated several -active Salafi-jihadi cells.[184] As of Summer 2018, it was estimated that ISGS possessed approximately 425 fighters.[185] Its membership was greatly augmented thanks to multiple rounds of JNIM defections in central Mali and northern Burkina Faso in the second half of 2019.[186]

Tactics, Organizational Capacity, and Communications

Before its incorporation into ISWAP, ISGS was considered the smallest and weakest of the Sahelian terrorist groups. While it carried out limited attacks from 2016 to mid-2019, the province always acted with a substantial degree of autonomy from IS Central.[187] It became known for its attacks against local and international security forces as well as community-based armed groups.[188] The group permitted its fighters belonging to targeted communities to carry out reprisal attacks against civilians and picked up members as a result.[189] It also targeted representatives of state or religious institutions that the group was fighting.[190]

---

[183] Jason Warner et al., "Outlasting the Caliphate: The Evolution of the Islamic State Threat in Africa," *CTC Sentinel* 13, no. 11 (November 20, 2020): 22, https://ctc.westpoint.edu/outlasting-the-caliphate-the-evolution-of-the-islamic-state-threat-in-africa/; "ISIS in the Greater Sahara," IntelBrief (The Soufan Center, May 18, 2018), https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-isis-in-the-greater-sahara/.

[184] Rémi Carayol, "Mali : Dans La Région de Mopti, « l'État Ne Contrôle plus Rien »," JeuneAfrique.com, Décembre 2016, https://www.jeuneafrique.com/383833/politique/mali-region-de-mopti-letat-ne-controle-plus-rien/.

[185] Jason Warner and Charlotte Hulme, "The Islamic State in Africa: Estimating Fighter Numbers in Cells Across the Continent," *CTC Sentinel*, August 8, 2018, https://ctc.westpoint.edu/islamic-state-africa-estimating-fighter-numbers-cells-across-continent/.

[186] Jared Thompson, "Examining Extremism: Islamic State in the Greater Sahara," Center fir Strateguc and International Studies (CSIS), *Examining Extremism* (blog), July 22, 2021, https://www.csis.org/blogs/examining-extremism/examining-extremism-islamic-state-greater-sahara.

[187] Djallil Lounnas, "The Transmutation of Jihadi Organizations in the Sahel and the Regional Security Architecture," Future Notes, April 2018.

[188] Thompson, "Examining Extremism," July 22, 2021.

[189] Particularly the Fulani. Mathieu Pellerin, "Armed Violence in the Sahara. Are We Moving From Jihadism to Insurgency?," *Études de l'Ifri*, November 2019, 30.

[190] "Burkina Faso: le groupe jihadiste EIGS revendique le rapt d'un enseignant," RFI, April 18, 2018, https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20180418-burkina-faso-le-groupe-jihadiste-eigs-revendique-le-rapt-enseignant.

After ISGS became a sub-component, "branch" or "wing" of ISWAP in March 2019, it maintained direct lines of communication to the IS core, though it remained operationally independent.[191] The group operated multiple cells in a geographically diffuse distribution, displaying various levels of operational independence.[192] Its tactics expanded from small, hit-and-run attacks on minor military outposts to larger-scale, coordinated attacks against sizable military outposts, which they targeted to replenish their supplies (arms, ammunition, vehicles, and gas). During the second half of 2019, in response to a call to action from IS Central leader al-Baghdadi, the group displayed a significant breakthrough in the regularity and deadliness of the group's activities. This marked a turning point for ISGS, making it a 'flagship affiliate' of IS Central and launching it into open conflict with rival JNIM.[193]

ISGS did not create a media wing upon its creation, as was common practice amongst the groups. And furthermore, IS did not publicize on its behalf. As the group's activity increased in 2017, it began promoting its attacks through local media sources or releasing its footage.[194] However, all this changed in March 2019, when IS published a media release referring to ISGS as a part of ISWAP.[195] In April 2019, when al-Baghdadi released a video encouraging increased IS attacks in the Sahel, ISWAP-GS attacks skyrocketed. As the group's provincial status was elevated, it also received greater visibility in IS Central's media realm and favored attacks that could be useful for propaganda.[196]

[191] Thompson, "Examining Extremism," July 22, 2021.
[192] Thompson.
[193] Roudabeh Kishi et al., "'Mid-Year Update: 10 Conflicts to Worry about in 2020: The Sahel,' ACLED," (Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), August 18, 2020), https://acleddata.com/acleddatanew/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/ACLED_TenConflicts2020_FinalWeb.pdf; Clionadh Raleigh et al., "Introducing ACLED: An Armed Conflict Location and Event Dataset - Clionadh Raleigh, Rew Linke, Håvard Hegre, Joakim Karlsen, 2010," *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 5 (September 2010): 651–60; Warner et al., "Outlasting the Caliphate."
[194] Caleb Weiss, "Islamic State Releases First Combat Video from Mali," FDD's Long War Journal, April 3, 2019, https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2019/04/islamic-state-releases-first-combat-video-from-mali.php; Héni Nsaibia, "#Mali: A New Video Release by #ISGS," Tweet, *Twitter*, March 31, 2019, https://twitter.com/MENASTREAM/status/1112191966836604928.
[195] Héni Nsaibia, "Islamic State in Burkina Faso," Blog, March 23, 2019, http://menastream.com/islamic-state-in-burkina-faso/.
[196] Thompson, "Examining Extremism," July 22, 2021.

Major Incidents

ISGS increased its violence in the second half of 2019 after IS Central acknowledged that it considered ISGS as a component of ISWAP. ISGS first gained regional recognition when it launched an attack on a high-security prison near Niger's capital Niamey in October 2016. They continued to initiate dozens of attacks against Nigerien, Malian, and Burkinabe troops and ethnic militias. The group expanded its geographical reach along the Niger-Burkina Faso border and into the Gourma region south of Timbuktu in Mali.[197]

ISGS acquired great international notoriety for its October 2017 ambush of a joint Nigerien-US patrol that killed five Nigerien soldiers and four US Green Berets in Tongo Tongo.[198] In its day-to-day attacks, the group was known to utilize common munitions, bombings, and armed assaults (small arms, rocket propelled grenades, mortar fire, etc.). Their attacks consisted principally of an ambush using an IED, which they followed up with small arms fire on the target.[199] In April 2018, the group kidnapped a German aid worker, Joerg Lang, in the Tillaberi region.[200]

Once Baghdadi called on ISGS to increase operations against the French and international partners in the region, IS Central claimed responsibility for two suicide attacks against French forces in Mali in January 2019, and the abduction and subsequent murder of Canadian geologist Kirk Woodman in Burkina Faso later that month.[201] The group displayed significant advancements in the frequency and lethality of the group's activities during the second half of the year.

[197] Lebovich, "Mapping Armed Groups in Mali and the Sahel."
[198] "IntelBrief."
[199] Dembele, "Africa: Mapping Islamic Militancy - Past, Present and Future," 65.
[200] "Country Reports on Terrorism 2018," *United States Department of State* (blog), accessed June 22, 2024, https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2018/.
[201] "Attentat suicide contre les militaires de Barkhane au Mali : trois blessés dont un grave," ladepeche.fr, accessed May 27, 2024, https://www.ladepeche.fr/article/2018/01/13/2720927-attentat-suicide-contre-militaires-barkhane-mali-trois-blesses-dont-grave.html; Anna Cunningham, "Death of Kirk Woodman Highlights Growing Instability in Sahel Region of West Africa," *CBC News*, January 17, 2019, https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/burkina-faso-kirk-woodman-jihad-west-africa-1.4982262.

The second half of 2019 revealed multiple joint and coordinated offenses between the two groups.[202] On May 14, 2019, ISGS fighters carried out a complex ambush on Nigerien troops near Tongo Tongo (30 casualties), and JNIM reportedly provided fighters.[203] In August 2019, the two groups launched an operation targeting a military outpost in Koutougou, Burkina Faso.[204] Finally, on December 10, 2019, ISGS launched the single deadliest attack on security forces recorded in Niger (70 casualties), and JNIM soldiers were among those killed in the attack.[205]

Economic Motivation

ISGS also collected revenue from multiple activities by taxing convoys to provide safe passage, protection, transportation, or selling stolen goods. Both licit (food, motorbikes, fuel) and illicit (arms, ammunition, drugs) goods ran through its area of operations. It collected zakat from the local population, and "young people cannot refuse them."[206] It participated in various other activities, including the livestock trade, illegal mining, car parts, and gas smuggling.[207]

Geographic Territory

ISGS was active in eastern Mali and a wide swath of territory both eastward to Niger and in the southeast towards Burkina Faso.[208] The group initially began operations in western Niger and in north-eastern Mali and conducted several early attacks in Burkina Faso along the border with Mali.

[202] Nsaibia and Weiss, "The End of the Sahelian Anomaly."
[203] "ISIL Claims Attack on Niger Soldiers as Death Toll Rises to 28," Al Jazeera, May 16, 2019, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/5/16/isil-claims-attack-on-niger-soldiers-as-death-toll-rises-to-28.
[204] Pellerin, "Armed Violence in the Sahara. Are We Moving From Jihadism to Insurgency?"
[205] Hannah Armstrong, "Behind the Jihadist Attack in Niger's Inates," International Crisis Group, December 13, 2019, https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/niger/behind-jihadist-attack-inates.
[206] The exact quote in French is "les jeunes ne peuvent pas les réfusée." Redaction, *Le journal du 19 octobre 2018*, Le journal (Niamey, Niger, 2018), https://www.studiokalangou.org/10703-le-journal-du-19-octobre-2018.
[207] "Eighth Report of the Secretary-General on the Threat Posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to International Peace and Security and the Range of United Nations Efforts in Support of Member States in Countering the Threat" (New York, NY: United Nations, February 1, 2019), 5, https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n19/019/37/pdf/n1901937.pdf?token=b1XO60bQAojQM2MJCm&fe=true.
[208] Dembele, "Africa: Mapping Islamic Militancy - Past, Present and Future," 65.

After ISGS became a subunit of ISWAP in March 2019, ISGS strongholds included the tri-border areas between Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, as well as the "W" National Park between Benin, Burkina Faso, and Niger.[209]

Foreign Sponsorship and Partners

When IS Central accepted the group's pledge of *bayah*, it did not immediately grant it the status of IS province or wilaya; instead, it referred to al-Sahraoui and his fighters as "Soldiers of the Caliphate" or Jund al-Khilafa.[210] As the frequency and lethality of its attacks increased, its connections to IS Central remained "murky to non-existent."

ISGS fighters fought an initial battle in June 2015, immediately after the split with Belkmokhtar's al-Mourabitoun fighters. However, moving forward, the two groups avoided clashes and even cooperated with JNIM fighters, "join[ing] hands…to fight the disbelievers"; they pledged to "continue to fight together."[211] The UN peacekeeping mission assessed that the groups were "operating in parallel and possibly cooperating."[212] Their engagement was quickly coined the 'Sahelian Anomaly" given no other region was spared AQ/IS jihadi-on-jihadi fighting.[213] This relationship was driven by positive interpersonal dynamics and crossovers of personnel between the two groups.[214]

At first, the two IS-affiliated groups (ISGS and ISWAP) engaged facilitators to enable an "enhanced operational connection" between the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin theaters and to deconflict and coordinate attacks.[215] In March 2019, IS Central Media Diwan published a media release referring to the group as ISWAP-Greater Sahara, integrating them into

[209] Djani, "24th Report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team," July 15, 2019, 11.
[210] Warner et al., *The Islamic State in Africa*, 169–97.
[211] L'Orient-Le Jour, "Union Des Jihadistes Contre La Force Du G5 Sahel, Selon Un Groupe Se Réclamant de l'EI," L'Orient-Le Jour, January 13, 2018, https://www.lorientlejour.com/article/1094189/union-des-jihadistes-contre-la-force-du-g5-sahel-selon-un-groupe-se-reclamant-de-lei.html.
[212] "Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Mali" (United Nations Security Council, December 26, 2017), 7.
[213] Nsaibia and Weiss, "The End of the Sahelian Anomaly," 1–14.
[214] The Sahel has a "history of militancy" where armed groups have recruited from the same common group of militants. Over time this has meant that there is a fluidity of fighters among the region's armed groups. Family and tribal ties are also strong among leaders and recruits. Nsaibia and Weiss, 4.
[215] Djani, "25th Report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team," January 20, 2020, 11.

ISWAP. From that point forward, it became a "sovereign subordinate," an operationally independent ISWAP subgroup under IS Central's jurisdiction.[216] One month later, al-Baghdadi definitively called on IS to accelerate attacks against France and its allies across the Sahel.[217] As a result of the merger, the Sahelian anomaly rapidly deteriorated as ISGS's attacks skyrocketed in the wake of al-Baghdadi's request and ensuing death in October 2019.

ISGS's relationship with IS Central did not go beyond its association with the IS brand.[218] As of the end of 2019, no evidence existed of any financing, weapons, training, or assistance provided to the affiliate.[219] Days after IS caliph al-Baghdadi's death in October 2019, ISGS immediately re-pledged its loyalty to the group's new leader, Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi, proving that al-Baghdadi's death had little effect on its subsidiary support on the continent.[220] The group then continued to increase the operational tempo of its attacks in the Sahel throughout the second half of 2019, as al-Baghdadi had requested.[221]

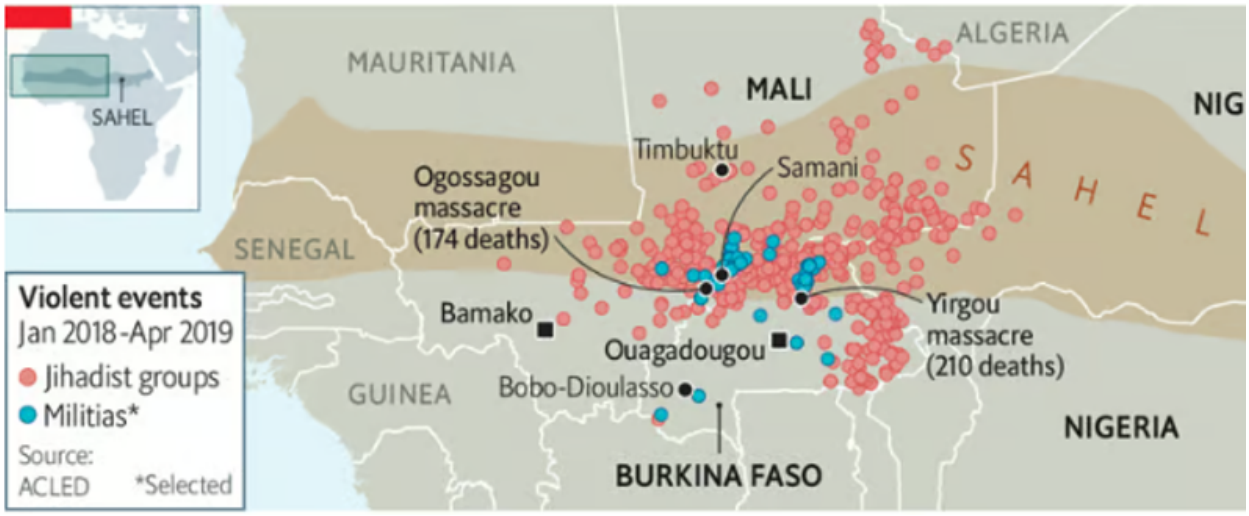
Effects on the Sahelian Population

The year 2018 marked the deadliest and most violent period in the Sahel since the onset of the Malian conflict in 2012. More than 350 violent episodes perpetrated by extremist groups took place, as can be seen in Figure 4.7. During the same period, fatalities linked to these events escalated from 225 to 2,000. This dramatic increase in violence had significant effects on the region. Conflict displaced more than 1.3 million people, and 7.2 million were targeted.[222] At the end of 2018, 24 million people needed humanitarian aid, and 5.2 million faced acute food insecurity.[223]

---

[216] Nsaibia, "Islamic State in Burkina Faso"; Warner et al., *The Islamic State in Africa*, 197.
[217] Louise Dewast, "Call to Attack French Allies," *BBC News*, May 15, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48286975.
[218] Warner et al., *The Islamic State in Africa*, 197.
[219] Warner et al., 196.
[220] Warner et al., 4.
[221] Héni Nsaibia, "Heeding the Call: Sahelian Militants Answer Islamic State Leader al-Baghdadi's Call to Arms with a Series of Attacks in Niger," *ACLED* (blog), May 23, 2019, https://acleddata.com/2019/05/23/heeding-the-call-sahelian-militants-answer-islamic-state-leader-al-baghdadis-call-to-arms-with-a-series-of-attacks-in-niger/.
[222] "Liptako Gourma Crisis - Monthly Dashboard #1," Displacement Tracking Matrix (Dakar, Senegal: International Organization for Migration, January 15, 2020), https://dtm.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl1461/files/reports/LGC_Monthly_Dashboard_January_2020_FINAL_0.pdf.
[223] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), "Sahel Crisis: Overview of Humanitarian Needs and Requirements (May 2020) | OCHA," May 13, 2020,

Figure 4.7 Geographic Distribution of Violent Events in the Sahel (2018-2019)[224]



Source: The Economist, The West's New Front against Jihadism is in the Sahel (2019)

Afrobarometer, a pan-African, non-partisan survey research network, has conducted public perception surveys throughout the subregion since 1999. Surveyors gauged public perceptions on key topics of particular interest to this research, such as citizen confidence in their governments, perceptions of the security environment, trust in public institutions, government performance, and international relations.[225] Polling throughout the region from 2017 to 2018 and 2019 to 2020 examined public attitudes on democracy, governance, the economy, and society. All TSCTP countries were surveyed except for Chad and Mauritania.[226] Any references to the 'Sahel' reflect citizen observations in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. Senegal was not included as no terrorist incidents have happened in Senegal, and the data would be skewed if it were included.

Public perceptions throughout the Sahel countries steadily worsened from 2014 to 2020, paralleling the deteriorating regional security context. Thirty-six percent of the population believed their country was headed in the wrong direction in 2014 and 2015, starkly increasing to 61 percent in 2017 to 2018 and 72 percent in 2019 and 2020.

https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/nigeria/sahel-crisis-overview-humanitarian-needs-and-requirements-may-2020.

[224] Economist, "The West's New Front against Jihadism Is in the Sahel."

[225] Afrobarometer Data, "Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal," 2018, R7 2017, http://www.afrobarometer.org.

[226] Chad and Mauritania were not open to having Afrobarometer conduct polls in their countries.

Security ranked amongst citizens' everyday concerns. Forty-one percent of individuals polled identified security-related issues (crime and security, political violence, political instability/ethnic tensions, war (international or civil war) as one of the top three most important problems facing their country between 2019 and 2020. Ninety-two percent of citizens identified terrorism as a 'major problem' in their country.[227] Fifty-one percent of citizens feared the threat of violent extremism in their country. Twenty-five percent feared but had not experienced violent extremism, and seven percent had feared and experienced violent extremism.

Table 4.4 Sahelian Regional Perceptions: Fear and Experience of Violent Extremism (2019)

	Fear	Fear and No Experience	Fear and Experience
Burkina Faso	37%	34%	3%
Mali	38%	29%	9%
Niger	78%	12%	9%
Regional Average	**51%**	**25%**	**7%**

Source: Author generated from Afrobarometer Data (2019-2020)

Regarding government performance, Sahelian country assessments of their governments' responses to extremist violence from armed extremist groups as 'very effective' or 'somewhat effective' decreased by 17 percent from 2017/2018 (53 percent) to 2019/2020 (36 percent). Citizens also had worsening assessments of their countries' capacities to prevent or resolve violent conflict. The regional average decreased 21 percent from 2017/2018 (67 percent) to 2019/2020 (46 percent).[228] In 2017/2018, 81 percent of citizens identified their nation's armed forces as "always" or "often" keeping their country safe from external and internal threats. This question was unfortunately not asked again during the 2019/2020 survey.

[227] Citizens in Cameroon and Niger were surveyed but not Nigeria for this question in 2019-2020.
[228] Responses to this question do not include perspectives from Niger in 2019/2020 as the question was not included on Niger's survey.

Citizens expressed relatively positive views when determining public trust in public institutions. Eighty-two percent of Sahelian citizens verbalized "a lot of confidence" or "some confidence" in their armed forces. Seventy-two percent believe that their armed forces work professionally and respect the rights of all citizens 'always' or 'often.'[229]

US Framing of the Threat in the Sahel: "Arc of Instability"

Immediately after 9/11, the US identified the GSPC as an international terrorism group linked to AQ and the Sahel as an 'arc of instability.' This immediate classification increased the security profile of the region and successfully justified funding for future avenues of cooperation. The engagement, however, while trumpeted as a balanced, 3-D approach to prevent terrorism from taking hold,[230] prioritized the 'Defense' component. Eerily foreshadowed by a European security analyst in 2004, this has 'create[d] many more issues than those the [initiative was] supposed to address.'[231]

Two main factors contributed to the US's categorization of the Sahel as an 'arc of instability:' the threat that terrorist groups posed throughout the region and the underlying vulnerabilities that made the subregion conducive to terrorism in the first place. First, the US posited that even loosely affiliated and relatively obscure AQ subgroups could destabilize the Sahel, threaten Europe, and carry out acts of violence around the globe. It quickly classified the GSPC as an international terrorist group with links to AQ. The group was one of 28 entities listed in President George W. Bush's initial September 23rd Executive Order, which attempted to immediately block terrorist financing worldwide.[232] The State Department designated the GSPC a Foreign Terrorist Organization on March 27, 2002, and highlighted the group in its first "Patterns of Global Terrorism" report published after 9/11 as "maintaining contacts with

[229] These survey questions were not asked prior or again after the 2017-2018 survey, so citizen perspectives on these questions are only available during this time frame.
[230] Lesley Anne Warner, "The Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership" (Center for Naval Analysis, March 2014), 1, https://www.cna.org/reports/2014/crm-2014-u-007203-final%20%281%29.pdf.
[231] International Crisis Group interview with security source, Paris, November 4, 2004. "Islamist Terrorism in the Sahel: Fact or Fiction?," March 31, 2005, 33, https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/chad/islamist-terrorism-sahel-fact-or-fiction.
[232] George W. Bush, "Executive Order 13224: Blocking Property and Prohibiting Transactions with Persons Who Commit, Threaten to Commit, or Support Terrorism," *United States Department of State* 66, no. 186 (September 25, 2001): 49079–83.

extremists sympathetic to AQ."[233] The GSPC was added to the Treasury Department's Specially Designated Global Terrorist list in September 2003.[234] The argument was that while it was unclear whether GSPC members in Europe and the Sahel were also AQ members, the group facilitated and supported AQ's existence and/or operations.[235]

In the aftermath of the September 2001 attacks, Hattab published a press release in the Algerian al-Youm daily in support of bin Laden and AQ. He threatened that the GPSC would 'strike hard' at 'American and European interests in Algeria if they implement[ed] their threats to attack Arab and Muslim states…[or] if they continue[d] to harass [the] Islamist network in the US, UK, France, and Belgium."[236] He did not, however, ally the GSPC directly with AQ.[237]

In Europe, the GSPC's support networks were immediately targeted and dismantled in multiple countries.[238] Spanish police took down a cell of six Algerians believed to be GSPC members in possession of false passports and sophisticated forgery equipment, which had sent high-tech equipment and intelligence to operatives in Algeria and had "financial connections to the terrorist organization led by bin Laden."[239] British authorities arrested seven individuals in London who oversaw the financing, logistics, and other planning activities for the GSPC in the UK.[240]

---

[233] The annual Patterns of Global Terrorism report was first published by the State Department in 1980, when terrorism began to be an increasing concern for the US. The report provides a comprehensive annual analysis of terrorist groups, incidents, and how the US is partnering with other countries to counter terrorism. Bureau of Counterterrorism, "Patterns of Global Terrorism 2001" (Washington, DC: US Department of State, May 2002), 109, https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2001/pdf/index.htm.
[234] Bureau of Counterterrorism, "Patterns of Global Terrorism 2001."
[235] Bureau of Counterterrorism, 109.
[236] Jonathan Schanzer. "Algeria's GSPC and America's 'War on Terror.'" *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy* 666 (October 2, 2002).https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/pdf/view/9160/en.
[237] Kohlmann, Evan F. "Two Decades of Jihad in Algeria: The GIA, the GSPC, and Al-Qaida," May 2007, 28. http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/world/moss_algeria_kohlman.pdf.
[238] Kohlmann, Evan F. "Two Decades of Jihad in Algeria: The GIA, the GSPC, and Al-Qaida," May 2007, 28. http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/world/moss_algeria_kohlman.pdf.
[239] Gyves, Cliff, and Chris Wyckoff. "Algerian Groupe Salafiste de La Predication et Le Combat (Salafi Group for Call and Combat, GSPC): An Operational Analysis." *Strategic Insights* 5, no. 8 (November 2006): 55. https://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/11195/Algerian%20Groupe%20Salafiste%20de%20la%20Predication%20et%20le%20Combat.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.
[240] Gyves and Wyckoff, "Algerian Groupe Salafiste de La Predication et Le Combat (Salafi Group for Call and Combat, GSPC): An Operational Analysis."

It should be noted that the GSPC did not conduct any anti-US attacks as a group before 9/11, but individual operatives may have participated in AQ attacks against US and Western targets.[241] While there was no mention of the GSPC in any congressional hearings on Algeria before 9/11, the GIA was discussed in Congressional hearings and was one of the 29 original groups designated by the US as a FTO on October 8, 1997, when the list was created.[242] The only international acknowledgment of the GSPC before 9/11 was the UK's Terrorism Act of 2000. There was, however, an Algerian extremist, Ahmad Ressam, who did not claim GSPC affiliation but was arrested in December 1999 when he plotted to bomb the Los Angeles International airport and had also trained at AQ camps in the Middle East.[243] There were later accusations that the GSPC had tried to target 'several US Embassies in 2000 and 2001 and had plotted to kill President Bush at a G-8 conference in Italy' in Congressional testimony; however, no evidence was cited to substantiate these claims.[244] Finally, Lebanese Hezbollah also had a longstanding, known presence in West Africa dating back to the group's founding in the early 1980s, where it was involved in the illegal diamond trade, criminality, and narco-trafficking, raising funds for the group in Lebanon.[245]

In addition to the US's analysis of the terrorist threat throughout the region, its characterization of the region as an 'arc of instability' was also based on an analysis of regional vulnerabilities. In its view, the Sahel's vast, 'ungoverned spaces' contained Muslim majority populations, extreme poverty, and security forces that could not control their borders, where groups could take advantage of the centuries-old existing smuggling networks. This made the region susceptible and prone to the infiltration of global jihad.[246] The term referred to both physical territory and

[241] Sara Daly. "The Algerian Salafist Group for Call and Combat: A Dossier." *Terrorism Monitor* 3, no. 5 (May 5, 2005). https://jamestown.org/program/the-algerian-salafist-group-for-call-and-combat-a-dossier/.
[242] Madeleine K. Albright, "Designation of Foreign Terrorist Organizations," 52650 § (1997).
[243] Federal Bureau of Investigation. "Millennium Plot/Ahmed Ressam." Page. Accessed October 18, 2021.Madeleine K. Albright, "Designation of Foreign Terrorist Organizations," 52650 § (1997).https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/millennium-plot-ahmed-ressam.
[244] This reference was expressed by Brad Sherman. "Algeria's Struggle Against Terrorism" (House of Representatives, March 3, 2005), https://webharvest.gov/congress109th/20061114070830/http://www.internationalrelations.house.gov/archives/109/99594.PDF.
[245] Carl Anthony Wege, "Hizballah in Africa," no. 197 (2012).
[246] Nicholas Schmidle, "The Saharan Conundrum," *The New York Times*, February 13, 2009, sec. Magazine, https://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/15/magazine/15Africa-t.html.

non-physical policy space in which effective state sovereignty and control were absent.[247] The argument was that terrorists specifically benefited from what Simons and Tucker referred to as 'hinterland' geography to strategize, grow, train, and generate income through illegal smuggling.[248] And while the peaceful, inclusive nature of Sahelian Islam had a regional culture of tolerance, fundamentalist teachings from the Middle East were seen as dangerous in potentially radicalizing Sahelian populations.

In 2001, the US government had relatively little defense presence, engagement, or expertise in Africa, reflected in the three COCOMs that had jurisdiction over different components of the continent, in addition to their primary focuses on Europe, the Middle East, and Asia.[249] The terms 'failed states' and 'ungoverned territories' became common ways for the US (and the international community) to frame its security analysis of the region.[250] The term 'ungoverned territories' was quickly added to the security lexicon, and the geographical areas it was used to describe became linked to terrorism. The 2001 Patterns of Global Terrorism report underlined the presence of AQ and Lebanese Hizballah in Africa, which were exploiting "Africa's permissive operating environment" and were "able to flourish in 'failed states' or those with weak governments that [we]re unable to monitor the activities of terrorists and the supporters within their borders."[251]

This viewpoint was, however, met with some opposition, even within the US government.[252] General Charles Wald, the Deputy Commander of US European Command, was known for publicly communicating a rather alarmist perspective of the terrorist threat in the Sahel. Given the failure of the US intelligence community's assessment of Iraq's possession of weapons of

[247] Jessica Piombo, "Terrorism and U.S. Counter-Terrorism Programs in Africa: An Overview," *Strategic Insights* VI, no. 1 (January 2007): 11.
[248] Anna Simons and David Tucker, "The Misleading Problem of Failed States: A 'Socio-Geography' of Terrorism in the Post-9/11 Era," *Third World Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (2007): 392, https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590601153887.
[249] "Islamist Terrorism in the Sahel," 31.
[250] Angel Rabasa, ed., *Ungoverned Territories: Understanding and Reducing Terrorism Risks* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2007), https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2007/RAND_MG561.pdf.
[251] Bureau of Counterterrorism, "Patterns of Global Terrorism 2001," 5.
[252] Jeremy Keenan, "Terror in the Sahara: The Implications of US Imperialism for North & West Africa," *Review of African Political Economy* 31, no. 101 (2004): 475–96; Jeremy Keenan, "Americans & 'Bad People' in the Sahara-Sahel," *Review of African Political Economy* 31, no. 99 (2004): 130–39; Mustafa Barth, "Sand Castles in the Sahara: US Military Basing in Algeria," *Review of African Political Economy* 30, no. 98 (2003): 679–85.

mass destruction (in which Niger was highlighted), concern was raised over the quality of the intelligence that was informing the US's analysis throughout the region.[253] The US's lack of history and assets in and throughout the region was also seen as severely impairing its ability to properly assess the situation. European partners feared that US interventions "m[ight] be compromised by lack of detailed knowledge of the history, culture, and sociology of the Sahelian region."[254]

The bureaucratic and slow-to-adjust nature of the US government was known for rewarding bold and alarming claims, not cautious and diplomatic analysis. By painting these countries as a region where terrorism could thrive, Defense Department officials sought to raise their security profile and receive funding for military engagement. International Crisis Group interviews with European Union officials in 2004 pointed to the prevailing view amongst European security analysts that the US was paying insignificant attention to the root causes of instability in the Sahelian countries and was unitarily focused on terrorism. One British expert contributed that "fighting terrorism was definitely not a top priority in Africa…We have to deal with the root causes of failing states, which, if not addressed, will collapse sooner or later…You have very deep problems like small arms smuggling, good governance, development, rule of law. They [the Americans] are aware, but they don't really care."[255]

Conclusion

This chapter established a foundational understanding of the terrorist threat landscape in North and West Africa before and after the September 11th attacks. While in 2000, one element of the GSPC sought refuge in northern Mali and profited from regional trafficking efforts, it was a localized terrorist group focused on Algerian domestic concerns that lacked infrastructure, global ambitions, and was not formally part of the al Qaeda global network. By 2018, the regional security environment had drastically worsened with multiple global jihadist terrorist groups jockeying for resources and international acclaim. Public perceptions throughout the Sahel

[253] "Islamist Terrorism in the Sahel," 31.
[254] "Islamist Terrorism in the Sahel," 32.
[255] ICG Interview with security source in Paris (November 4, 2004). "Islamist Terrorism in the Sahel," 33.

paralleled this stark decline, with 72 percent of citizens believing their country was headed in the wrong direction in 2019 and 2020.

This comparative assessment underscores the dynamic evolution of the regional security environment and illustrates how shifting threat perceptions shaped US counterterrorism initiatives in the Sahel. From the outset, the US characterized the region as an 'arc of instability,' which justified a security-centric counterterrorism approach. Ironically, this framing encouraged a Malian security-focused approach. Ironically, this ended up contributing to the very instability the strategy was created to prevent, reinforcing a cycle of militarized engagement and fragile state response. These findings provide essential context for evaluating the design, scope, and outcomes of US counterterrorism assistance in Mali. In the next chapter, I conduct a broad assessment of Mali's defense sector, armed forces, and capacity to counter terrorism, to contextualize the institutional environment in which CT forces were operating in 2012.

CHAPTER FIVE
MALI DEFENSE SECTOR ASSESSMENT

Before conducting a micro-level assessment of Mali's CT capacity, it is essential to undertake a broader defense sector assessment to understand the institutional environment in which CT forces operated in 2012. CT units do not function in isolation; their effectiveness is shaped by the capabilities, coordination, and governance of the wider defense apparatus. A sector-wide assessment helps reveal systemic challenges such as poor command structures, politicization of the military, inadequate logistics, or weak oversight, all of which can undermine the impact of CT programming. Moreover, it enables donors and practitioners to design more strategic, aligned, and sustainable interventions by identifying misalignments between tactical CT support and broader institutional needs. Without this holistic understanding, assistance may inadvertently reinforce dysfunctional systems or contribute to instability, as seen in cases where trained forces later participated in military coups or repression. In contexts like Mali, where US CT assistance has been delivered amidst deep institutional fragility, a broader assessment is critical to determine whether CT support is feasible, appropriately targeted, and likely to yield lasting security gains.

Country Profile and History

One of the world's least developed countries, approximately half of Mali's population is comprised of Mandé peoples (Bambara and Malinké). The Tuareg (approximately 8 percent) is one of many minority groups that make up the remaining 50 percent. Colonialism fundamentally altered the power dynamics of the Sahel. The Tuareg, a formerly privileged, nomadic population that had dominated the trans-Saharan trade routes throughout the Sahel, did not benefit from the institution of national boundaries, which divided up their population amongst five states (Algeria, Burkina Faso, Libya, Mali, and Niger).[1]

With ninety percent of Mali's population living in the southwest and central regions and 10 percent in the vast desert north, the Tuareg were consistently and acutely impacted by the uneven

[1] "The Tuareg," The Unreached Peoples Prayer Profiles, accessed July 17, 2024, http://kcm.co.kr/bethany_eng/clusters/tuareg.html.

development of southern versus northern Mali. Long-standing tensions and grievances quickly developed with the dominant Mande cultures in the South, which received the lion's share of resources. Adding fuel to the flames, the central government in Bamako did not include the Tuareg in early efforts to develop a new national identity.[2]

While Mali gained independence from France in 1960, its colonial inheritance included many governance weaknesses: a strong presidency and centralized state authority (that was secular, autocratic, unaccountable, clientelist, and corrupt).[3] This was reflected in state agencies' incompetence in fulfilling even the most fundamental duties.[4] The military rebelled against the young government in 1963 and was led by a socialist military dictatorship with strong ties to the Soviet Union throughout the Cold War. In 1991, the military waged a coup against its military dictator, and the country's first democratic elections were held in 1992.

During the 1990s, Mali gained a reputation for successful steps towards democracy. Politically, 'free and fair,' multi-party, competitive elections were held in 1992, 1997, and 2002, leading to peaceful transfers of presidential power.[5] Encouraging metrics of strengthened governance included the presence of robust parliamentary institutions, the improved protection of civil liberties and political rights, and the (albeit slow) implementation of government decentralization programs in the north.[6] Economically, a steady five percent economic growth rate, decreasing child mortality, and a doubling of the primary school completion rate began reflecting encouraging signs of decreasing poverty.[7] And socially, a free press and a burgeoning civil

[2] Lecocq, Baz. 2010. Disputed Desert: Decolonization, Competing Nationalisms and Tuareg Rebellions in Mali. Leiden: Brill.
[3] Bintou Sanankoua, "Gouvernance, Légitimité et Légalité Au Mali" (IRG/ARGA colloquium, Bamako, Mali, January 2007), http://www2.institut-gouvernance.org/fr/analyse/fiche-analyse-257.html; Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, "Gouvernance Despotique, Gouvernance Chefferiale et Gouvernance Postcoloniale" (IRG/ARGA Colloquium, Bamako, Mali, 2007), http://www2.institut-gouvernance.org/es/analyse/fiche-analyse-263.html.
[4] Leonardo A. Villalón and Abdourahmane Idrissa, "The Tribulations of a Successful Transition: Institutional Dynamics and Elite Rivalry in Mali," in *The Fate of Africa's Democratic Experiments: Elites and Institutions in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Leonardo A. Villalón and Peter vonDoepp (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 52.
[5] Susanna D. Wing, "Briefing: Mali: Politics of a Crisis," *African Affairs* 112, no. 448 (July 2013): 478.
[6] Clemens Zobel, "Le Mali Postcolonial: Perspectives Politiques," in *La Tragédie Malienne*, ed. Patrick Gonin, Natalie Kotlok, and Marc-Antoine Peerouse de Montclos (Paris, France: Vendémediaire, 2013), 57–81.
[7] Steven Radelet, "Emerging Africa," in *Emerging Africa: How 17 Countries Are Leading the Way: Emerging Africa* (Routledge, 2010), 9–26.

society were widely applauded.[8] While a UN observer lauded the country as an "island of tranquility in an ocean of wars" throughout the sub-region in 2000,[9] others aptly identified Mali as one of the rare "unqualified examples of successful democratic transitions."[10]

Unfortunately, despite the successful democratic image Mali presented to the international community, a very different reality was simmering beneath the surface. The country's first two decades demonstrated poor governance, burgeoning state corruption, a failing and corrupt judicial system, extractive institutions, reoccurring conflicts with northern Tuareg tribal groups, and steadily growing public disaffection with Mali's elected leaders.[11] Mali Historian Bruce Whitehouse identified "the fact that this positive image survived nearly two decades…indicates the power of narrative to shape outside perceptions of events on the African continent."[12] The US and the international community saw what they wanted to see. Ultimately, progress was uneven, with the northern region continuing to face significant disadvantages compared to the rest of the country.

A Tuareg rebellion (1990-1996) plagued the beginning of President Alpha Oumar Konaré's first term (1992-2002). Konaré prioritized a decentralization program, La Politique de la decentralization (the policy of decentralization), to bring more state services to the north and curb the Tuareg's militant opposition to the central state.[13] The ambitious reform program attempted to delegate administrative capacity, political power, and financial autonomy to the local level.

[8] Freedom House, 'Freedom in the world 2013: democratic breakthoughs in the balance', 2013, < http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-20 13> (26 March 2013).
[9] Stephen A. Harmon, *Terror and Insurgency in the Sahara–Sahel Region: Corruption, Contraband, Jihad and the Mali War of 2012–2013* (Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2014), 74, https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-modern-african-studies/article/terror-and-insurgency-in-the-saharasahel-region-corruption-contraband-jihad-and-the-mali-war-of-20122013-by-stephen-harmon-burlington-vt-ashgate-2014-pp-xxii-273-11995-hbk/E1B5C63C56A2EDF2BBFB513F6772F94D.
[10] Victor T. Le Vine, "Redemocratization," in *Politics in Francophone Africa* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), 258.
[11] Susanna D. Wing, "Briefing: Mali: Politics of a Crisis," *African Affairs* 112, no. 448 (July 2013): 480; Sanankoua, "Gouvernance, Légitimité et Légalité Au Mali."
[12] Whitehouse, p.127
[13] Dorothea E. Schulz, "Decentralization and Political Legitimacy in Mali," in *Political Legitimacy in Postcolonial Mali*, 1st ed. (Boydell and Brewer Limited, 2021), 106, https://doi.org/10.1017/9781800101654.

President Amadou Toumani Touré (ATT), the General who mounted the coup and ushered in democracy, was elected as an independent candidate in 2002 on a platform of 'consensus politics.' He assembled a large, diverse coalition of members of the political elite, unaffiliated with any particular party. However, the seemingly inclusive alliance resembled a 'no-party' or single-party state of the post-independence era, which became a patronage machine. Its broad inclusivity disincentivized the group from making any substantial political decisions or enacting any meaningful reforms.

A significant change occurred in the mid-2000s, when cocaine trafficking became a major destabilizing factor in West Africa, eroding the legitimacy of most states in the region. Weak law enforcement and judicial institutions and limited state reach in Mali's vast north, paired with high rates of poverty and unemployment, made northern Mali's trafficking routes an attractive route to Europe. Whereas cocaine seizures before 2005 amounted to approximately one ton per year, between 2005 and 2008, 46 tons were confiscated throughout the sub-region on their way to markets in Europe.[14] Drug trafficking entrenched criminal activities across all levels of the state, from elected officials in the north to senior authorities in Bamako, while intensifying conflicts among local communities.[15]

Repeatedly, democratically elected leaders exploited the state's financial resources for personal enrichment, neglecting the welfare of the Malian populace.[16] Corruption and impunity in Mali considerably worsened during ATT's administration The civil service was repurposed as a tool for distributing patronage, diverting resources to the ruling party, and intimidating political adversaries.[17] A "culture of impunity" developed in which state and local officials took

[14] Liana Sun Wyler and Nicolas Cook, "Illegal Drug Trade in Africa: Trends and U.S. Policy" (Congressional Research Service, September 30, 2009), 8, https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc689297/m1/1/high_res_d/R40838_2009Sep30.pdf.
[15] Mohamed Ag Alhousseini, "Du conflit aux conflits, Kidal dans l'espoir d'une paix jamais retrouvée" (Berlin, Germany: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Décembre 2016), https://sahelresearch.africa.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/170/AgAlhousseini_PolicyPaperKidal_janv2017-2.pdf.
[16] Anne Frintz, "Drugs: The New Alternative Economy of West Africa," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, fevrier 2013, https://mondediplo-com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/2013/02/03drugs.
[17] Marietou Macalou, "The Politicization of the Malian Civil Service in the Context of Democratization" (University of Pittsburgh, 2010), https://core.ac.uk/reader/12207750.

advantage of their positions and access with no potential accountability.[18] Mali's Inspector General (Bureau des Vérificateurs Généraux [BVG]) documented that between 2006 and 2008, the Malian State embezzled approximately four to five percent of the national budget annually ($75 million of public funds each year) via either fraud or mismanagement.[19] During ATT's presidency, land expropriation emerged as a significant issue, with the government facing accusations of displacing impoverished families and transferring extensive areas of fertile land to international corporations at prices below market value.[20]

Furthermore, government officials, politicians, and military and intelligence officers–up to the highest levels–were complicit in and profited from criminal activities in the north.[21] One of the most flagrant cases was when ATT's wife was reportedly apprehended on a shopping trip in Paris attempting to utilize euros tagged from one of the hostage exchanges.[22] Susanna Wing captured Malian sentiment: "At best, the political class was seen as corrupt and indifferent to the instability and criminality in the north; at worst, it was viewed as complicit in allowing AQIM to flourish there."[23]

By 2009, the Malian military could not maintain operational security throughout its northern territory. The absence of the Malian Armed Forces (Forces Armées Maliennes or FAMa) in the northern regions prompted the Malian government to allow neighboring countries—Mauritania, Niger, and Algeria—to pursue militant groups within Mali's borders. However, regional allies and international partners were hesitant to share information with the Malian military and

[18] Bruce Whitehouse, "The Malian Government's Challenge to Restore Order in the North," *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point* 7, no. 2 (February 24, 2014): 12.
[19] Chéibane Coulibaly, J Tyler Dickovick, and James T Thomson, "Comparative Assessment for Decentralization in Africa: Mali In-Country Assessment Report" (Washington, DC: US Agency for International Development, September 2010), 34–35, https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADX218.pdf.
[20] Adama Dao, "Journée mondiale de l'habitat au Mali: Mettre fin aux expulsions forcées," Le 26 Mars, October 12, 2013; Madiassa Diakité, "Spéculation foncière: le Mali sur une poudrière?" Le Républicain, January 9, 2014.
[21] Lacher, "Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region"; Boukhars, "The Paranoid Neighbor; Algeria and the Conflict in Mali"; Peter Tinti, "Illicit Trafficking and Instability in Mali: Past, Present, and Future" (Geneva, Switzerland: The Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, January 2014), 11–13, https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Illicit-Trafficking-and-Instability-in-Mali-Past-present-and-future.pdf.
[22] Stephen Tankel, "Mali: The Weakest Link," in *With Us and Against Us: How America's Partners Help and Hinder the War on Terror* (Columbia University Press, 2018), 257.
[23] Susanna D Wing, "Mali's Precarious Democracy and the Causes of Conflict," Special Report (Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace, May 2013), https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/164172/SR331_Malis_Precarious_Democracy_and_the_Causes_of_Conflict.pdf.

intelligence services regarding these operations, fearing that certain officers might alert AQIM. Regional partners attacked AQIM elements on Malian territory multiple times without informing Mali in advance.[24]

The international community is also responsible for allowing Mali's democratic charade to continue. Much greater attention should have been paid to the risks of state collusion with organized crime. In ignoring these underlying dynamics, the international community helped maintain the pretense that corruption was not enabled from the top but was a bug that the government was ready and willing to eradicate. Donors turned a blind eye as they didn't want to jeopardize their diplomatic priorities. The international community provided significant foreign aid yet failed to monitor its use or hold Malian leadership accountable when evidence of a lack of financial probity repeatedly came to light. Isaline Bergamaschi aptly noted, "Mali's ruling elite made a show of being compliant aid recipients, ensuring that aid flows continued and even increased while stymying bids to make the Malian state more transparent and accountable to its citizens."[25] "The government skillfully navigated competing donor agendas and leveraged foreign aid priorities to serve its own interests.[26] Dependence on foreign aid diminished the government's responsibility to its citizens. Direct aid to the Malian treasury increased year after year, rising from 12 percent of total aid in 1999 to 42 percent in 2013, and it accounted for almost 25 percent of Mali's public expenses in 2009, according to a joint evaluation by the EU, Belgium, and Canada.[27]

ATT did not maintain Konaré's commitment to decentralization and addressing long-standing Tuareg grievances, which led to widespread disillusionment with the government and a third

[24] ATT said Mali had given the Algerian military permission to pursue AQIM as much as 1,000 KM into Malian territory but that Algeria inexplicably chose to do nothing. Georges Berghezan, "La Corruption, au coeur de l'effondrement de l'état malien," in *Sahel : éclairer le passé pour mieux dessiner l'avenir*, ed. Rouppert Bérangère, 2013, 40–60; Gillian Milovanovic, "President Toure Ready to Target AQIM, with Help," Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy (Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, June 12, 2009), https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO387_a.html.
[25] Isaline Bergamaschi, "The Fall of a Donor Darling: The Role of Aid in Mali's Crisis," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 52, no. 3 (September 2014): 347–78, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X14000251.
[26] Isaline Bergamaschi, "Analyzing the Politics of Aid and Poverty Reduction in Africa: A Conceptual Proposal and The Case Of Mali," Global Cooperation Research Papers (Kiel, Germany: Centre for Global Cooperation Research, 2016), http://www.gcr21.org/publications/research-papers/2198-0411-gcrp-16/.
[27] Isaline Bergamaschi, "Mali: How to Avoid Making the Same Mistakes," *Africa In Fact*, April 1, 2015, sec. News, https://allafrica.com/stories/201304051114.html.

Tuareg rebellion (2006 to 2009).[28] Bamako's 'talk and thump' approach—combining selective military action with political dialogue and concessions—culminated in the July 2006 Algiers Accord, which aimed to restore peace, security, and development to the Kidal region and establish a broader development roadmap for northern Mali.[29] Despite international donor support and political will, ATT failed to implement the Special Program for Peace, Security, and Development in northern Mali (Programme spécial pour la paix et le développement des régions du nord Mali (PSPDN).[30]

Malian Tuareg had initially expressed demands for independence during decolonization in the late 1950s, then again in violent rebellion in the 1960s (*Alfellaga*, 1963-1964), the 1990s (*Al-Jebha,* 1990-1996), and the 2000s (2006-2009). A consistent factor amongst each of these rebellions was the violent state suppression of the Tuareg. Another was that northern Mali was a "graveyard of unimplemented peace agreements."[31]

Each post-rebellion settlement contained Tuareg demands for increased autonomy and development. And each included the training and re-integration of Tuareg soldiers in the Malian army. The National Pact (1992) and the Algiers Accord (2006) both conferred 'special status' upon northern Mali, aiming to address longstanding grievances. These agreements sought to decentralize governance and enhance regional autonomy by reducing the presence of the Malian military in the north, thereby increasing the region's responsibility for its own security. The retreat and ongoing absence of the military from northern Mali created a power vacuum, enabling state officials, including Tuareg and other ethnic groups, to become involved in escalating criminal activities. By 2010, widespread evidence documenting ongoing state complicity with organized crime and AQIM in the north concretely undermined civilian

[28] Susanna D Wing, "Mali's Precarious Democracy and the Causes of Conflict," Special Report (Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace, May 2013), https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/164172/SR331_Malis_Precarious_Democracy_and_the_Causes_of_Conflict.pdf.
[29] Stephen A. Emerson, "Desert Insurgency: Lessons from the Third Tuareg Rebellion," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 22, no. 4 (October 1, 2011): 676, https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2011.573406.
[30] Susanna D Wing, "Mali's Precarious Democracy and the Causes of Conflict," Special Report (Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace, May 2013), https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/164172/SR331_Malis_Precarious_Democracy_and_the_Causes_of_Conflict.pdf.
[31] Lesley Anne Warner, "Catch-22 in the Sahel," Text, The National Interest (The Center for the National Interest, April 3, 2014), https://nationalinterest.org/commentary/catch-22-the-sahel-10176.

confidence in the central government and the protection it offered its citizens.[32] Large quantities of small arms and light weapons, combined with high youth unemployment in the north, made terrorist and extremist elements attractive work opportunities.[33]

Everything came to a head in January 2012 when returning Tuareg fighters from Libya, who had spent decades in Colonel Gaddafi's camps on the promise of 'liberating' their home nations, joined forces with pre-existing Malian Tuareg groups, Islamist Extremist groups (AAD and AQIM), and transnational criminal operators in northern Mali, and a new rebel independence movement was born. Following the onset of the insurgency in January 2012, Tuareg commanders from three of the four Malian military units stationed in the north defected, taking with them up to 1,600 troops and substantial weapons caches to the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (Mouvement National de Libération de l'Azawad or MNLA).[34] Not only did these defectors make up the majority of soldiers deployed in the north, but they also knew where and how the army protected its bases and how to access arms depots.[35]

This enabled the group to easily occupy towns and cities in the three northern regions in early 2012. It quickly defeated and expelled the remaining Malian armed forces, occupying over half of Malian national territory and declaring an independent homeland, *Azawad*, in just a few months of fighting. Malian citizens utilized popular demonstrations to protest the apparent lack of seriousness with which the government was addressing the threat and its failure to support soldiers fighting in the north. They questioned its commitment to resupply military units in battle, which were experiencing heavy fighting thousands of kilometers away and running out of vital supplies such as gas, food, and ammunition. In March 2012, protests led by the wives of the Malian military members deployed in the north, became unruly and spiraled into a mutiny at the

[32] Wolfram Lacher, ed., "Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region" (Brookings Institution Press, 2012), 32, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt6wpjcm.
[33] Farrell and Komich, "USAID/DCHA/CMM Assessment: Northern Mali," 3.
[34] Adam Nossiter, Eric Schmitt, and Mark Mazzetti, "French Strikes in Mali Supplant Caution of U.S.," *The New York Times*, January 14, 2013, sec. World, https://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/14/world/africa/french-jets-strike-deep-inside-islamist-held-mali.html.
[35] Jean-Christophe Notin, *La guerre de la France au Mali* (Paris, France: Tallandier, 2014); Holger Anders et al., "Expanding Arsenals Insurgent Arms in Northern Mali," in *Small Arms Survey 2015* (Geneva: Small Arms Survey, 2015), 156–85, https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/Small-Arms-Survey-2015-Chapter-06-EN.pdf.

military barracks in Kati (15km northwest of Bamako), and an unexpected coup d'état that overthrew ATT, just weeks before his presidential term was due to expire.

The international operations, France's Operation Serval and the AU's AFISMA (briefly mentioned in Chapter 3), retook the north of the country and ended the jihadi occupation. While these events were a tactical success, there was no strategic victory.[36] The deployment of UN peacekeepers (MINUSMA) in July 2013 and France's Operation Barkhane in August 2014 brought only minimal and temporary further stability, as jihadi attacks on French, Malian government, and civilian targets increased year after year. Criticism of MINUSMA abounded. While it was a large force, it was relegated to its fortified base and primarily focused on self-protection, withstanding significant attacks each time it left its stronghold. It was, therefore, incapable of protecting the population and restoring order to neglected rural areas, which was its mission. Violence swiftly extended from northern Mali—specifically Kidal, Gao, and Timbuktu—to the central regions of Mopti and Ségou.[37]

The prospect for a "credible, state-led rethinking of the state" was squandered.[38] Mali's political leadership lacked both the resolve and the capacity to implement the substantial reforms necessary to unify the nation, initiate a fresh start, and advance toward progress. The implementation of the 2015 peace agreement with separatists lagged. "Empirical state failure" continued; public service provision remained extremely poor and virtually nonexistent in rural areas. This continued failure of the state to provide basic services created societal openings for non-state actors advocating for alternative forms of political change, many of which were violent.

[36] Sergei Boeke and Bart Schuurman, "Operation 'Serval': A Strategic Analysis of the French Intervention in Mali, 2013–2014," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 38, no. 6 (September 19, 2015): 801–25, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2015.1045494.
[37] International Crisis Group, "Central Mali."
[38] Bruno Charbonneau and Jonathan M. Sears, "Fighting for Liberal Peace in Mali? The Limits of International Military Intervention," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 8, no. 2–3 (July 3, 2014): 11, https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2014.930221.

Mali quickly experienced a surge in paramilitary groups in its northern and central regions.[39] The FAMa and its allies were not effective against these diffuse threats. Some groups had overlapping criminal, insurgent, and terrorist ties; others were proxy ethnic self-defense militias formed to fill the FAMa's security vacuum. Finally, the number of jihadi groups skyrocketed. The groups entered into competition with each other over recruits, access to the criminal market, messaging, and territory.

Military interventions often prioritize containing the spread of armed groups, focusing on immediate security threats. However, this approach frequently overlooks addressing the underlying causes of insecurity, such as political marginalization, economic deprivation, and social grievances, which continue to fuel instability among local populations. An International Crisis Group report aptly identified that community grievances stemmed from "the government's lack of legitimacy and the inability of the authorities to peacefully regulate local conflicts to secure a given area" rather than religious radicalization.[40] Tensions with the population began increasing as acts of brutality by security forces began increasing.

Mali Defense Sector Assessment

The following section is an overview of the detailed defense sector assessment to follow, conducted with the RAND Corporation's Defense Sector Assessment Rating Tool (DSART).[41]

Assessment Summary

In 2012, the FAMa failed to protect and uphold the sovereignty of the Malian nation state. Its participation in the coup, abuse of local populations, constant human rights violations, and alienation of–and aggression towards–key communities in the north exposed that it served as a more significant threat to its own country than it did to any foe on the battlefield. A 2013 EUTM audit characterized the FAMa as a collapsed army that was 'poorly and badly trained, un-managed, under-equipped and under-resourced' and 'inadequately led and supervised.'

[39] Sergei Boeke, "Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb: Terrorism, Insurgency, or Organized Crime?," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 27, no. 5 (September 2, 2016): 914–36, https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2016.1208280.
[40] International Crisis Group, "Central Mali."
[41] Agnes Gereben Schaefer et al., "Defense Sector Assessment Rating Tool," n.d.

While officially, the FAMa was a functioning national army (formal structures, hierarchies, ranks, etc. existed), it was completely dysfunctional.

Malian defense forces collapsed in early 2012 in the face of the Tuareg-Islamist offensive, and the ensuing coup led by junior officers against the democratically elected government in Bamako. Offensive actions were implemented disjointedly without coordinated air support or prepositioned logistical stocks.[42] Severe problems of command and control were exacerbated by extensive communication and intelligence failures. These weaknesses were compounded by the fact that the Malian army possessed very low skill levels and lacked the tactical mobility (vehicles and airlift) necessary to deploy, support, and resupply its troops over a territory double the size of Texas. Furthermore, the FAMa did not field and maintain sufficient equipment to wage an effective offensive campaign.[43] Most weapons, equipment, and vehicles utilized were abandoned during the FAMa's hasty retreat from the north, which ceded an even more significant advantage to its enemies.[44] During the first months of 2012, many northern soldiers defected to the rebel side, taking significant amounts of equipment with them, some of it US-supplied.[45]

Three overarching problems formed the basis of the FAMa's breakdown. First, when a concrete risk threatened the existence of the Malian state, it was unable to protect the country, provide security for citizens, or earn the nation's confidence. This was due to a general level of complete incompetence from the strategic down to the tactical levels and, specifically, a lack of cohesion amongst the force at the tactical level. Second, Mali has a long history of coup d'états. The 2012 coup confirmed the armed forces' profound lack of respect for civilian authority and pervasive mindset that it was the military's responsibility to change the government (rather than wait for the upcoming Presidential election in April 2012). Third, a lack of civilian oversight and functioning justice mechanisms inculcated a

[42] Mary B. Leonard, "Mali Uses Helicopters to Attack Bahanga Near Kidal," Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy (Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, April 2008), https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08BAMAKO325_a.html.
[43] Magnuson, 2013
[44] Peter Tinti, "Long History, Uncertain Results for U.S. Counterterror Efforts in Mali, Sahel," *World Politics Review* (blog), November 30, 2012, https://www-worldpoliticsreview-com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/long-history-uncertain-results-for-u-s-counterterror-efforts-in-mali-sahel/.
[45] Former US Security Cooperation Officer in Bamako, "Mali Way Ahead" document, May 2012.

culture of impunity throughout the security sector. Malian citizens viewed the FAMa with suspicion and distrust due to their involvement in politics and human rights abuses, for which there was no accountability.

Several underlying conditions contributed to the FAMa's breakdown. The FAMa suffered from extremely low levels of unit cohesion, morale, and general esprit de corps, which resulted from non-existent human resource management, maintenance, and training practices, undermining units' determination to fight. While the terrorist and rebel armed groups the FAMa faced on the battlefield possessed similar levels of training and equipment, they possessed a superior sense of motivation and mission purpose. Consistent ambushes, hit-and-run attacks on bases, and IEDs amplified the FAMa's poor morale.

The FAMa's problems stemmed from significant ethnic and demographic challenges. The FAMa maintained strained relations with northern communities and had a poor human rights record, which undermined the state's legitimacy and intensified the conflict between northern communities and the government in Bamako. Following past rebellions, the reintegration of ethnic minorities was completely mismanaged, and no effort was put towards cultivating relationships. In 2012, unofficial records indicate a 30 to 70 percent desertion rate among northern FAMa units.[46]

Mali's MDAC was poorly run. The military faced significant challenges in planning and lacked even the most basic doctrine.[47] Support for units deployed to fight in the north was not functional.[48] At the tactical level, the FAMa suffered from considerable command and control failures and the inability to conduct coordinated offensive operations.[49] Although

[46] Michael Shurkin et al., "The Malian Army," in *Building Armies, Building Nations: Toward a New Approach to Security Force Assistance* (RAND Corporation, 2017), 165, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1832.html.
[47] Stephen Tankel, "Mali: The Weakest Link," in *With Us and Against Us*, How America's Partners Help and Hinder the War on Terror (Columbia University Press, 2018), 250, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/tank16810.11.
[48] Denis M. Tull, "Rebuilding Mali's Army: The Dissonant Relationship Between Mali and Its International Partners," *International Affairs* 95, no. 2 (March 2019): 411, https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiz003.
[49] Laurent Touchard, "Mali : Retour Sur La Bataille Décisive de Konna," JeuneAfrique.com, January 30, 2014, https://www.jeuneafrique.com/165872/politique/mali-retour-sur-la-bataille-d-cisive-de-konna/; Laurent Touchard, "Guerre Au Mali : Retour Sur Le Drame d'Aguelhok," JeuneAfrique.com, October 21, 2013,

specific units did perform well, including a US-trained unit, they ultimately ended up defeated due to a lack of ammunition and supplies after Bamako failed multiple resupply efforts. In the aftermath of Mali's state failure, Bamako yielded the primary responsibility for the security of its geographic territory to France (Operation Serval/Barkhane) and the UN (MINUSMA).

Detailed Assessment of Mali's Defense Sector

The DSART consists of assessments to qualitatively and quantitatively determine the state of a country's defense sector, its institutions and processes, and its capacity to carry out operations for counterterrorism and counterinsurgency. The DSART was used to analyze Mali's defense sector in 2012 to analyze its capacity and capabilities immediately before the March 2012 coup d'état, after having experienced US CT training for over nine years since November 2003.

Section I: Characteristics of the Defense Sector

Developing an overall baseline assessment of a country's defense sector is a critical first step for anyone to understand the operating environment and identify where and how limited resources can most effectively influence change in each area. The focus is on the military forces and the various institutions and processes that sustain and exercise control over the defense sector. The section ends with attempting to generate an understanding of the country's overall political, economic, and security environment, which was covered earlier in this chapter on Mali and in Chapter 3, Regional Overview, where a detailed regional political, economic, and security overview was provided.

Military Forces

Role of the Military

In Mali, the security sector was governed by various bodies and institutions: the Presidency, the MDAC, the Ministry of Internal Security and Civil Defense, the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Local Authorities, and the Ministry of Justice. The MDAC coordinated

https://www.jeuneafrique.com/167687/politique/guerre-au-mali-retour-sur-le-drame-d-aguelhok/; Laurent Touchard, "Défense : Où En Sont Les Forces Armées Maliennes ?," JeuneAfrique.com, juin 2014, https://www.jeuneafrique.com/52526/politique/d-fense-o-en-sont-les-forces-arm-es-maliennes/.

the activities of the Army, the Air Force, the National Guard, and the National Gendarmerie. All these entities fell under the authority of the MDAC.[50] The Ministry of Internal Security coordinated the activities of the Gendarmerie, the National Guard, and the National Police. In areas where there was no police force, the Gendarmerie and the National Guard were present.[51]

The rights and obligations of the defense sector were defined through legislation and regulations (laws, decrees, ministerial orders, administrative decisions, etc.).[52] The mission of the armed forces encompassed safeguarding the nation's territorial integrity, ensuring the security of its citizens, and defending against all forms of aggression. Additionally, the FAMa contributed to national development by engaging in infrastructure projects through its Military Engineering Corps, thereby playing a significant role in the country's development efforts.

Composition of the Military

Mali's armed forces included the army and air force (FAMa), charged with national defense, and the security forces (Police Nationale, Garde Nationale, and Gendarmerie). In terms of intelligence, Mali had three primary intelligence services leading up to the 2012 coup: the Directorate General of External Security (DGSE), the Directorate of Military Security (Directorate de sécurité militaire or DSM), and the General Intelligence and Territorial Surveillance Directorate of the National Police (Direction générale du renseignement et de la surveillance territoriale de la police nationale or GITSDNP).[53] The DGSE reported directly to

[50] "Mali SSR Background Note," Background Note (Geneva, Switzerland: Democratic Control of the Armed Forces (DCAF), 2019).

[51] Mahamadou Nimaga, "Mali," in *Security Sector Governance in Francophone West Africa: Realities and Opportunities*, ed. Alan Bryden and Boubacar N'Diaye (Geneva, Switzerland: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), 2011), 125–49, https://www.academia.edu/65976666/Security_sector_governance_in_Francophone_West_Africa_realities_and_opportunities.

[52] Zeïni Moulaye, "Missed Opportunities for Comprehensive Security Sector Reform in Mali," in *Learning from West African Experiences in Security Sector Governance*, ed. Alan Bryden and Fairlie Chappuis (Ubiquity Press, 2015), 82, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv3t5qk2.11.

[53] The National Agency for State Security (ANSE) was created and replaced the General Directorate of State Security (DGSE) via Order No. 2021-013/PT-RM on October 1, 2021. "Securité d'Etat: L'ANSE Remplace La DGSE," *La Nouvelle Voie Du Mali* (blog), October 20, 2021, https://lanouvellevoiedumali.com/securite-detat-lanse-remplace-la-dgse/.

the President, the DSM to the Minister of Defense, and the GITSDNP to the Minister of Security.[54]

While official estimates consistently reported the size of the Malian Armed Forces to range between approximately 15,000 and 18,000 personnel since the late 1980s, in 2012, the actual size of the FAMa was probably closer to 12,000 personnel.[55] However, "nobody can tell you actually how many soldiers and airmen are in the FAMa" conveyed the senior US Security Governance Initiative (SGI) defense advisor in charge of reforming the FAMa's human resource management system.[56] Mali does not have a formal conscription system. The country relies primarily on volunteer enlistment for its armed forces. At the time of the coup, it broke down into an estimated 7,800 in the Army (combat and support units, most of which were understaffed), 1,000 Air Force personnel (pilots, technicians, administrative staff, four companies of air commando riflemen, and the air defense group), and approximately 3,000 in self-defense militia (vaguely defined units).[57] However, not all 12,000 were deployed to the north. The Army has jurisdiction over the entire country, reducing the number of forces available in the north. A more realistic figure reflecting the strength of the Malian forces was estimated at 7,600 men (including at most a paltry 3,000 operational soldiers), dispersed and as was displayed, of varying capacity.[58]

[54] Adama Mahamane Maiga, "Challenges to Reforming Intelligence Agencies in Re-Democratizing Countries: The Case of Mali" (Monterey, California, Naval Postgraduate School, 2018), 14.
[55] "Mali - Armed Forces," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, August 2020; Michael Brzoska, "Chapter 3 World Military Expenditures," in *Handbook of Defense Economics*, vol. 1 (Elsevier, 1995), 45–67, https://doi.org/10.1016/S1574-0013(05)80005-5.
[56] Interview with Abbie Robinson, former US SGI Defense Team Lead for Mali on October 19, 2018.
[57] Mali's total order of battle in 2012 was estimated at approximately 26,400 total security sector personnel. This broke down into 7,800 in the Army (considering combat and support units, most of which were understaffed), 1,000 Air Force personnel (pilots, technicians, administrative staff, four companies of air commando riflemen, and the air defense group), 14,600 Paramilitary forces (4,600 Gendarmes, 3,000 National Guard, and 7,000 Police), and approximately 3,000 in self-defense militia (vaguely defined units). Laurent Touchard, "Armée Malienne : Le Difficile Inventaire," JeuneAfrique.com, accessed July 19, 2024, https://www.jeuneafrique.com/170176/politique/arm-e-malienne-le-difficile-inventaire/.
[58] Touchard; Niagale Bagayoko, "Le Processus de réforme du secteur de la sécurité au Mali" (Québec, Canada: Centre FrancoPaix en résolution des conflits et missions de paix, fevrier 2018), 46, https://dandurand.uqam.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/2018_02_Rapport-Bagayoko_CFP.pdf.

Mali's level of human capital was low – in 2012, the country had an adult literacy rate of around 33 percent.[59] While official records indicate that all Malian soldiers possess at least a middle school education, the enforcement of this requirement within the military remains questionable. Consequently, assumptions about the educational backgrounds of recruits are uncertain.[60]

The Malian armed forces have been strongly affected by ethnic factors.[61] The FAMa assert that no single ethnic group or region has ever dominated the command structure of the armed and security forces. However, the makeup of the FAMa was consistent with the country's composition as a whole.[62] Approximately 40 to 55 percent of the population is composed of Mandé groups (Bambara, Sarakole, and Malinke), 15 to 20 percent Fulani, eight to 12 percent Songhai, 10 to 15 percent Tuareg, and three to five percent Dogon. In reality, however, Tuaregs and Arabs were represented in sizeable numbers in the National Guard, but the Malian Army was overwhelmingly made up of soldiers from the south.[63] While during the 1991 rebellion, it was assessed that there were practically zero Tuareg in the armed forces, twenty years later, there were only 200 poorly integrated soldiers.[64] As of 2016, "no one knew what the numbers" were, expressed a MINUSMA security sector reform (SSR) officer working directly on the reform of the defense forces.[65] By 2012, specific militia units (in the north) did exist with a high percentage of Tuaregs and experienced high desertion rates during the rebellions.[66]

[59] "Mali Population Data," World Bank Open Data, 2018, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?end=2022&locations=ML&name_desc=true&start=1982.
[60] Shurkin et al., "Building Armies, Building Nations," 175.
[61] "Rapport D'Information sur L'Opération Serval au Mali," juillet 2013, 23, https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/14/pdf/rap-info/i1288.pdf.
[62] Nimaga, "Mali," 142–43.
[63] Gillian Milovanovic, "Running on Fumes: Mali's Soldiers Exposed in the Desert," Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy (US Embassy Bamako, June 25, 2009), https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO415_a.html.
[64] Christophe Châtelot, "Les trois plaies du Mali," *Le Monde*, février 2013, https://www.pressegauche.org/Les-trois-plaies-du-Mali.
[65] Interview with Everet Kets, MINUSMA SSR Officer, in Bamako, Mali on September 19, 2016.
[66] Juan Carlos Castilla Barea, "The Malian Armed Forces and the Future of EUTM" (Institute Espagnol de Estudios Estrategicos, October 7, 2013), 12, https://www.academia.edu/6881400/THE_MALIAN_ARMED_FORCES_REFORM_AND_THE_FUTURE_OF_EUTM.

Despite being a diverse force ethnically, little effort was made to "foster[ing] ethnic integration and unit cohesion."[67] Soldiers were never recruited on an ethnic basis, except for when former rebels were integrated into the different military corps following each of the Tuareg rebellions (1991, 2006, and 2012) and within the framework of implementing the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs. A history of Presidents (Konaré in 1993 and Touré in 2006) re-incorporating Tuareg fighters (and often deserters who had killed Malian soldiers) back into the Malian security forces after each rebellion (individually and collectively), without repercussion, was a cause for mounting frustration and grievances amongst the majority Mandé force. One soldier recounted, "For ten years, we shared everything, we ate together, we had tea together." Forgiving nor forgetting that one of his former brothers-in-arms had seized his own Kalashnikov to shoot down six of his companions was not possible. President Touré was seen as trying to mollify the rebels, not hold them accountable. Large recruitment campaigns in the 1990s incorporated up to 10,000 former rebels into the army but reduced regular basic training from nine to three months.[68] At other times, quotas were instituted to ensure a minimal diversity of the Malian force. Non-Tuaregs denounced this favorable discrimination policy, which integrated Tuareg "into the army at high ranks, based on previous military experience which could not be proven, while others with similar military experience were not promoted."[69] These returning Tuareg rebels were promoted in favor of soldiers who had remained faithful to the Malian state rather than being held accountable. This was a significant cause for grievance and was seen as evidence of corruption within the armed forces and the nation from the very top at the Presidency.[70]

Military Organization

The structure of the Malian armed forces command relationships was characterized by a hierarchical organization under the Ministry of Defense. Key elements included the Minister of Defense, who held ultimate authority over the armed forces and was responsible for

[67] Michael Shurkin, Stephanie Pezard, and Rebecca Zimmerman, *Mali's Next Battle Improving Counterterrorism Capabilities* (Washington, DC: RAND Corporation, 2017), 23, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1241.html.
[68] Dorothée Thiénot, "Le Blues de l'armée Malienne," Le Monde diplomatique, accessed September 23, 2024, https://institutions-mondediplo-com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/2013/05/THIENOT/49061.
[69] Michel Galy, *La guerre au Mali* (La Decouverte, 2013).
[70] Thiénot, "Le Blues de l'armée Malienne."

military policy and strategic decisions. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Chef d'état major général des armées or CEMGA) was the nation's highest-ranking military officer, responsible for the administration and operational control of the military. The CEMGA had oversight over the different service chiefs and military zone commanders. Mali organized its vast territory (twice the size of Texas) among eight military regions and maintained a mix of infantry, armored, artillery, and engineering units. The CEMGA also oversaw several bureaus such as operations, administration, logistics, and, according to some sources, general studies and external relations.[71] Numerous other functions, such as military justice, military policing, engineering, communications, health, and social services, were also nested under the chief of the general staff's authority.[72]

A Joint Operational Command (JOC) did exist to coordinate among the different service branches. However, the effectiveness of joint operations was often limited by inter-service rivalries and a lack of an integrated planning process. Finally, units were deployed to the field to counter various threats over Malian territory. These units often operated with varying degrees of autonomy, complicating command relationships. This command structure faced significant challenges, including issues of communication, resource allocation, and cohesion, which contributed to the military's difficulties in addressing the rising threats in northern Mali before the coup.

The Ministry of Defense housed the DSM, which was created in 1995. It reported to the Minister of Defense and was responsible for military intelligence functions within the armed forces. It implemented the National Military Intelligence Policy. Law No. 95-038 specified the DSM's main role as preparing the intelligence requirements of the different branches of the armed forces as well as monitoring 'internal' threats emanating from within the

[71] Touchard, 2013; "Réforme de l'armée: La cartographie de l'organisation territoriale de la nouvelle armée du Mali," Maliweb, February 21, 2014.
[72] "Communiqué du Conseil des ministres du mercredi 16 mai 2012," Maliweb, May 17, 2012.

military.[73] The office was staffed by officers seconded by the different service branches.[74] The DSM worked closely with the intelligence cells located at the level of staff and services (Army, Air Force, Gendarmerie, National Guard, etc.), and intelligence cells in defense zones and air bases).[75] As information is power, an ongoing rivalry existed between the DSM and the DGSE, creating a contentious working relationship between the two agencies. It also critically affected the proper flow of intelligence, which typically would go first to the President before it was shared with the General Staff of the Armed Forces (Etat Major Général des Armées or EMGA) or sent out to units in the field.[76]

Military Capabilities

Mali had a small, under-equipped defense force, given the size of its terrain and the operational requirements. The army had a very limited military capability and was totally reliant on external assistance. According to Simon Powelson, a US Special Forces officer who worked continuously in Mali from 2009 to 2011, Malian forces faced challenges in their performance at Flintlock 2010, ranking in the lowest category of the forces represented.[77] In terms of specific capabilities, Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment consistently ranked Mali at a 'low' capability level across all available categories for evaluation (air defense, fire support, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance [ISR], logistics, and direct ground combat). A 'low' rating was characterized as having a "capability gap against requirements, putting the country at a military disadvantage" against the threats it faced. In terms of air defense, Mali had low air-to-air warfare and ground-based air defenses. Its offensive air support and indirect fire support were also assessed to be low. In terms of ISR capacity, the country's air (space) recon and ground reconnaissance capacity were identified as low. In

[73] This is detailed further: "to search, centralize, exploit, and synthesize military intelligence as well as those transmitted by other sources or intelligence services, coordinate the action of the various sources of military intelligence and prepare comprehensive documentation of the various threats; and participate in the implementation of the provisions relating to the prevention of the illicit trade in war materials, arms, and ammunition," 367. http://sgg-mali.ml/JO/1995/mali-jo1995-10.pdf.
[74] Maiga, "Challenges to Reforming Intelligence Agencies in Re-Democratizing Countries: The Case of Mali," 19.
[75] "Decret N99365/P-RM: Fixant l'organisation et les attributeions de l'armee de terre et de l'air," Pub. L. No. Exec. Order No. 365-366/P-RM (1999), 1309 (1999), https://sgg-mali.ml/JO/1999/mali-jo-1999-33.pdf.
[76] Internal US Embassy Bamako document from Spring 2012, detailing the Malian military directorates and their service descriptions.
[77] Simon J. Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No: Lessons for SOF from Mali" (Thesis, Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School, 2013), 40–41, https://calhoun.nps.edu/handle/10945/38996.

terms of logistics, its airlift capacity was low. Finally, in terms of all categories of direct ground combat, armored warfare, infantry operations, and combat engineering were all assessed as low as well. Finally, Malian air-to-ground interoperability was nascent at the time of the ranking in 2012.[78]

Military Readiness

Mali's armed forces were not prepared for an asymmetric conflict in 2012. The FAMa's overall capacity was extremely low, and it lacked the capacity to conduct complex operations. Support for units deployed to fight in the north was not functional.[79] When responding to a military situation, the Malians always turned to the unit that happened to be located closest to the problem, regardless of if that unit was trained for that problem set or if that unit was specifically designated for a different purpose.[80]

At the tactical level, the FAMa suffered from considerable command and control failures and the inability to conduct coordinated offensive operations.[81] The soldiers, panicked in fear, faced with who they believed was a stronger adversary–and fled the front.[82] Both junior officers and enlisted soldiers held the President, the Minister of Defense, and senior military leaders responsible for the inadequate supply of northern units.[83]

The FAMa was stricken with incredibly limited and outdated equipment platforms. Overall, the corrupt practices of ATT resulted in dire shortages of equipment and supplies for Mali's security forces. If Commanders needed something for their units, they were supposed to submit an equipment or ammunition request to the Department of Equipment, Gas, and Transport of the Armed Forces (Direction du Matériel, des Hydrocarbures et des Transports des Armées or DMHTA) under the General Staff. However, they knew their requests would

[78] "Mali - Armed Forces."
[79] Tull, "Rebuilding Mali's Army," 411.
[80] AFRICOM J5, "Mali Retrospective - Implications for Security Cooperation Paradigms and Strategy in Africa" (Stuttgart, Germany: US Africa Command (AFRICOM), June 1, 2012), 5.
[81] Touchard, "Mali," January 30, 2014; Touchard, "Guerre Au Mali"; Touchard, "Défense."
[82] Marc-André Boisvert, "Forces Armées Maliennes, Une Lente Reconstruction," *Afrique Contemporaine* 4, no. 260 (2016): 87–90.
[83] Mark Moyar, "Countering Violent Extremism in Mali," Manuscript (Joint Special Operations University, November 2015), 23, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GOVPUB-D-PURL-gpo81723/pdf/GOVPUB-D-PURL-gpo81723.pdf.

not be fulfilled. The system was hampered by a lack of political will to allocate the required resources across the board.[84] Instead, the General Staff relied on international donations to fill the gaps in its procurement capacity, which made for a very diverse fleet. Historically, the Republic of Mali depended on Soviet equipment during the time of its military dictatorship, so a lot of its equipment was Soviet holdovers and relics.

There was no command emphasis on maintenance throughout the entire Malian armed forces except the Air Force. Mali's acquisition system also neglected to lifecycle manage its equipment, leading to the quick deterioration of most items.[85] Given the overall lack of training and equipment, officers were not trained and familiar with the weapons they carried.[86]

The Malian military displayed a range of issues regarding equipment. First, the general state of issued equipment and personal weaponry was substandard. The condition of the average rifle in the Malian army was 'remarkably poor.' Deficiencies abounded; soldiers carried AK rifles without stocks, missing hand guards or front sights, or broken rear sights and wobbly stocks. The majority of its weapons were unserviceable for both training and general usage. This was also the case amongst Mali's operational units deployed to the north. The FAMa also had persistent issues fielding the equipment it did have. The FAMa often prioritized stockpiling new equipment and supplies over distributing them to troops in need. As soldiers knew they had an underfunded military, it was generally accepted that there were no guarantees that requests for replacement items would be fulfilled.[87] However, available weapons could always be verified on Independence Day or Armed Services Day when they were issued to soldiers specifically for participation in military parades.[88]

During the crisis in January 2012, units in the north lost (or abandoned) two-thirds of Mali's total equipment stocks to AAD after the fight and the ensuing massacre at Aguelhok. Seventy

[84] Interview with former US Security Cooperation Officer (OSC) in Mali (2011-2012), May 9, 2019.
[85] Interview with former Mali OSC (2011-2012), May 19, 2019.
[86] Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 23.
[87] Powelson, 25.
[88] Powelson, 27.

Malian soldiers ran out of ammunition, surrendered, and were executed by the Islamists.[89] The Malian soldiers' confidence that the military hierarchy would adequately protect them in battle was critically broken in that one incident. Shortly thereafter, multiple smaller posts surrendered or abandoned their positions and just left their equipment.[90]

Military Logistics

Two military directorates played a role in military logistics. The DMHTA was responsible for provisioning and maintaining all vehicles, weapons, optics, and associated items for use and maintenance by the Malian military. It was directly responsible for the equivalent of US level III (direct support) and level IV (depot) maintenance. It established standards for unit-level and operator-level maintenance throughout the FAMa. It was also responsible for managing the procurement and distribution of fuel, though it deferred to the Air Force to manage the purchase and management of aircraft fuel. Finally, the DMHTA was responsible for fielding equipment and support based on orders from the Joint Operations Center (Centre Operational Inter-Armée or COIA) at the EMGA.[91]

The DMHTA was also responsible for training the mechanics and subject matter experts who dealt with the different responsibilities and tasks under its purview. DMHTA officers assigned to staffs, conducted logistics planning for garrison and tactical operations. The directorate was in the military garrison in Kati and was responsible for managing the military war stocks/reserves stored therein. Prior to the 2012 coup, the stocks included weapons and armored vehicles.[92]

The Defense Logistics Agency (Directorate du commissariat des armées or DCA) was responsible for the provision and maintenance of all individual equipment and the provisioning of all rations to units in garrison and deployed. The DCA was responsible for

[89] "Assessing Developments in Mali: Restoring Democracy and Reclaiming the North" (Washington, DC, December 5, 2012), 35, https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/120512_Transcript_Assessing%20Developments%20in%20Mali.pdf.
[90] Interview with former Mali OSC (2011-2012), on May 9, 2019.
[91] Internal US Embassy Bamako document from Spring 2012, detailing the Malian military directorates and their service descriptions.
[92] Internal US Embassy Bamako document from Spring 2012, detailing the Malian military directorates and their service descriptions.

fielding equipment and support based on orders received from the COIA at the EMGA. DCA officers assigned to staffs, conducted logistics planning for garrison and tactical operations.[93]

The FAMa's ability to logistically support their units was 'exceptionally limited' and very stove-piped, recounted a former US security cooperation officer who had served in Bamako.[94] With an abysmal road network, extremely limited aviation capacity, and a harsh climate, one former DATT identified they were "barely able to manage life support for routine garrison operations."[95] A Malian Commander of one of the elite units recounted, "The FAMa has no logistics. It's the definition of the Army; we are like a fish out of the water. If there are no logistics, there is no military."[96]

Very few processes existed, such as a logistics planning process or methodology. A network of maintenance depots and supply chain stopovers had been constructed throughout the country by the French during the Colonial period. However, nearly all were extremely dilapidated and not able to properly service vehicles.[97] All efforts to manage the deployment of military forces and equipment within the country happened on an ad hoc basis. There was also no formalized process to manage the repair and maintenance of weapons, equipment, and vehicles. Furthermore, no accountability system was in place to track and manage supplies and equipment.

Military Personnel Policies

The FAMa relied on voluntary enlistment. Individuals could apply to join the armed forces, typically following a recruitment campaign. Traditionally, recruitment efforts were often localized, with a focus on attracting individuals from different regions to ensure a diverse military force. Until 2000, the FAMa's efforts used to be decentralized throughout Mali on a prefecture-by-prefecture basis, which worked to ensure there was a regional diversity of

[93] Internal US Embassy Bamako document from Spring 2012, detailing the Malian military directorates and their service descriptions.
[94] Interview with former Mali OSC (2011-2012), on May 9, 2019.
[95] Interview with Colonel (ret) Marshall Mantiply, Senior Defense Officer/Defense Attaché in Bamako (2008-2010) on November 14, 2018.
[96] Interview with former Commander of the 33rd RCP, on October 22, 2018.
[97] Interview with Colonel (ret) Joshua Burgess, former JSOTF-TS J5 (2007-2009), on November 14, 2024.

recruits and kept corruption in check.[98] However, after 2000, as corruption within the security sector increased, more and more of that recruitment became based out of Bamako.[99] Having a recruitment and promotion system based on patronage networks rather than merit significantly undermined the competence levels of Mali's armed forces and left soldiers lacking basic provisions (salaries, equipment).[100] Under ATT, securing a position in the armed forces often hinged on having influential connections, such as a relative holding the rank of Colonel or General, or they went to the highest bidder; skill sets did not matter.[101]

Candidates were supposed to meet specific age, health, and education criteria, typically ranging from 18 to 30 years old, pass a medical examination, and have a high school degree to become an NCO or a college degree to become an officer. Recruits underwent basic training, which included physical fitness, military tactics, and education on military discipline.[102]

Corruption within the defense sector began with President Touré's regular promotion of military officers to the rank of general based on their loyalty. During his two terms in office, he promoted 45 officers, which doubled the total number of generals to 104.[103] The lower officer ranks–those who fought on the front lines in the north, bearing the same rank as the 2012 coup leaders–did not receive the same treatment.[104] President Touré strategically withheld resources from the regular military to keep it weak while at the same time supporting his presidential guard (red berets). At the same time, cases of senior military officers (part of the patronage system) enjoying impunity from the laws and repercussions

[98] Interview with journalist, Adam Thiam, on September 20, 2016
[99] Interview with Eloi Togo, former Commander of the 33rd RCP, on September 14, 2016.
[100] Karolina MacLachlan, *Security Assistance, Corruption and Fragile Environments; Exploring the Case of Mali 2001-2012* (London, UK: Transparency International, 2015), 24, https://ti-defence.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/150818-150817-Security-assistance-corruption-and-fragile-environments-Exploring-the-case-of-Mali-2001-2012.pdf.
[101] Yacouba Koné, "Lessons from Mali's Arab Spring: Why Democracy Must Work for the Poor," September 2012, 12.; and interview with Journalist Adama Diarra, September 16, 2016.
[102] Interview with Lieutenant Colonel Yssouf Traoré, former Commander of the 33rd, on May 1, 2018.
[103] Barea, "The Malian Armed Forces and the Future of EUTM"; Hussein Solomon, "Mali: West Africa's Afghanistan," *The RUSI Journal* 158, no. 1 (February 1, 2013): 12–19, https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2013.774635.
[104] MacLachlan, *Security Assistance, Corruption and Fragile Environments; Exploring the Case of Mali 2001-2012*, 23.

were public, common knowledge. These divisions created a very serious, damaged esprit de corps and weakened "cohesion and operational readiness."[105]

A Defense Sector Reform Advisor to the MDAC recounted that jobs and promotions were "given based on political appointment and loyalty, but that doesn't get the work done. The FAMa is seen as a social promotion and an employment guarantee."[106] This explained the lack of professionalism in the army, where the majority of officers were related to people associated with the regime. Corruption and nepotism extended all the way from the top, senior-most levels of government to the bottom. The Minister of Defense often did not have the proper background to serve his function; he was just there to serve the President. "Even Ministers believed they were chosen because of their ties rather than their competence and therefore were only focused on maintaining their relationship with ATT, not on their technical day job."[107] It was documented that similar corruption existed within the justice and legal sectors.

The FAMa faced significant ethnic and demographic challenges. After previous rebellions, the reintegration of ethnic minorities was mishandled, with no efforts made to foster relationships. Bamako's policies of promoting reintegrated Tuareg created deep-seated grievances amongst soldiers from the South, who had not deserted and saw their colleagues killed by the deserting soldiers. Malian military personnel rotated between the south and the north every three years, giving them time off in the relatively peaceful south after several years of hardship and danger in the north.[108] Interviews with US SOF officers identified that this rotational schedule created "essentially insurmountable problems for those attempting to assist the Malians to improve their capabilities."[109]

Leading up to 2012, there was no social welfare system for military personnel and their families. Military personnel were paid in cash and oftentimes did not receive their full

[105] MacLachlan, 24.
[106] Interview with DSR Advisor to the MDAC, Kissima Gakou, September 2016; interview with Journalist Adama Diarra, September 16, 2016.
[107] Interview with DSR Advisor to the MDAC, Kissima Gakou, September 2016
[108] Moyar, "Countering Violent Extremism in Mali," 18.
[109] Moyar, 18.

paychecks, as superior officers would skim money off the top for their own personal well-being.

The Directorate of Military Education (Directorate des École militaire) was responsible for the institutional level training of officers, noncommissioned officers, and soldiers. It oversaw the English language lab, the military high school (Prytanee), the Officer Candidate School (École militaire inter-armée), the NCO academy, and basic soldier training at various bases around the south of the country.[110] These military education institutions did not meet regional or international standards.[111] A former OSC noted, "Mali was crippled by a simplistic and ineffectual institutional training system that prepared neither individuals nor units for combat."[112] The country possessed two national military schools: an officer candidate's school, the Joint Military School (École de guerre or War College), located in Koulikoro, which opened in 2000, and the Basic Training for Non-Commissioned Officers (the Banankoro School), which opened in 2001.[113] Officially, officers and NCOs would choose a specialization and then conduct focused training in locations dependent on the specialty.[114] However, though several Army-specific schools were supposed to exist, the US's defense sector reform team identified the country as having almost no training capacity, so it was "unclear what they were actually able to train their soldiers on."[115] Other national-level military training would occur at the Ségou and Sikasso bases in central Mali.[116]

The MDAC never developed a Malian training plan for its armed forces. In comparison, the Western professional military education training model offered individual and collective task training in preparation for war. Without such a model in place in Mali, no common

[110] Internal US Embassy Bamako document from Spring 2012, detailing the Malian military directorates and their service descriptions.
[111] Adama Mahamane Maiga, "Empowering Democracy Through Civil-Military Relations: The Case of Mali 2012-2017" (Monterey, California, Naval Postgraduate School, 2017), 8.
[112] Interview with former Mali OSC (2011-2012), on May 19, 2019.
[113] The War College was moved in 2013 to enable EUTM-Mali to conduct its training at this location. Theodore McLauchlin, Marc-André Boisvert, and Aboubacar Maïga, "Les formations militaires internationales et l'instabilité politique en Afrique subsaharienne," Cahier du CÉRIUM Working Paper (Université de Montréal.: Centre d'études et de recherches internationales, December 2019), 43, https://cerium.umontreal.ca/public/FAS/cerium/Images/4_nouvelles_evenements/legacy/ilovepdf_merged.pdf.
[114] Interview with Attaher Maiga, Directorate of Training and Doctrine, on October 21, 2018.
[115] Interview with Abbie Robinson, former US SGI Defense Team Lead for Mali, on October 19, 2018.
[116] "Mali - Army," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 2019.

qualification standards existed, nor were they achieved at the individual or unit level. Tasks, therefore, were not performed to standard on a consistent and reliable basis.[117] All of Mali's uniformed services faced serious human capital shortages due to low levels of education.[118] Mali lacked effective structures to maintain and enhance the training of its armed forces.[119]

Mali traditionally depended on its international partners to fulfill its training requirements both in and out of the country. Approximately 10 to 15 percent of Malian officers received training in other countries, and similarly, 10 to 15 percent of billets in Mali's training schools were held by officers from other African countries.[120] Historically, participant selection for professional military education and training programs was based on nepotism rather than competency, as professional training facilitated promotion.[121] Senior officers were frequently sent to international training schools to make up for the lack of a war college in Mali. Mali sent officers to other schools on the continent in Gabon, Central African Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Niger, Mauritania, and Morocco, and to the US, Germany, and France.[122] Bamako hosted the Alioune Blondin Beye Peacekeeping School (École de maintien de la paix or EMP), one of ECOWAS's three sub-regional peacekeeping schools.[123] Cooperation existed at the regional level between the tactically focused EMP (Bamako), the strategic level National Defense College (Abuja), and the operationally focused Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC, Accra).[124]

Military Justice Policies

Mali's judiciary had constitutional and legal oversight over the defense sector. Its responsibilities included investigating potential infringements and the potential provision of martial law via military tribunals and courts. However, it suffered from severe resource constraints (personnel, infrastructure, corruption, lack of training, funding, and

[117] Interview with former Security Cooperation Officer in Bamako, on May 9, 2019.
[118] For example, in 2013, the World Bank estimated the youth literacy rate at 47 percent and adult literacy rate at 34 percent. World Bank, "World Development Indicators," World DataBank, April 14, 2015.
[119] Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 29.
[120] Interview with Attaher Maiga, Directorate of Training and Doctrine, on October 21, 2018.
[121] Interview with former Defense Sector Reform Advisor to the MDAC, September 2016
[122] Interview with Attaher Maiga, Directorate of Training and Doctrine, on October 21, 2018.
[123] "Alioune Blondin Beye Peacekeeping School," accessed September 17, 2024, https://www.empbamako.org/en/school-mission/.
[124] Nimaga, "Mali," 148.

mismanagement). A US implementer noted that "Mali has too few judges and lawyers, which contributes to case backlogs."[125]

The Malian military justice system was officially created in 2008 and functioned with legal irregularities.[126] The Code of Military Justice said that it is the only body of law that should be applied to soldiers. At the same time, the Military Code said that soldiers may be prosecuted according to military or civilian law (depending on the nature of the infraction).[127] In 2012, there were approximately 50 to 60 military lawyers in the Malian army. Few cases have been referred to the military justice system, and none of them have been known to have resulted in judgments.[128]

The Gendarmerie (Gendarmerie Nationale or GN), which administratively fell under the MDAC but operationally fell under the Ministry of Internal Security and Civil Defense, possessed a military police function (among others) and was supposed to accompany army units when deployed to provide oversight and conduct criminal investigations against army officers and soldiers who violated the code of conduct.[129] GN officers were better educated than army personnel and had a reputation for being more professional. However, according to Michael Shurkin, it is "implausible that GN officers would have been adequately trained and able to fulfill the function assigned to them, and even less plausible that they would have enjoyed the kind of institutional support that would have empowered them to denounce their army colleagues or check them in the field."[130]

In 2012, there was a recognized general state of impunity in the force. Mali's justice infrastructure was virtually nonexistent, with both civilian and military legal systems failing to operate effectively, thereby rendering the state incapable of prosecuting human rights

[125] "SGI Monitoring and Evaluation Stocktaking Report" (Washington, DC: Department of State, September 30, 2019), 68.
[126] Interview with Hamidou Abdoulaye, Director of Military Justice, on September 15, 2016 and Brahima Mamadou Diallo, Legal Advisor to the Minister of Defense, September 14, 2016.
[127] Interview with Brahima Mamadou Diallo, Legal Advisor at the MDAC, on October 14, 2016.
[128] Interview with Abdoulaye Hamdou, Director of Military Justice, on September 14, 2016.
[129] The other functions of the GN include policing, administrative police, and defense. In terms of criminal investigation, the GN record crimes and offences, contraventions, investigation to collect proof and identify perpetrators of violations, etc.). Nimaga, "Mali," 130.
[130] Shurkin et al., "Building Armies, Building Nations," 176.

violations.[131] Examples of cases committed by soldiers included mutiny, desertion, rebellion, and abuse. There was great political interference. It was up to the Minister of Defense to give his authorization for officers to be tried making it a very political process.[132] There was no way to appeal the Minister of Defense's decision as he is not a part of the judicial process. A legal advisor to the MDAC recounted that "In the last 10 years, while there had been an increase in cases reported, they were all still in the process of being investigated. No one had been brought to trial, not even Sanogo."[133] The Director of Military Justice recounted that "there was a huge list of dossiers that sat on the Minister's desk, blocked." While many people have joined the court of magistrates, many have not been properly trained.

The judiciary did not play an oversight role, enabling the military to act independently. Military justice institutions–the Inspector General and the Directorate of Military Justice–had, for decades, 'been undermined intentionally to make them ineffective' and to avoid any public questioning of the military hierarchy.[134]

Military Doctrine

Military culture (values and behaviors) is capable of spreading within a nation's armed forces thanks to its doctrine and code of conduct.[135] During Mali's independence, it is unsurprising that the military code of conduct, the military code of justice, and its doctrine were initially drafted by inexperienced officers seeking to replicate French documents.[136] These existed as 'basic texts,' but nothing was officially approved that could be distributed to the army writ

[131] Virginie Ladisch, "Possibilities and Challenges for Transitional Justice in Mali" (New York, NY: International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), September 2014), https://primarysources.brillonline.com/browse/human-rights-documents-online/possibilities-and-challenges-for-transitional-justice-in-mali;hrdhrd98082014005.
[132] Interview with Hamidou Abdoulaye, Director of Military Justice, on September 15, 2016; Interview with Brahima Mamadou Diallo, Legal Advisor to the Minister of Defense, on September 14, 2016.
[133] Interviews with Brahima Mamadou Diallo, Legal Advisor to the Minister of Defense, September 14, 2016.
[134] Maiga, "Empowering Democracy Through Civil-Military Relations: The Case of Mali 2012-2017," 6.
[135] Jean Callaghan and Franz Kernic, *Armed Forces and International Security* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2003); Henrik Furst and Gerhard Kummel, *Core Values and the Expeditionary Mindset: Armed Forces in Metamorphosis* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2011).
[136] Boisvert, "Forces Armées Maliennes, Une Lente Reconstruction," 88.

large. From 1960 to 2012, multiple officers stated that no update of doctrine, norms, or values had ever been officially conducted.[137]

Mali has instead relied extensively on foreign doctrine, such as French, American, Soviet, or Moroccan, to inform its approach to the battlefield.[138] A Malian Army Lieutenant Colonel commented, "We don't have a standardized, approved doctrine to direct our given situation, such as what our needs and requirements are, and how we carry out those needs."[139] When it has sent officers to train in foreign countries, they are instructed to return with doctrine, and these foreign examples have served to informally advise Malian officers on what their doctrine should be, or it is replicated and distributed in Mali's military institutions.[140] The current state of Mali's doctrine within and amongst the FAMa remained unclear in 2018. One officer relayed that Mali's doctrine was updated after the Mali-Burkina war in 1974 and was centered on state-on-state conflict. This version was very army and ground-focused, while the Air Force doctrine served as an attachment.[141] Some references existed that the État-Major was working on an updated draft,[142] while many others denied any progress was underway.[143] A formal office, the Joint Doctrine Center (le Centre interarmées de doctrine), existed to oversee the completion of the doctrine. A Guidance of the Employment of the Force (Concept de l'Emploi des Forces) was published in July 2014.[144] Yet mission-specific doctrine and guidance did not exist.[145] The Commander of one of FAMa's elite units documented that no specific counterterrorism doctrine existed either; "there is no direction to us in the field, such as a formula to be carried out by the special forces that dictates, for

[137] Interviews with former 33rd Commander, Eloi Togo on September 13, 2016; General Abderahmanne Baby, Secretary of the Army on October 25, 2018; Colonel Moussa Ongoiba former 33rd Commander, on October 22, 2018; Tankel, 250; among others.
[138] Shurkin, Pezard, and Zimmerman, *Mali's Next Battle Improving Counterterrorism Capabilities*, 68.
[139] Interview with Lieutenant Colonel Yssouf Traoré, former Commander of the 33rd RCP, on May 1, 2018.
[140] Interview with Lieutenant Colonel Yssouf Traoré, former Commander of the 33rd RCP, on May 1, 2018.
[141] Sory I. Kone, "Doctrine for a Smaller Air Force: Mali and the Question of Unique Air Doctrine:" (Fort Belvoir, VA: Air Command and Staff College, March 1, 1997), 1, https://doi.org/10.21236/ADA397875.
[142] Interview with Lieutenant Colonel Yssouf Traoré, former Commander of the 33rd RCP, on May 1, 2018; Marc-André Boisvert, "The Malian Armed Forces and Its Discontents: Civil-Military Relations, Cohesion and the Resilience of a Postcolonial Military Institution in the Aftermath of the 2012 Crisis" (Norwich, England, University of East Anglia, 2019), 295, https://core.ac.uk/download/346617610.pdf.
[143] Boisvert, 295.
[144] Government de Mali, Ministère de la défense, Concept d'Emploi des Forces (Juillet 2014) CEF 02-01-NP-JUL14, 1-17.
[145] Maiga, "Empowering Democracy Through Civil-Military Relations: The Case of Mali 2012-2017," 8.

example, what should happen if a village is attacked, that we are directed to engage within a certain set number of hours."[146]

Mali's official Code of Conduct was originally written by the État-Major in 1960; however, it didn't officially come into effect until 1998. It had 36 articles and elaborated the principal mission of the Malian armed forces was 'to prepare for and guarantee, if necessary by armed force, the defense of the homeland, the republican form of the state, its democratic heritage and the highest interests of the nation.'[147] It outlined Mali's defense policy, detailing the three categories of missions the armed and security forces could undertake—during peacetime, internal unrest, and wartime—and clarified the military's role in each scenario. Yet this document was, for a very long time, reportedly unknown to the majority of military officers.[148] It also did not have any definition, standards, or consequences of corruption for military and civilian personnel.[149]

Given this lack of clear and available doctrine and guidance, the culture of Mali's armed forces deteriorated over time. Rather than valuing "honesty, discipline, self-sacrifice, decisive action, initiative, or duty to country," Powelson documented, a toxic culture emerged that "did not support sound individual initiative or discipline–a culture overrun by apathy."[150] A concrete example of this was the absence of "acting on commander's intent," the practice of soldiers using their judgment and initiative to carry out actions in line with the overarching goals and objectives communicated by their Commander. In the Malian armed forces, soldiers would only act when given a direct order by an immediate supervisor. While it was an implicit intent that company commanders ensure their soldiers remain mission-

[146] Interview with Moussa Ongoiba, former Commander of the 33rd RCP, on October 22, 2018.
[147] Title I, Article 1 (authors' translation). Ministère des Forces Armées et des Anciens Combattants, "Code de conduite des Forces Armées et de Sécurité du Mali [Code of conduct of the armed and security forces of Mali]" (1997).
[148] Ministère de la Défense et des Anciens Combatants, "Code de conduite des forces armées et de sécurité du Mali," Bamako, Mali: Ministère de la Défense et des Anciens Combatants, January 10, 1997.
[149] Florina Christina Matei, "The Case of Mali," in *Security Forces in African States*, ed. Paul Shemella and Nicholas Tomb (Amherst, New York: Cambria Press, 2017), 113.
[150] Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 31.

ready, commanders did not conduct daily training to ensure continued unit competence and readiness.[151]

At the same time, the armed forces in Mali viewed itself as existing a class apart. A MINUSMA officer described that "they think of themselves as a state within a state, and the glue holding the state together."[152] Furthermore, Mali lacked a military ethos. A Colonel Major relayed, "For an officer to say 'Ok, I will die defending my unit,' you need to have a military tradition or ethos. Mali does not have one."[153]

Conduct of Defense Policy

Section two of this assessment reviews the conduct of defense policy. A country's defense policy provides important insights into its strategic goals, priorities, and view of its security environment.

Role of Political Officials

Mali's history of coups has fostered a climate of suspicion and mistrust between civilians and the defense sector. Mali's political decision-makers, who constantly feared a coup d'état, seemed to lack interest in defense issues, often because of the 'secret' nature of security issues.[154] Given ATT's role as the leader of the 1991 coup, "coup-proofing became a national obsession" during his administration.[155] His interference in military recruitment, training, and promotion significantly undermined the professionalism of the armed forces.[156] The country's lack of military professionalism also stemmed from the absence of civilian control due to very low levels of civilian expertise in security and defense issues.[157] This

[151] Powelson, 31. Interview with Lieutenant Colonel Yssouf Traoré, former Commander of the 33rd RCP, on May 1, 2018.
[152] Interview with Evert Kets, MINUSMA SSR Officer, on September 19, 2016
[153] Interview with Eloi Togo, on September 13, 2016
[154] Anatole Ayissi and Nouhoum Sangaré, eds., "Mali," in *Budgeting for the Military Sector in Africa: The Processes and Mechanisms of Control* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 122–36, https://sipri.org/sites/default/files/files/books/SIPRI06OmHu/SIPRI06OmHu.pdf.
[155] Boisvert, "Forces Armées Maliennes, Une Lente Reconstruction," 79.
[156] Moyar, "Countering Violent Extremism in Mali."
[157] Maiga, "Empowering Democracy Through Civil-Military Relations: The Case of Mali 2012-2017," 7.

demonstrates how poor national civilian leadership could impede the security sector reform process and its progress.

Officially, both civilians and the military provided oversight over the Malian Armed Forces. In 2012, the Malian constitution designated the President of the Republic as the Commander in Chief of the armed forces, who maintained political control over the armed and security forces.[158] The President could not commit Mali to combat operations without the agreement of the National Assembly. The National Assembly possessed the power to authorize a declaration of war.[159]

The President presided over three governmental Councils responsible for defense policy, military management, and crisis management: the Higher Council for National Defense, the Committee on National Defense, Security, and Civil Protection, and the Council of Ministers.[160] The Committee on National Defense had the responsibility for oversight and control of all Malian security matters. The Malian President appointed the Minister of Defense and the Chief of the Defense Staff (Chef d'état-major de la défense or CHOD). The Prime Minister was responsible for the 'execution' of the national defense policy.[161] A civilian minister led the MDAC and was responsible for implementing the country's national security policy and best practices, as well as ensuring that the armed forces functioned in an ethical manner and complied with the code of conduct. The Ministry's inspectorate department was also involved in this oversight mission. If an offense involved a human rights violation, the case was brought before the prosecutor, who had the authority to initiate proceedings.[162]

ATT regularly included senior military officers in his party and various ministries. This strengthened the loyalty of Army leadership in his favor and created lucrative financial and

[158] See Title II, Article 44: "Mali 1992 Constitution," Constitute, accessed September 13, 2024, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Mali_1992.
[159] Article 71, "Mali 1992 Constitution."
[160] "Decree No. 98-285/P/PRM" (1998).
[161] Article 55, "Mali 1992 Constitution."
[162] Nimaga, "Mali," 134.

economic opportunities for them. Few NGOs or CSOs were involved with military matters. However, more and more began participating in public discussions about military policy.

Ministry of Defense and Veterans Affairs (MDAC)

While the Malian MDAC was structured to oversee the country's armed forces, it faced significant challenges and limitations. The Minister was typically a civilian; however, in some instances, military personnel held the position.[163] Specific data on the exact ratio of civilians to military personnel within the Malian Ministry of Defense in 2012 was not readily available. However, those interviewed estimated 20 or fewer civilians throughout the ministry, involved in administrative, logistical, and policy roles.[164] However, no formal human resource policy or structure existed.

Defense Strategy, Planning, and Budget

Up until the time of the coup, Mali had no official defense or security strategy to guide and direct its security sector. The lack of a defense strategy deriving from an overarching national security strategy obstructed the effectiveness of the defense and security sectors. Mali's first National Defense Strategy (Livre blanc) was drafted in 2013 and presented to and approved by the High Council on Defense in December 2014. This version, however, only contained a component drafted by the Ministry of Defense. It was supposed to be combined with security strategies from other relevant ministries to form an overarching National Security Strategy. However, this never happened.[165] The interagency working group was waiting for contributions from the different sectors.[166] In July 2014, Mali published a Guidance for the Employment of the Force (Concept d'emploi des forces), which was derived from the Malian National Security Strategy and laid out the different justifications for the use of military force.[167] The Joint Doctrine Center was responsible for distributing the doctrine so that the entire force was adequately informed and could benefit from it. Even pocket-sized cards were

[163] Military officers have held the post during periods of political instability or military coups, such as: General Sadio Camara (October 2020 - May 2021, May 2021 - present), General Ibrahima Dahirou Dembélé (2019-2020), Lieutenant Kissima Darkara (1970-1978), Kafougouna Koné (1991-1992). This is not a complete list.
[164] Interview with Yssouf Traoré, former Commander of the 33rd RCP, on October 25, 2024.
[165] Interview with Mahamane Adama Maiga, Malian National Security Council staff, on April 2, 2025.
[166] Interview with Salifou Kone, Secretary General of the Minister of Defense, September 16, 2016
[167] "Concept d'emploi des forces" (Bamako, Mali: État-Major General Des Armées, July 18, 2014).

printed and distributed for every soldier to carry with them.[168] In 2016, the working group also drafted a multi-sectoral Malian National Strategy for Countering Terrorism.[169]

In 2014, Mali introduced a Military Programming Law (Loi de Programmation Militaire or LOPM, 2013–2017), a strategic framework outlining the FAMa's priorities and financial requirements for the ensuing five years. This law delineated objectives for recurrent expenditures, capital investments in new equipment, and the recruitment of additional personnel. It was developed and adopted by the Malian Parliament in February 2015.[170] The goal of the LOPM was to enhance the operational effectiveness of combat units and mobile teams, bolster logistical support for transportation and counter-mobility capabilities, and improve the living conditions of military personnel. [171]

The General Status of the Military (*Statut général des militaires),* a new law passed in 2017, codified military standards for the first time (recruitment, discipline, promotion, training, rank hierarchy, compensation, and benefits).[172] The Malian Secretary of the Army referred to it as "the fundamental text for the restructuring of the FAMa."[173]

In 2018, Mali's defense expenditure as a percentage of GDP was 2.9 percent, tripling since the beginning of the conflict in 2012.[174] The Ministry of Defense prepared the defense budget, which was then subjected to the standard procedure for adoption within the national budget. This meant that there was a transparent system through which the defense budget was screened, working to guarantee transparency and accountability.[175] Until 2016, the

[168] Interview with General Abderahmanne Baby, Secretary of the Army, on October 25, 2018.
[169] Interview with Salifou Kone, Secretary General of the Minister of Defense, September 16, 2016
[170] maliweb, "Reforme de l'armée : Le parlement adopte la loi de programmation militaire," février 2015, https://www.maliweb.net/politique/assemblee-nationale/reforme-de-larmee-le-parlement-adopte-la-loi-de-programmation-militaire-817732.html.
[171] Mamadou Makadji, "Mali : Tout Sur La Loi d'orientation et de Programmation Militaire : Son Budget, Sa Justification et Ses Éléments," *Mali Actu*, août 2016, https://maliactu.net/mali-tout-sur-la-loi-dorientation-et-de-programmation-militaire-son-budget-sa-justification-et-ses-elements/.
[172] Ousmane Morba, "Statut Général Des Militaires: Une Autre Raison de Mourir Pour Sa Patrie," Malijet, September 4, 2017, https://malijet.com/la_societe_malienne_aujourdhui/actualite_de_la_nation_malienne/193806-statut-general-des-militaires-une-autre-raison-de-mourir-pour-sa.html.
[173] Interview with General Abderahmanne Baby, Secretary of the Army, on October 25, 2018.
[174] Boisvert, "Forces Armées Maliennes, Une Lente Reconstruction," 79.
[175] Nimaga captures the several phases to the procedure: budget is drafted by the department concerned; adoption in the cabinet of the competent ministry; transmission to the ministry of finance; inclusion in the national budget;

Malian government did not utilize a priority-based budgeting system. Mali traditionally had a very small army procurement budget (estimated at $10 to $15 million annually since 2002, including construction and physical infrastructure).[176] The budget allocated for the defense sector was publicly available and included in the national budget, which was submitted to the Council of Ministers and the National Assembly for annual approval. Specialized public administration departments in the Ministry of Defense managed defense resources.[177]

The absence of financial management systems and procedures hindered accountability, anti-corruption efforts, and auditing processes. Quite the contrary, senior members of the FAMa were suspected of being involved with trafficking in the north. By 2008, illicit trafficking, particularly narcotics, had become deeply integrated into Mali's state security and political structures. Never was this made more apparent than the notorious 'Air Cocaine' incident in 2009 when a Boeing 727, believed to have been carrying up to 10 tons of cocaine, was found burned up in the Malian desert.[178] It was leaked by officials involved in the investigation that not only state security services, but the President himself, intervened to stymie the investigations for Air Cocaine. An interview in 2013 with a Malian government official in Bamako noted that the army "regularly blocks police investigations."[179]

Overall Political, Economic, and Security Environment

Chapter 3, Regional Overview, presented a detailed overview of Mali's political and justice systems, economic situation, internal conflicts, and external threats. A country's overall political, economic, and security environment is crucial for a comprehensive defense sector assessment. These factors shape the context in which defense policy and military strategies are developed and implemented.

Section II. Assessment of Defense Institutions and Processes

review and adoption by the council of ministers; transmission, discussion and final adoption by the National Assembly; and proclamation of the finance law by the President of the Republic. Nimaga, "Mali," 144.
[176] "Mali - Army," 7.
[177] Moulaye, "Missed Opportunities for Comprehensive Security Sector Reform in Mali," 82.
[178] Afua Hirsch, "Cocaine Flows through Sahara as Al-Qaida Cashes in on Lawlessness," *The Guardian*, May 2, 2013, sec. World news, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/02/cocaine-flows-through-sahara-al-qaida.
[179] Tinti, "Illicit Trafficking and Instability in Mali: Past, Present, and Future," 12.

Section II assesses how the country's defense institutions and processes match what the US views as the critical capacities of a defense sector. This assessment involves a qualitative appraisal and then a quantitative scoring of the country's capacities on a scale of 1 (entirely lacking) to 5 (strong and no major improvement needed). There is a qualitative appraisal of each capacity and then a quantitative scoring of the country's capabilities based on the following scale:

1. *Very Low:* entirely lacking
2. *Low:* beginning to develop
3. *Neither Low nor High:* minimal but functioning
4. *High:* functional but room for improvement
5. *Very High:* strong and no major improvement needed

Table 5.1 Assessment of Defense Sector Critical Capacities for Reform

Critical Capacities of the Defense Sector	Qualitative Assessment	Quantitative Assessment (1 to 5)
A. Civilian control of military in practice, not just organization	See Below	1
B. Systems of defense planning, procurement, budgeting, and financial management, including contracting and auditing		1
C. Professionalism of military forces in terms of education and training		1
D. Military personnel policies capable of recruiting, training, and retaining high-quality soldiers and officers representative of society as a whole		1
E. Effective military command-and-control and logistics organizations		1
F. Incorporation of rule of law and human rights components into military and MDAC training programs		1
G. Security forces carry out their functions in accordance with the principles of accountability, transparency, public participation, and respect for human rights		1
Rating Scale: 1 (Very Low: Entirely Lacking), 2 (Low: Beginning to Develop), 3 (Neither Low nor High: Minimal but Functioning), 4 (High: Functional but Room for Improvement), and 5 (Very High: Strong and no Major Improvement Needed)		

Source**:** Defense Sector Assessment Rating Tool, the RAND Corporation (2010)

Mali has civilian control of the military in organization but not in practice (Very Low, 1)
In 2012, Mali maintained *very low* civilian control of the military organization in practice. Continuous legislative oversight of the defense sector did not exist, and formal oversight mechanisms lacked expertise and authority. Mali's 1992 constitution was the cornerstone of the separation of powers between the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary. Each entity was supposed to provide checks and balances over the military. While these bodies had official roles and responsibilities on paper, active oversight was not conducted in practice. Until 2012, the President of the Republic, dual-hatted as the commander in chief of the armed forces, was also a former senior officer in the Malian military. A question, therefore, existed whether there was strong political will to support active security sector reform efforts.

The National Assembly exercised its oversight of the defense sector by reviewing draft defense bills under consideration and adopting the defense budget. However, parliamentarians lacked basic knowledge pertaining to the general security sector and defense-related issues.[180] Parliamentarians believed security was a 'reserved domain' for uniformed officers.[181] While legislators could discuss the military budget, the executive could choose to ignore their suggestions and was not bound by any amendments proposed to them. Even if the National Assembly refused to approve the budget, the Executive could continue to expend funds unimpeded after a few days pause.[182] In addition, the government traditionally communicated very little about security matters and there was a clear lack of political will to subject the security sector to democratic control. There was also no committee in the Malian parliament that provided oversight over Mali's intelligence agencies.[183]

While it had the authority to question the Minister of Defense or other security officials, the various security committees remained 'passive' and did not exercise their power to request

[180] Interview with Karim Keita, National Committee for Security and Defense Chair, on October 23, 2018.
[181] Nimaga, "Mali," 136.
[182] Ayissi and Sangaré, "Mali," 135.
[183] Matei, "The Case of Mali," 111.

reports from the Executive on various defense-related policies, programs, or expenditures. A senior MDAC Advisor recounted, "In reality, [oversight] does not occur at all. The committees are colored by the Executive. They end up being a second arm of the President following his instructions."[184] They also have the power to assemble experts to brief them on various defense-related issues, but they "typically do not." This translates to overall weak oversight of the defense sector.[185] One study captured a '[dearth] of parliamentary control' at all stages of the process.[186] This also extended to oversight over all aspects of defense and security-related foreign aid.

The judiciary had constitutional and legal privileges over the security sector. According to the code of criminal procedure, the Judiciary's criminal investigation department was responsible for recording military violations (contraventions, offenses, or crimes), gathering proof, seeking out perpetrators, and bringing them before the courts. The judiciary could also exert control over the armed forces through its military tribunal.[187]

The final element of civilian control over the defense sector was civil society, which closely monitored its behavior and actions. Malian civil society comprises the media, associations, organizations, the press, NGOs, and academics. While civil society garnered some influence over the defense sector, the actual control they exerted was weak. However, on a positive note, the number of civil society actors who worked on issues of peace and security (associations, media, NGOs, etc.) constantly increased, as did the number of journalists wishing to focus on defense and security-related issues.[188]

Systems of defense planning, procurement, budgeting, and financial management, including contracting and auditing (Very Low, 1)

The capacity of Mali's systems of defense planning, procurement, budgeting, and financial management, including contracting and auditing were *very low* in 2012. There existed "a lack of political will on the part of the Malians to provide sufficient budgetary resources for

[184] Interview with Senior MDAC Advisor, Kissima Gakou, September 2018
[185] Moulaye, "Missed Opportunities for Comprehensive Security Sector Reform in Mali," 83.
[186] Ayissi and Sangaré, "Mali."
[187] Nimaga, "Mali," 136.
[188] Nimaga, 133.

training, equipping and maintaining the Malian army."[189] There were significant difficulties facing the defense forces in areas such as human and material resources, logistics, finances, and infrastructure.[190]

Corruption existed at all levels within the defense establishment, which was highlighted by several civil society watchers.[191] "Everything is corrupt, this is normal," expressed a Senior Advisor to the MDAC. Once the annual budget for defense spending was approved by the National Assembly Committee on Defense and Security, the allocated figures could still change. Graft was executed via several different mechanisms. One common practice highlighted was that filler numbers were utilized for line items such as 'patrols,' which it was common knowledge acted as a placeholder, and the Minister could do whatever he wanted with this money.[192] Another example was the practice of accounting for ghost soldiers or documenting higher numbers of soldiers than existed. A journalist recounted an example of this: "I saw an Arab militia north of Gao. On paper, the garrison accounted for 150 soldiers, but the Commander said he had 60 soldiers. Another reason fraud is so easy is that salaries are paid in cash. He kept 20 salaries and sent the difference to Bamako. The troops don't even know the number has been exaggerated."[193] Another mechanism was contracting, which was utilized as a tool for corruption.

While there was an audit and oversight process in place, the ministerial inspector general (who was most likely to audit a given transaction) was not an independent body. Only the senior-most oversight body, the Auditor General (Vérificateur général), was truly independent, as evidenced by the 2014 release of a searing audit report of military procurement.[194]

Professionalism of military forces in terms of education and training (Very Low, 1)

[189] "Rapport D'Information sur L'Opération Serval au Mali," 24.
[190] Moulaye, "Missed Opportunities for Comprehensive Security Sector Reform in Mali," 84.
[191] Shurkin, Pezard, and Zimmerman, *Mali's Next Battle Improving Counterterrorism Capabilities*, 84.
[192] Interview with Senior MDAC Advisor, Kissima Gakou, September 2016.
[193] Interview with journalist, Adam Thiam, on September 20, 2016; Adam Nossiter, "The Whiff of Conflict Grows in Mali," *The New York Times*, October 24, 2012, sec. World, https://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/24/world/africa/an-aura-of-conflict-grows-in-a-divided-mali.html.
[194] Shurkin, Pezard, and Zimmerman, *Mali's Next Battle Improving Counterterrorism Capabilities*, 84.

Overall, while there were efforts to promote professionalism within the FAMa, systemic issues, including inadequate training resources and infrastructure, limited the effectiveness and readiness of the forces leading up to the 2012 coup. One senior military official repeatedly stressed the need to develop a culture around key institutional processes, such as maintenance, management, and doctrine.[195]

Military personnel policies capable of recruiting, training, and retaining high-quality soldiers and officers representative of society as a whole (Very Low, 1)
Mali's military personnel policies had *very low* capacity to recruit, train, and retain high-quality soldiers and officers who were representative of society. Mali's defense sector lacked professional human resources. Defense sector personnel do not receive the education, training, and equipment to perform necessary bureaucratic tasks and expected operational missions.[196] No human resources management system existed to keep track of individuals, careers, promotions, training, or even basic information, such as which officers were in each unit.[197] A merit-based promotion system did not exist; however, in reality, promotion was linked to connection to international training or political patronage.[198]

Patronage and a lack of connection between the middle and senior ranks hollowed out the FAMa's esprit de corps, weakening cohesion and operational readiness. This gulf was likely intensified by the fact that "bribes would frequently help soldiers to avoid combat postings in the North, making it more likely that those without financial resources and/or backing among the upper echelons of the army would be deployed to dangerous assignments."[199] Those officers who worked to counter corruption would be kept 'in the dark' and sent overseas to serve as military attachés.[200]

A culture of apathy and acceptance of ubiquitous corruption permeated the officer corps at the senior colonel level and higher. The morale among junior officers and the NCO corps

[195] Shurkin, Pezard, and Zimmerman, 85.
[196] Matei, "The Case of Mali," 115.
[197] Maiga, "Empowering Democracy Through Civil-Military Relations: The Case of Mali 2012-2017," 8.
[198] Barea, "The Malian Armed Forces and the Future of EUTM."
[199] MacLachlan, *Security Assistance, Corruption and Fragile Environments; Exploring the Case of Mali 2001-2012*, 31.
[200] Interview with journalist Adam Thiam, on September 20, 2016.

was generally low, as frustration with living conditions, lack of equipment and supplies, and fear the government was not safeguarding its troops in battle were the primary drivers behind the March 2012 coup.[201] A journalist recounted, "The daily allotment in Sévaré per soldier was not enough to live on at 2,500 CFA per day. That does not cover the cost of eating three meals a day, which means money for food allowance was diverted. Sévaré is a strategic location. How can we expect these soldiers to protect us if they are not able to eat?"[202] As a result of the events of 2012, the armed forces became 'totally discredited.'[203] General Abderahmanne Baby, the Secretary of the Army, relayed "the most important for us is in the morale of our force and to regain confidence.[204]

Two additional factors of demoralization included the lack of a culture of training and low levels of education among defense sector leadership. Not having a training culture meant that soldiers' skills would quickly languish even if they had conducted training programs. The FAMa often felt unfit compared to the better organized, outfitted, and capable force of the jihadi groups, which concretely affected unit morale. Finally, the majority of FAMa leadership did not have the necessary education qualifications to lead their troops into combat (literacy or vehicular skills), which had a significant effect on a company's performance on the ground.[205]

Effective military command and control and logistics organizations (Very Low, 1)
Mali's military command and control logistics organization had *very low* capacity. In the 2006 Algiers Accords, the Malian state agreed to withdraw armed forces from the north, outsourcing the securing of northern Mali to various actors whose security interests aligned with those of the state. The Malian Army was supposed to be restricted to urban centers, whereas new 'Sahara Security Units' would provide security outside cities. The units were supposed to be mixed containing northern and southern soldiers. However, they were never

[201] "Mali - Air Force," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, March 11, 2019, 9.
[202] Interview with journalist, Adam Thiam, on September 20, 2016.
[203] Interview with Ibrahim Littny and Oumar Konipo, former FSNs at the US Embassy, Defense Attaché's Office on September 17, 2016.
[204] Interview with General Abderahmanne Baby, Secretary of the Army, on October 25, 2018.
[205] Interview with Benoit Cusin, EUTM Security Sector Reform Unit, on October 14, 2016.

implemented.[206] In relying on local proxy militias to secure the area, MDAC leadership in Bamako maintained influence in the army and over associated local militia groups. Another issue was corruption, which undermined "public trust in the government and the armed forces and pose[d] a major threat to the success of operations."[207] A former US Security Cooperation Officer in Bamako recounted that "the Malian government's ability to secure the territory and population of the north was marginal at best, [and after the coup] non-existent."[208] The Malians also could not control their air space. It was the "wild west," a former Defense Attaché recounted. The Malians did not have a national radar station (just local radar), so they did not know who was transiting their airspace.[209]

The Malian Ministry of Defense demonstrated a distinct lack of command emphasis. A lack of discipline, cohesion, trust, and limited capabilities significantly undermined effectiveness.[210] Regarding leadership, an EUTM officer recounted that "within the FAMa, leadership was so centralized and stove-piped that leaders had to ask international actors for information on activities in other parts of the FAMa."[211] US civil-military relations expert Christopher Holshek assessed Mali's defense forces as "poorly led, equipped, and trained as well as fragmented and incapable of preventing soldiers from committing atrocities against civilians," which was evidenced in widespread reports of post-coup human rights abuses and retaliation.[212] Mr. Soumeylou Boubeye Maïga, a former Minister of Defense, described the army as having poor operational capacity and incapable of intervening on the front lines of conflict. Instead, it became a "group of civil servants, not fighters," who lived more from their small (or large) scale trafficking than from their official salary.[213]

[206] Ivan Briscoe, "Crime after Jihad: Armed Groups, the State and Illicit Business in Post-Conflict Mali" (Clingendael, May 2014), https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.1951.3206.
[207] Tehmina Abbas et al., "Regional Results Africa. Government Defence Anti-Corruption Index" (Transparency International, January 2016), https://government.defenceindex.org/downloads/docs/GI-Africa-results-web.pdf.
[208] Department of State. "Mali; Thoughts on the Post Coup Way Ahead for Military Cooperation" (Bamako, Mali: US Department of State, May 21, 2012).
[209] Interview with Colonel (ret) Corban Spraker, former Defense Attaché in Bamako (2010-2012), on April 16, 2019.
[210] Shurkin, Pezard, and Zimmerman, *Mali's Next Battle Improving Counterterrorism Capabilities*.
[211] Shurkin, Pezard, and Zimmerman, 86.
[212] Christopher Holshek, "Mali and the Primacy of Civil Authority," *The Worldpost*, May 28, 2013.
[213] Christophe Châtelot, "Opération « Serval » et les trois plaies du Mali," *Le Monde*, février 2013, https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2013/02/01/les-trois-plaies-du-mali_1826060_3210.html.

Beginning in December 2011, the Malian military started conducting operations in a more aggressive and concerted manner that "far exceeded the intensity and frequency of operations" in the several years prior, according to the US Embassy in Bamako.[214] This provided multiple concrete opportunities to analyze Mali's command, control, and logistics capacity while units pursued and attempted to degrade an enemy. A former US OSC in Bamako recounted, "The Malian government's ability to secure the territory and population of the north was marginal at best."[215] This resulted from being unable to field a strong and large enough force over a massive territory, combined with a lack of political will, given that government players across the spectrum were benefiting from the illicit activity in the north. Overall, the FAMa "performed poorly and demonstrated that, for the most part, it was an inadequately equipped and trained garrison force that was unprepared to conduct combat operations and woefully deficient in all war-fighting functions."[216] The Army, National Guard, and northern counterterrorism task force units (Echelon Tactiques Inter-armée or ETIAs) each collapsed in the face of a competent enemy.

Furthermore, units were deployed without a clear purpose and without planning for logistical support. It was not uncommon that an infantry company would be deployed to a garrison in the north; however, what they were supposed to be doing (or not doing) was typically unclear. This 'inculcated a reactive instead of proactive mentality,' which influenced units to question the capabilities and decisions of their leaders.[217]

There was clear and consistent evidence that Mali could not transport troops nor conduct aerial resupply supporting elements deployed to the north. In September 2007, during the third Malian rebellion (2006-2009), Tuareg rebels surrounded Malian troops in Tinzouaten for at least four days. The Malian government requested US air support to drop critical humanitarian assistance and resupply its troops as it could not do so independently.[218] Mali's logistical system was inadequate for supporting tactical units operating across vast swaths of

[214] Department of State., "Mali; Thoughts on the Post Coup Way Ahead for Military Cooperation."
[215] Department of State.
[216] Lee.
[217] Lee.
[218] Tiemoko Diallo, "Tuareg Rebels in Mali Besiege Northern Garrison," *Reuters*, September 14, 2007, sec. D, https://www.reuters.com/article/economy/tuareg-rebels-in-mali-besiege-northern-garrison-idUSL14849848/.

desolate terrain. First, in June 2009, the Malian government launched Operation Djigui (Operation Hope in Bambara) to neutralize AQIM activities in the north.[219] Severe logistical limitations impaired the Malian military's ability to engage with AQIM elements. In hot pursuit of AQIM elements, Malian forces ran out of gas and sat stranded in the open desert for a week until they were resupplied by land. By this time, their ability to pursue AQIM had evaporated.[220] The US Ambassador to Mali from 2008 to 2011, Gillian Milovanovic, documented and justified the 'resource-inspired standdown' as grounds to increase US support of FAMa.[221]

Next, in early July 2009, AQIM ambushed Malian forces, inflicting the most significant number of casualties since the Tuareg rebellion in 1991 and destroying four to six pick-up trucks.[222] The attack underscored AQIM's more sophisticated knowledge of the terrain, maneuverability, ability to inflict crushing losses, and the evident vulnerability of untrained Malian units. An AFRICOM assessment identified significant vulnerabilities in Malian "logistics capabilities, including transport, communications, and intelligence."[223] A SOCAF assessment team was sent to Tessalit, Mali's northernmost prominent base, to assess the Army's capabilities in the wake of the attack. The assessment team described the base as 'desperately isolated' and 'woeful[ly] short of basic supplies and logistical support.' Perimeter security was poor; it lacked even a basic stone perimeter wall surrounding the base.[224] The stock of weapons and ammunition dated back to the 1960s, much of it inoperable. With half of the base deployed on patrol in pursuit of AQIM, the base was only left with three operational vehicles (two trucks and a minivan). Equipped with two truck-

[219] Yvan Guichaoua and Mathieu Pellerin, "Making Peace, Building the State; Relations between Central Government and the Sahelian Peripheries in Niger and Mali," Études (Paris, France: Institut de recherche stratégique de l'école militaire, March 2018), 47.
[220] Milovanovic, "Running on Fumes."
[221] Milovanovic., "ATT: "We're Acting on AQIM - Now We Need Your Help""
[222] Gillian Milovanovic, "Ambush: AQIM Inflicts Heavy Losses in Battle with Malian Forces," Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy (US Embassy Bamako, July 6, 2009), https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO445_a.html.
[223] Gillian Milovanovic, "Scenesetter for Codel Marshall Visit to Mali," Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy (Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, August 26, 2009), https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO566_a.html.
[224] Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 15.

sized generators, the base could only maintain two hours of electricity daily. The runway was cracked and needed repair.[225]

Mali was unable to maintain the integrity of its borders. The US Embassy in Bamako identified Malian border patrol forces as ineffective, assessing that "most borders are unpatrolled and uncontrolled. The vast size of Mali's borders, a border control contingent that is under-manned and poorly trained, along with widespread corruption, makes effective border control unrealistic."[226] Moreover, border control personnel lacked the basic resources and professionalism to effectively perform their work.

Another component of effective command and control is the capacity to communicate with your troops in the field and your regional neighbors and partners. Mali did not possess this capacity. The Operations Centers in the military bases in the north could not communicate with each other via secure radio, nor with the Joint Operations Center in Bamako.[227] Mali and Mauritania did not have the means to talk to each other from garrisons, which were sometimes only a couple of hundred miles apart. "If they see something, they don't have an easy way to pass it on to their counterparts," an American official said.[228] Finally, there was no command emphasis on maintenance.[229]

Incorporation of rule of law and human rights components into military and MDAC training programs (Very Low, 1)

Mali had *very low* incorporation of the rule of law and human rights components into its military and MDAC training programs. While the defense sector had very little knowledge about the concept of human rights in the early 2000s, as of 2012, all military training schools taught the subject as well as international humanitarian law.[230] The FAMa's behavior in the

[225] Peter Barlerin, "Licking Its Wounds: Mali Regroups, Hostage Released," Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy (Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, July 14, 2009), https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO460_a.html.
[226] Mary Beth Leonard, "Fall 2008 Sepq Response-Bamako," Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy (Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, Seotember 2008), https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08BAMAKO787_a.html.
[227] "OEF-TS Culture of Maintenance and Logistics Course Brief" (Stuttgart, Germany, July 11, 2011), 23, https://www.slideserve.com/file-download/1598924.
[228] Craig S Smith, "U.S. Training African Forces to Uproot Terrorists," n.d.
[229] AFRICOM J5, "Mali Retrospective - Implications for Security Cooperation Paradigms and Strategy in Africa," 5.
[230] Nimaga, "Mali," 132.

field reflected the security services' general disregard for human rights and international humanitarian law. Many incidents of torture and extrajudicial execution of civilians were captured.[231] The FAMa received very little training of any kind and, at best, nominal training in anything related to civil education (the rule of law or the law of war).[232]

Security forces carry out their functions in accordance with the principles of accountability, transparency, public participation, and respect for human rights (Very Low, 1)
Malian security forces had a *very low* capacity to carry out their functions in accordance with principles of accountability, transparency, public participation, and respect for human rights. Mali has not been able to develop effective security forces which remain under democratic civilian control. The security sector has been plagued by a lack of leadership, vision, strategy, communication, and good governance.[233] Efforts were undertaken to reign in corruption, particularly with the establishment of the office of the Auditor General.[234]

Assessment for Prospects for Reform

According to Mali SSR expert, Moulaye Zeïni, the country's early SSR efforts were plagued by a lack of "leadership, vision, strategy, communication, and good governance."[235] While multiple independent SSR programs coexisted starting in 2005, Mali lacked an overarching reform program based on a 'single vision, a comprehensive strategy, synergy of action, and appropriate communication,' perhaps the most influential factor in its failure to succeed.

In 2005, the Government of Mali launched its first national security sector reform (SSR) dialogue, the General Assembly on Peace and Security in Mali. Immediately after that, the Ministry of Security established an SSR commission, which drafted a Malian national internal security policy and established a five-year action plan (2008–2012) to implement 'hard' and 'soft' elements of Mali's agreed-upon SSR goals.[236] The 88.4 billion West African CFA franc action plan was to serve as the security sector planning law. However, the effort was driven by

[231] Dufka, ""How Much More Blood Must Be Spilled?"
[232] Shurkin et al., "Building Armies, Building Nations," 175.
[233] Moulaye, "Missed Opportunities for Comprehensive Security Sector Reform in Mali," 81.
[234] Nimaga, "Mali," 143.
[235] Moulaye, "Missed Opportunities for Comprehensive Security Sector Reform in Mali."
[236] Moulaye.

the MoS, and a commensurate version had not yet been created by the MDAC. As a result, the Malian parliament did not approve the law for budgetary and political reasons.[237] A definitive defense sector reform effort was not conducted prior to 2012.

A security governance implementation plan, the PSPDN, was also designed in 2006 and implemented from 2008 to 2011. The program's accomplishments were greatly limited to the Ministry of Security: the drafting of a national internal security and civil defense policy framework document, the publication of multiple studies to drive the SSR reform process (feasibility study on a communal police service, the creation of a database on criminal activity, and a communication strategy and accompanying plan for the ministry of internal security and civil defense), and a multitude of capacity building events for security sector stakeholders.[238] The UN Development Program supported the General Assembly, given that human security was a cornerstone of its proposed plan to overhaul the security sector. Norway, Luxemburg, and Switzerland also provided support to the initiative.[239]

The PSPDN welcomed Malian civil society into the SSR process. Malian civil society organizations working on peace, security, and human rights had organized to form the National Coalition of Civil Society for Peace and the Fight against the Proliferation of Small Arms (Coalition National de la Société Civile pour la Paix et la Lutte contre la Prolifération des Armes Légères or CONASCIPAL) in 1999. CONASCIPAL organized the first national civil society forum on democratic security sector governance in Mali in 2007.[240]

Section III: Assessment of Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency Capabilities

This section evaluates Mali's overall counterterrorism capabilities via a qualitative and quantitative assessment of the country's capabilities to carry out the critical functions necessary

[237] The council of ministers identified that a budget to support the security sector planning law was not available and should have been presented alongside a military sector planning law, which was still pending.
[238] Zeïni Moulaye and Mahamadou Niakaté, "Gouvernance partagée de la sécurité et de la paix : l'expérience Malienne" (Abuja, Nigeria: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, December 2011), 15, https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/nigeria/08907.pdf.
[239] Moulaye and Niakaté, "Gouvernance partagée de la sécurité et de la paix : l'expérience Malienne."
[240] "Coalition National de La Société Civile Pour La Paix et La Lutte Contre La Prolifération Des Armes Légères (CONASCIPAL)," SIPRI, accessed November 8, 2024, https://www.sipri.org/research/conflicts-and-peace/mali-civil-society-and-peacebuilding/partner.

to respond to a terrorism or insurgency threat. There is a qualitative appraisal of each capacity and then a quantitative scoring of the country's capabilities based on the following scale:

1. *Very Low:* entirely lacking
2. *Low:* beginning to develop
3. *Neither Low nor High:* minimal but functioning
4. *High:* functional, but room for improvement
5. *Very High:* strong and no major improvement needed

Capabilities Assessment

In 2012, Mali experienced a series of destabilizing events: a rebellion by Tuareg separatists in the north, a military coup that ousted President Amadou Toumani Touré, an attempted countercoup, and the subsequent loss of control over the northern two-thirds of the country to violent extremist groups. The Malian military was actively involved in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations. Military CT units did not coordinate or conduct joint operations with law enforcement agencies on CT missions.[241] The country lacked a sufficient number of personnel with specialized training to effectively address the severity of the threat. Additionally, there was a significant deficiency in planning, doctrine, and logistical support tailored for counterterrorism, which severely hindered the effectiveness of the nation's counterterrorism capabilities. While international partners provided CT training, equipment, and intelligence-related support, it was woefully insufficient for the severity of the threat. The training received was significantly stymied by more significant defense sector weaknesses. FAMa did not possess adequate equipment to conduct CT operations. Mali could not process actionable intelligence to benefit and drive its ongoing operations. This meant it did not have the correct types of information on terrorists or insurgents (ex. prospects of terrorist groups for expanding their operations, how they align themselves, their grievances, the support given to terrorist groups by other states or international groups, etc.). It was also not able to share the intelligence it did possess with its regional partners. Consequently, the military was ill-equipped to counter the strategies employed by terrorist and insurgent groups within the country. Meanwhile, the Malian government maintained connections with both domestic and international financial institutions

[241] Bureau of Counterterrorism, "Mali Country Report on Terrorism 2013" (Washington, DC: US Department of State, April 2014), 30, https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/225886.pdf.

and was actively engaged in efforts to disrupt the financial networks supporting terrorism. The FAMa had been developing a civil affairs capacity in 2012, thanks to training and support from international partners.

Assessment of Areas for Improvement in Capabilities

Across the twelve different CT/COIN functional areas, Mali scored an average of 1.25 or *Very Low* capacity.

Table 5.2 Table of Assessment of Areas for Improvement in CT/COIN Functions

Critical CT/COIN Functions	Qualitative Assessment	Quantitative Assessment (1 to 5)
A. Maintain security throughout the country	See Below	1
B. Collect and analyze intelligence		2
C. Provide policing and law enforcement		1
D. Protect critical infrastructure		1
E. Carry out military surveillance and interdiction		2
F. Integrate strategic communication		2
G. Hold territory and control roadways, waterways, and airspace		1
H. Contribute to the design and delivery of an overall integrated government strategy and operations		1
I. Train military forces for CT or COIN operations		1
J. Control corruption		1
K. Disrupt financing by terrorist or insurgent groups from within or outside the country		1
L. Deny support to terrorist or insurgent groups from domestic populations or from outside the country		1

Rating Scale: 1 (Very Low: Entirely Lacking), 2 (Low: Beginning to Develop), 3 (Neither Low nor High: Minimal but Functioning), 4 (High: Functional but Room for Improvement), and 5 (Very High: Strong and no Major Improvement Needed)

Source**:** Defense Sector Assessment Rating Tool, the RAND Corporation (2010)

Qualitative Assessment Details

Maintain security throughout the country (Very Low, 1)

In 2012, Mali displayed *very low* capacity to maintain security throughout the country. Before the coup, Mali was the least secure it had been in decades. Malian defense forces took the lead in countering both internal and external security threats, though they were utilized more like "firemen" and "policemen" and less as "warfighters" or "defenders," according to Florina Christiana Matei.[242] Rampant corruption, incompetence, lack of political will, lack of logistics capacity to sustain operations up in the north, and the FAMa's poor ability to carry out essential tasks prevented them from effectively safeguarding Malian territory, leading up to the 2012 coup. The US Embassy in Bamako assessed that Mali lacked the necessary "military support infrastructure in the country's desert north," which prevented FAMa from forward deploying its units.[243] Instead, they had to deploy from Bamako by land. Functions such as basic patrolling and forward projecting their forces were serious challenges given a significant lack of mobility and airlift capacity.[244] While Mali possessed fundamental border security mechanisms, its law enforcement units faced significant challenges in securing the nation's extensive and porous borders. These challenges included limited capacity, inadequate training, and insufficient mobility assets. To address these issues, the gendarmerie and national border police, operating under the Ministry of Defense, provided paramilitary support to prevent and deter criminal activities in border areas.[245]

[242] Matei, "The Case of Mali."
[243] Milovanovic, "Running on Fumes."
[244] Interview with Colonel (RET) Marshall Mantiply, Senior Defense Officer/Defense Attachée in Mali (2008-2010), on November 11, 2008.
[245] Bureau of Counterterrorism, "Chapter 2. Country Reports," April 2014, 30.

In a country the size of Mali, aviation capacity plays a definitive role in maintaining security. A nation's aviation capacity involves its ability to project air power, defend its airspace, and support military operations. "We need airplanes to move troops quickly," said Malian Army spokesman COL Abdoulaye Coulibaly.[246] The Malian Air Force (la Force Aérienne de la République du Mali or L'armée de l'air) had extremely low capacity and never maintained full operational autonomy.[247] It had an incredibly small fleet that lacked diversity. It suffered from incredibly poor operational readiness, having problems keeping its pilots consistently qualified and its aircraft airborne to train its crews in basic flying operations. Resource shortages (fuel and parts) complicated and delayed the Air Force's readiness even further. It depended on international partners for all pilot and crew training.

Historically, during the Cold War, the Air Force was mentored by the Soviet army, and although the FAMa was involved in the management, piloting, and maintenance of their Air Force, The Soviet Union's departure left Mali's Air Force without the essential training and expertise needed for autonomous operational command. The absence of a cohesive strategy or long-term vision led to the collapse of the Air Force infrastructure, with airbases transforming into storage sites for damaged Soviet-era aircraft. Only limited operational capacity remained, supported by international partnerships with the United States, France, and the European Union. Despite these efforts, the Air Force lacked the necessary framework for sustainable development.

The Air Force's stated goal was to transport 200 personnel at the tactical level anywhere in Mali within 24 hours. However, this was impossible, given the status of its fleet. The country's existing operational aircraft were not suited for troop transport to the north, which was what they needed to forward project their forces. Mali's Air Force could not support or transport troops and had minimal combat capability. It provided inadequate support to the

[246] Stew Magnuson, "U.S. Military Seeks to Quash Terrorism Before It Takes Root," National Defense, March 1, 2007, https://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/articles/2007/2/28/2007march-us-military-seeks-to-quash-terrorism-before-it-takes-root.
[247] Florent de Saint Victor, "The Malian Air Force: A Mirage?," *Mars Attacks* (blog), May 21, 2012, https://mars-attaque.blogspot.com/2012/05/larmee-de-lair-malienne-un-mirage-22.html.

ground forces against the Islamist rebels that took control of the northern part of the country in 2012.[248]

A fraction of Mali's available aircraft was ever operational.[249] Due to a combination of accidental damage, maintenance challenges, and a lack of spare parts, most of Mali's limited fleet was rendered inoperative or withdrawn from service. Of the dozen combat aircraft (MiG-21MF, Mi-24s, and Mi-35s) Mali possessed, only two appeared operational in 2012. The remainder were grounded due to insufficient spare parts and trained pilots. Four Mi-24 Hinds (two purchased from Bulgaria in 2007) could have represented a potentially significant threat to the rebels; however, at the dawn of the 2012 crisis, only one of the four combat helicopters was operational.[250] The Malians contracted Bulgarian crews to fly their Hind helicopters. Mali received four Tetras (training aircraft) and three Tetras (long range) reconnaissance aircraft as part of French security cooperation efforts, which it used for training, patrols, and reconnaissance missions.[251] In particular, they carried out weather reconnaissance missions for the benefit of Mi-24 pilots. As for transport craft, the US sold Mali its BT-67 (Basler) for personnel and cargo transport in the mid-1990s.[252] The Basler had a range of over 3,000 kilometers. It could conduct troop transport, 28 to 30 fully equipped soldiers, or paratrooper drops during airborne assaults. It could also provide cargo airlift during logistical operations to move essential materials (up to 6 tons of equipment) to front-line units, often under combat conditions.[253] Mali also possessed two AN-26 transport craft, gifted by the Soviet Union, which could have transported up to 40 equipped soldiers, though both were inoperable.[254] In 1994, the US provided three used Cessna O-2 observational aircraft to Mali as excess defense articles (EDA).[255] These Cessnas provided

[248] "Mali - Air Force," 2.
[249] Touchard, "Armée Malienne."
[250] Mary B. Leonard, "Mali Uses Helicopters to Attack Bahanga Near Kidal," Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy (Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, April 3, 2008), T, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08BAMAKO325_a.html; Touchard, "Armée Malienne."
[251] de Saint Victor, "The Malian Air Force"; "Burkina Faso," defenceWeb, February 8, 2013, https://www.defenceweb.co.za/security/african-militaries/burkina-faso/.
[252] Touchard, "Armée Malienne."
[253] de Saint Victor, "The Malian Air Force."
[254] Interview with Colonel (ret) Marshall Mantiply, former SDO/DATT (2008-2010), via email on March 14, 2019.
[255] Excess Defense Articles are military equipment and supplies no longer needed by the US Department of Defense, which are offered at reduced or no cost to foreign governments and international organizations through authorized security cooperation programs. "U.S.C. Title 22 - FOREIGN RELATIONS AND INTERCOURSE," accessed May

low-cost, low-risk reconnaissance benefits. Their high endurance, ability to fly at low altitudes, and relatively small radar signature made them practical for monitoring enemy movements, providing real-time intelligence, and supporting tactical ground operations. However, given the O-2's age and high repair cost, only one Cessna was still operational in 2008, though another could have been operational with relatively minor repairs.[256]

The Air Force had less than 1,000 airmen (estimated at approximately 800 pilots, technicians, administrative staff, one or two companies of air commando riflemen, and an air defense group).[257] While they were able to build a strong culture of safety and maintenance training, they relied entirely on international partners for their aviation education and training needs. The Air Force had non-existent or extremely outdated educational training manuals. Its maintenance facility was not organized, and the assessment team identified old unused munitions that had to be professionally removed.[258] Compared with the rest of the FAMa, the Malian Air Force performed reasonably well, boasting a more productive and disciplined organizational culture. It was, however, hindered by many of the same institutional weaknesses and shortcomings in planning and resourcing as the larger army.

The Air Force valued and followed maintenance standards and recognized that deficiencies in maintenance protocols were likely to lead to aviation accidents. Like the 33rd Parachute Commandos Regiment (Régiment Commandos Parachutistes or RCP), the Air Force was a small unit within the larger FAMa with a rigorous qualification process. Air Forces tend to be better educated and maintain high levels of camaraderie. Before the 2012 coup, the Air Force had undergone a formalized internal review process, identifying necessary structural and equipment changes to better combat security threats in the north. A formal reform plan to restructure and modernize into an operational and effective service' was supposed to be published, but its status in 2018 was unknown.[259]

4, 2025, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2023-title22/html/USCODE-2023-title22-chap39-subchapII-sec2761.htm.

[256] Gillian Milovanovic, "Malian Military Could Make Good Use of Cessna Caravans," Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy (Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, December 21, 2009), https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO820_a.html.

[257] Touchard, "Armée Malienne."

[258] Interview with Sean Setter, former AFRICOM J35 CT Programs Officer, on November 15, 2024.

[259] Interview with General Abdrahamane Baby, Secretary of the Air Force, on October 25, 2018.

The corruption and cronyism that permeated Mali's overall governance structures by 2011 were also rampant throughout the defense and the larger security sector, as could be evidenced by multiple high-level public scandals, such as the documented theft of approximately 800 to 1,000 Toyota 4x4s for resale and spare parts purposes.[260] Additional factors led to the dramatic weakening of the Malian army, such as a general lack of professionalism, nepotism, persistent resource shortfalls (equipment and weapons), and the military's complicity in smuggling and other illegal activities throughout the north.[261]

Collect and analyze intelligence (Low, 2)

Mali displayed *low* capacity to collect and analyze intelligence. Little information is available on the roles, capabilities, and effectiveness of the Malian intelligence agencies outside of one former intelligence officer's academic writing in 2018.[262] Furthermore, no strategic intelligence documents or doctrines existed leading up to 2012 that identified priorities and guidelines or aligned the DSM to resources.[263] Mali maintained weak civilian control of its intelligence institutions. Transparency International detailed in its 2015 report that the "policies, administration, and budgets of the intelligence services were not subject to effective, properly resourced, and independent oversight."[264]

Active intelligence personnel during the 2012 timeframe reported that Mali only maintained human intelligence capabilities (a significant limitation) before the coup in 2012. On top of this, 90 percent of Malian elements were from the South and experienced significant language barriers when collecting.[265] One officer described the overall intelligence apparatus as "completely ineffective."[266] The historian and security researcher, Laurent Touchard,

[260] Touchard, "Armée Malienne."
[261] Marina Caparini, "DDR and SSR Challenges in Mali," NUPI Working Paper (Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2015), http://www.ssrn.com/abstract=2670212.
[262] Matei, "The Case of Mali," 109–10.
[263] Maiga, "Challenges to Reforming Intelligence Agencies in Re-Democratizing Countries: The Case of Mali," 27.
[264] "Mali Country Assessment" (Transparency International, 2015), https://government.defenceindex.org/countries/mali/.
[265] Shurkin, Pezard, and Zimmerman, *Mali's Next Battle Improving Counterterrorism Capabilities*, 72.
[266] Maiga, "Challenges to Reforming Intelligence Agencies in Re-Democratizing Countries: The Case of Mali," 2.

pointed out Mali's "absence of real intelligence resources and the ability to manage this intelligence, both tactical and strategic (on the scale of Mali and its border areas)."[267]

The country relied on international partners to share any potential aerial surveillance or signal intelligence and held this in much higher regard than its human intelligence capabilities.[268] It was reported that the DGSE dominated the DMS and other intelligence agencies, and intelligence sharing did not effectively exist. Six camel companies of the National Guard "brown berets" had an intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance mission, patrolling desert areas, not fighting. They were charged with feeding intelligence up the military system through the DSM.[269]

As a result, Mali could collect information, but it could not process and produce actionable intelligence.[270] According to Mark Moyar, Malian intelligence capabilities were "focused more on preventing coups and other internal problems than defeating the enemy."[271] Malian intelligence agencies failed to appropriately assess the power of the combined Tuareg/Islamist threat that led to the collapse of the Malian state in 2012.[272] Before this time, interagency intelligence cooperation did not effectively exist. Information typically remained siloed, and the DGSE and GITSDNP used it "to serve political purposes rather than protecting troops or security services [sharing with the DSM], for national security ends," according to a military field Commander.[273] Each intelligence agency only sends information up their chain of command to the President, and not down and out to share with the other agencies.[274] ATT recounted creating a four-person intelligence cell at the Presidency in 2009

[267] Touchard, "Armée Malienne."
[268] Maiga, "Challenges to Reforming Intelligence Agencies in Re-Democratizing Countries: The Case of Mali," 29.
[269] Touchard, "Armée Malienne."
[270] Matei, "The Case of Mali," 106.
[271] Moyar, "Countering Violent Extremism in Mali," 17.
[272] Laurent Touchard, "Mali : Des Services de Renseignement à Reconstruire," JeuneAfrique.com, accessed July 19, 2024, https://www.jeuneafrique.com/171419/politique/mali-des-services-de-renseignement-reconstruire/.
[273] Interview with Lieutenant Colonel, Yssouf Traoré, former Commander of the 33rd RCP on April 3, 2018.
[274] Interview with Lieutenant Colonel, Yssouf Traoré, former Commander of the 33rd RCP on April 3, 2018.

consisting of himself, his Chief of Staff, and the DGSE "to handle the most strategic and sensitive intelligence matters."[275]

The Malian intelligence services sustained close relations with international intelligence community counterparts in Bamako (France, Germany, and the US), principally within the context of the war on terrorism and drug trafficking in northern Mali.[276] The US Embassy in Bamako identified the Malian intelligence services as "limited in their capability of detecting, deterring, and responding to a terrorist attack" in 2008, however they consistently cooperated with the Embassy's requests for information and support.[277] General Youssouf Goïta, the former director of the DSM, stated, "Mali does not possess high-tech equipment to monitor the border" and acknowledged that intelligence on GSPC numbers and movements in the north had always been typically given to them by the US military.[278] When available, the US Embassy would share active intelligence with the DGSE if, for example, there was a threat of hostage-taking in the north. At times, the Malian DGSE and Army would visibly reinforce security after receiving this information, and the plot was thwarted.[279]

Regionally, Mali did not have a good relationship with its regional neighbors in this domain. Algeria, Mauritania, and Niger all believed Mali to be the weak link in the chain, openly questioning their neighbor's ability to safeguard and share intelligence necessary for regional collaboration.[280] They often coordinated without informing Mali, given its poor track record.[281] ATT reflected to US Ambassador Milovanovic in 2009 that his country's intelligence services "need[ed] to be professionalized and more secure."

[275] Gillian Milovanovic, "DASD Huddleston Meets ATT: The Way Forward Against AQIM," Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy (Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, July 1, 2009), https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO435_a.html.
[276] Maiga, "Challenges to Reforming Intelligence Agencies in Re-Democratizing Countries: The Case of Mali," 22.
[277] Leonard, "Fall 2008 Sepq Response-Bamako."
[278] Magnuson, "U.S. Military Seeks to Quash Terrorism Before It Takes Root."
[279] Gillian Milovanovic, "Ambassador's Meeting with Malian President Amadou Toumani Toure," Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy (Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, November 23, 2009), https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO754_a.html.
[280] Gillian Milovanovic, "New Algerian Ambassador to Meets with Ambassador," Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy (Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, February 19, 2010), https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/10BAMAKO99_a.html.
[281] Tankel, "MALI," 257.

In the late 2000s, a regional intelligence-sharing and joint operations center (Comité d'Etat-major Opérationnel Conjoint or CEMOC) was slowly established in Tamanrasset, Algeria. In 2009, the 'Tamanrasset Plan' was to serve as a framework for regional coordination of counterterrorism operations between Algeria, Mauritania, Mali, and Niger as concerns about jihadist activities in the region escalated.[282] An intelligence center was also created in Algiers. Algeria provided radios for cross-border communication to each of its neighbors; however, it only pointed to successes with Mauritania and Niger.[283] As of 2011, as the situation in Libya deteriorated, the CEMOC did not appear to be operational, let alone coordinating regional responses.[284]

Provide policing and law enforcement (Very Low, 1)

Mali displayed *very low* capacity to provide policing and law enforcement capacity. The Malian armed forces are the force that is being examined in this dissertation, not Mali's policing and law enforcement agencies. The Armed Forces had no authority to provide policing and law enforcement functions, except for the Gendarmerie, which administratively fell under the Ministry of Defense and operationally fell under the Ministry of Security. It possessed a military police function (among others). It was supposed to accompany army units when deployed to provide oversight and conduct criminal investigations against officers and soldiers who violated the code of conduct.[285]

Protect critical infrastructure (Very Low, 1)

Mali displayed *very low* capacity to protect critical infrastructure, a function that fell between the jurisdictions of the Ministries of Defense and Security.[286] It was typically the responsibility of the National Guard (Garde Nationale du Mali or GNM) and the Army's engineering units within the FAMa. The GNM protected vital infrastructure such as energy facilities, government institutions, telecommunications infrastructure, and transportation

[282] Alexis Arieff, "Algeria: Current Issues," November 18, 2013, 10, https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/RS21532.pdf.
[283] Milovanovic, "New Algerian Ambassador to Meets with Ambassador."
[284] Arieff, "Algeria: Current Issues," 10.
[285] The other functions of the GN include policing, administrative police, and defense. In terms of criminal investigation, the GN record crimes and offences, contraventions, investigation to collect proof and identify perpetrators of violations, etc.). Nimaga, "Mali," 130.
[286] Nimaga, 125–49.

routes. The FAMa's Military Engineering units were tasked with securing and maintaining critical infrastructure, especially in operational contexts where infrastructure may have been vulnerable to attacks or sabotage.

Carry out military surveillance and interdiction (Low, 2)

Mali displayed *low* capacity to carry out military surveillance and interdiction. While the FAMa did possess an intelligence capacity, it was extremely feeble (see section B, "Collect and analyze intelligence," above). Military surveillance involves monitoring and gathering intelligence about enemy movements, activities, and capabilities to assess threats and inform strategic decisions. The FAMa did not have aerial reconnaissance or satellite imagery capabilities, so its military surveillance efforts were limited to collection via ground observation. While the DSM had human intelligence sources throughout the country capable of recruiting and entertaining sources, this made a lot of raw, unprocessed, and analyzed intelligence available.[287]

The FAMa's interdiction capacity via possible air strikes or ground actions aimed at limiting the enemy's ability to conduct operations. Their interdiction capacity to prevent or disrupt enemy operations (targeting enemy supply lines, reinforcements, or other critical assets) was very low. This was due to the FAMa's lack of credible, actionable intelligence and readiness.[288] The Malian Air Force successfully used their Mi-24 helicopters to attack Tuareg rebels led by Ibrahim Bahanga southwest of Kidal in Alket in April 2008.[289] While they were working with the US on improving their air-to-ground integration to combat AQIM, there were no more recorded incidents of successful attacks by air against terrorist groups leading up to 2012.

Integrate strategic communication (Very Low, 1)

The Directorate of Information and Public Relations of the Armed Forces (Direction de l'Information et des Relations Publiques des Armées or DIRPA) was responsible for

[287] Interview with Colonel Yssouf Traore, former 33rd Commander, on November 5, 2024.
[288] Traore, Interview.
[289] Leonard, "Mali Uses Helicopters to Attack Bahanga Near Kidal."

managing communication, public relations, and information dissemination related to the Malian military. While DIRPA played a role in shaping the public perception of the armed forces and providing information to the public during military operations and national events, it did not have a Military Information Support Operations (MISO) capacity.[290] In 2012, DIRPA was at a very early stage of learning how to share information and did not have the capacity to conduct operations that used information to influence target audiences and achieve strategic objectives (such as psychological operations).[291]

Hold territory and control roadways, waterways, and airspace (Very low, 1)
The FAMa could not hold territory or control roadways, waterways, and airspace. See section E. Effective military command and control and logistics organizations for more information.

Contribute to the design and delivery of an overall integrated government strategy and operations (Very Low, 1)
In 2012, Mali did not have an overall integrated government strategy, such as a national security strategy.

Train military forces for counterterrorism or counterinsurgency operations (Very Low, 1)
The FAMa relied on international forces to conduct all CT or COIN training of its troops. For more information on the FAMa's training and education capacity, please see the section Characteristics of the Defense Sector, 1. Military Forces, G. Military Personnel Policies.

Control corruption (Very Low, 1)
A culture of corruption permeated all levels within the Malian government and the FAMa in 2012 and was one of the main justifications cited for the March 2012 coup. Mali created an Office of the Auditor General in August 2003, which served as an independent institution with responsibilities for auditing public finances, ensuring transparency, and providing oversight over the management of public funds by government institutions.[292]

[290] Interview with Colonel Diarran Koné, Head of DIRPA, on October 23, 2018.
[291] Interview with Max Blumenfeld, former JSOTF-TS Public Affairs Officer, on October 29, 2024.
[292] "Bureau Du Vérificateur Général," Bureau du vérificateur général, accessed November 8, 2024, https://koulouba.ml/autorites-independantes/le-verificateur-

Disrupt financing by terrorist or insurgent groups from within or outside the country (Very Low, 1)

In 2012, Mali was a member of the ECOWAS regional body, the Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (Groupe intergouvernemental d'action contre le blanchiment d'argent en Afrique de l'Ouest or GIABA).[293] In Mali, GIABA focused on targeting non-profit organizations that funded terrorist groups as well as eradicating kidnapping for ransom, which served as a fundraising mechanism for terrorist organizations. Mali's financial intelligence unit was the National Center for the Treatment of Financial Information (Centre national pour le traitement de l'information financière or CENTIF). In 2012, the main impediments to countering terrorist financing in Mali were poor coordination between CENTIF and law enforcement and limited judicial capacity to support effective prosecutions.[294] Mali's law enforcement capacity to freeze and confiscate assets remained unclear, given that Mali has never identified or frozen any assets under the Malian jurisdiction of UN-designated terrorist individuals or entities.[295]

Mali could track financial transactions through formal networks. It lacked, however, the capacity to trace informal networks and alternative money transfer systems such as the *hawala* network. Like most West African countries in 2012, Mali relied on cash for virtually all daily transactions. While businesses were legally required to report cash transactions over $10,000, most did not.[296]

---

general/#:~:text=LE%20V%C3%89RIFICATEUR%20G%C3%89N%C3%89RAL%20EST%20INSTITU%C3%89, programmes%20et%20projets%20de%20d%C3%A9veloppement.

[293] "Improving Compliance with International AML/CFT Standards: Report on the Strategic Review of the First Round of Mutual Evaluations of GIABA Member States (2007 - 2012)" (Dakar, Senegal: Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa, January 2014), https://www.giaba.org/Frame/pdfviewer%7C%7Ced7e54a9463f405f2c8caff31a6c5da7ee81eb322ea4764b4599d4f8688afba9%7C%7C769_ENG%20-Strategic%20Review%20of%20GIABA%20First%20Round%20of%20Mutual%20Evaluations%202007-2012%20-trackled%20changes.pdf.

[294] Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, "International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 2013" (Washington, DC: US Department of State, June 2013), 256–58, https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/211396.pdf.

[295] "Cellule Nationale De Traitement Des Informations Financieres (CENTIF)," accessed November 6, 2024, https://centif.ml/.

[296] "Terrorist Financing in West and Central Africa" (Dakar, Senegal: Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa, October 2016),

In May 2012, Mali's legislature enacted a new penal code to help counter terrorism and transnational organized crime. The law called for establishing a CT center to centralize all terrorism investigations and prosecutions.[297] The new penal code established an interagency investigative brigade, analysts, specialized prosecutors, and investigative judges for terrorism offenses and cases related to terrorist financing.[298]

Deny support to terrorist or insurgent groups from domestic populations or from outside the country (Very Low, 1)

In March 2012, following the coup that ousted President Amadou Toumani Touré, northern Mali—comprising 10% of the nation's population and over half of its territory—fell under the control of various armed groups, including the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), Ansar Dine, and other Islamist factions. The FAMa failed in its efforts to stop the terrorist/Tuareg armed groups' onslaught.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the structure, governance, and performance of Mali's defense institutions, revealing critical systemic weaknesses across the sector. Deficiencies in maintenance and logistics, strained civil-military relations, weak accountability mechanisms, and poor resource management were pervasive. These issues were compounded by chronic underfunding, widespread corruption, and a culture of impunity—factors that significantly contributed to the 2012 coup. By establishing this baseline, the chapter highlights how institutional fragility and dysfunction may have influenced the outcomes of US military assistance. This broader sectoral perspective is essential for assessing in subsequent chapters whether counterterrorism programming was appropriately tailored to Mali's needs or unintentionally exacerbated the country's instability. The next chapter provides a historical snapshot of US-Malian security cooperation as well as an overview of US counterterrorism policies and programs in Mali.

https://www.giaba.org/Frame/pdfviewer%7C%7Cc129358cee441d8d957d394342a35d6b935014783e9ac2c72f7ff3e383ab9df5%7C%7C1023_Terrorist-Financing-West-Central-Africa.pdf.

[297] Bureau of Counterterrorism, "Mali Country Report on Terrorism 2012" (Washington, DC: US Department of State, May 30, 2013), https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2012/209979.htm.

[298] Bureau of Counterterrorism, "Chapter 2. Country Reports," April 2014, 31.

CHAPTER SIX
THE US-MALIAN SECURITY RELATIONSHIP

This chapter provides a comprehensive historical overview of US–Malian security cooperation, tracing its evolution from Mali's independence in 1960 through the military coup of 2012. It situates the bilateral relationship within broader post-9/11 dynamics and the shifting priorities of US foreign policy, including the transition from early diplomatic and developmental engagement to more security-focused cooperation. While security ties between the two countries did not exist during the Cold War, given Mali's status as a Soviet client state, the relationship intensified considerably following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, when Mali and the Sahel region began to emerge as new frontiers in the global counterterrorism agenda.

It then examines how US military assistance to Mali became operationalized under various counterterrorism programs, notably the PSI, the TSCTP, and other broader DoD frameworks. It outlines the structure and scope of these programs, with a specific focus on how they were implemented in Mali. This includes detailing efforts across seven critical domains of military CT capacity building: infantry training, logistics, communications, civil affairs, aviation, military intelligence, and medical stability operations. Through these disciplines, the US sought to professionalize the Malian armed forces, enhance their operational reach, and build the internal capacity needed to confront transnational terrorist threats.

Finally, the chapter introduces a framework for understanding US strategic and programmatic intentions in Mali, based on official policy statements, training doctrine, interviews with implementers, and internal planning documents that articulate what the US aimed to achieve through its security cooperation efforts. These objectives included not only the defeat of terrorist actors but also the strengthening of state legitimacy and civil-military relations. This framework sets the stage for the next chapter, in which I assess the actual outcomes of US counterterrorism programming in Mali—both intended and unintended—and evaluate their implications for future US engagement in fragile states.

A History of US-Malian Security Cooperation

US-Malian diplomatic relations date back to September 24, 1960, when the US became the second country to recognize the newly independent Republic of Mali.[1] US interests were principally focused on humanitarian issues during Mali's first years of independence.[2] US-Malian security cooperation dates back to 1961 when Mali's fledgling airborne unit conducted its first jump with US SOF.[3] US security cooperation with Mali was principally extended through professional military education (IMET) and peacekeeping training assistance to develop Mali's capacity to support regional peacekeeping efforts either through the Africa Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI) or the African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance program (ACOTA) in the 1990s.[4]

Initial SOF interaction with African partner nations prior to 9/11 focused on FID. Foreign internal defense entailed helping foreign governments who supported US interests in Africa against Russian, Cuban, and rebel-type governmental forces maintain internal stability and defend against threats to their sovereignty. Also, FID allowed SOF teams to train and operate in their assigned mission areas or the vicinity thereof.[5] From 1952 to 1996, the 10th SFG(A) was regionally aligned with the African continent until the activation of the 3rd SFG(A) in 1996.[6]

After Mali's first coup and the start of the military regime in 1968, all US military assistance was suspended. Mali became heavily dependent on the Soviet Union throughout the Cold War for all

[1] U.S. Embassy in Mali, "The United States and Mali Celebrate 60 Years of Friendship and Partnership," US Embasy Bamako, September 25, 2020, https://ml.usembassy.gov/the-united-states-and-mali-celebrate-60-years-of-friendship-and-partnership/.
[2] Robert Pringle, "Democratization in Mali: Putting History to Work" (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, October 2006), 64, https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/resources/PWOct2006.pdf.
[3] Mamadou Makadji, "Mali: Les Commandos Parachutistes Communement Appeles Berets Rouges," *Malijet*, November 27, 2016, https://maliactu.net/mali-les-commandos-parachutistes-communement-appeles-berets-rouges/.
[4] IMET focused on areas such as leadership development, military professionalism, and civil-military relations, with the aim of improving Mali's military capabilities and fostering closer ties between the U.S. and Malian armed forces. "International Military Education and Training Program" (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, October 28, 2004), https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20041028_RS20506_447988c3327cd740fdbb7e3551e315c12ce78806.pdf.
[5] Interview with Colonel (ret) Ronald Newton, former SOCEUR Director of Operations (2001-2004), on April 30, 2019 via email.
[6] "The History of the 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne)," 2002, https://web.archive.org/web/20071009025542/http://www.soc.mil/SF/history.pdf.

types of military assistance (training, equipment, and logistical support).[7] The end of the Cold War in 1991 meant the end of security assistance from both Soviet and Western sides, leaving a definitive void in Mali's security budget. Some drew a distinct causal link from this decrease in support to the fall of Moussa Traoré's regime in March 1991.[8] The cut in Soviet-Malian security cooperation meant a decrease in the number of slots Mali could send its officers to military academies in the Soviet Union, on which they greatly depended for professional military education. This had perhaps the most significant impact on Mali's air force, which was no longer able to carry out necessary maintenance, repair, and pilot training and, therefore, was not able to continue carrying out its basic missions.[9]

The US restarted IMET at a 'very modest level' in FY 1979 to begin slowly re-forming important relationships with senior military leaders.[10] Mali also purchased small quantities of boots, uniforms, and tents from the US for its armed forces, as there was no sale of defense articles, services, or training under FMS credit financing.[11] After the return to democratic government in 1992, multiple US National Guard units came to Mali in the 1990s for humanitarian assistance and civil-military relations purposes. The Tennessee National Guard provided medical care to ten villages in the Sévaré region. The Alabama National Air Guard rebuilt a playground on a military base in the central region. In 1993, JCETs resumed with US SOF to support Malian peacekeeping training. The Minnesota National Guard provided medical care to ten villages throughout the Sénou region. In 1995, the US started a multi-year Defense Institute for International Legal Studies (DIILS) program for Mali, which provided training on military and defense management to better enable the Malian government to fight corruption and

[7] Byrne, "Mali Input for FY 1980 Security Assistance Program," Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy (US Embassy Bamako, December 12, 1978), https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1978BAMAKO05977_d.html.
[8] This is consistent with the demise of other autocrats previously backed by one or other superpower in the same time period.
[9] Theodore McLauchlin, Marc-André Boisvert, and Aboubacar Maïga, "Les formations militaires internationales et l'instabilité politique en Afrique subsaharienne," Cahier du CÉRIUM Working Paper (Université de Montréal.: Centre d'études et de recherches internationales, December 2019), https://cerium.umontreal.ca/public/FAS/cerium/Images/4_nouvelles_evenements/legacy/ilovepdf_merged.pdf.
[10] Three slots at US schools were opened in 1979: one for advanced infantry ranger school, and two engineering school billets. $35k was also allocated for the opening of an English language lab for the Ministry of Defense. Byrne, "Mali Input for FY 1980 Security Assistance Program."
[11] Byrne.

instill good governance.[12] Mali also hosted its first MEDFLAG exercise in 1995, which trained local military doctors to prepare for all 'cases of emergency and medical crisis.'[13]

In 1997, US-Mali security cooperation increased with two JCETs, and the US helped transport 680 Malian soldiers and 450 tons of equipment to support the West African peace enforcement operation in Liberia. Regarding aviation assistance, the US provided Mali with three used Cessna O-2s (observation aircraft) as EDA in 1994 and a Basler BT-67 at some point during the 1990s.[14] Mali was one of six initial partner countries worldwide that received assistance when the US launched the Aviation Leadership Program (ALP) in 1996. The next year, Mali received $350k for aviation pilot and logistics training to support two refurbished DC-3 aircraft that the Malian Air Force had recently purchased.[15]

In 1998, Mali was one of the first African countries to join the newly launched ACRI, a US military training program to enhance African capacity to participate in regional and UN peacekeeping missions.[16] Training and non-lethal equipment were provided by US SOF (3rd and 5th groups), together with private military companies, focused on developing basic military capabilities, strengthening combat formations, and boosting headquarters organization.[17] Projects shifted from being focused on the direct training of foreign troops to the training of African trainers, who then trained their own countries' troops at home.[18]

---

[12] "The Defense Institute for International Legal Studies Charter," accessed September 20, 2024, https://dscu.edu/diils/charter.

[13] MEDFLAG is a medical-training exercise in which medical personnel treat residents and train local health care workers throughout the point of injury to evacuation. "MEDFLAG," accessed September 23, 2024, https://www.defense.gov/Multimedia/Photos/igphoto/2001188942/.

[14] Milovanovic, "Malian Military Could Make Good Use of Cessna Caravans."

[15] Pierre Abramovici, "Le cas du Mali," *Le Monde diplomatique*, Juillet 2004.

[16] US Department of Defense and US Department of State, "Foreign Military Training Report 2008-2009," Volume I (Washington, DC: US Department of State, 2008), 36, https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/152778.pdfM.

[17] In 2002, ACRI was 'reorganized' into the Africa Contingency Operations Training Assistance (ACOTA) program to focus on preparing peacekeepers for restoring peace. Its training changed to focus on offensive training for hostile environments, particularly for regular infantry units and small units modeled on special forces.
Office of the Press Secretary The White House, "The African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI)," April 1, 1998, https://clintonwhitehouse4.archives.gov/Africa/19980401-20179.html; U.S. Department of Defense and U.S. Department of State, "Foreign Military Training Report," Volume 1, n.d., 14, https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Volume-I-508-Compliant.pdf.

[18] In 2005, ACOTA was incorporated into the Bush administration's Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI). Elizabeth Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa after the Cold War: Sovereignty, Responsibility, and the War on*

1999 marked the opening of the Defense Department's fourth and newest regional center, the Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS). Since its launch, ACSS has brought high-level military and civilian leaders to academic seminars on civil-military relations, national security strategy, and the principles of democratic defense.[19] That same year, the US added a Defense Attaché position on the Embassy Country Team in Bamako, a concrete reflection of the increasing priority of US-Malian security engagement.[20] Finally, 1999 marked the beginning of the Department of Defense's Humanitarian Assistance Program in Mali, which spent $3 million between 1999 and 2009 to build wells, construct schools, and renovate health clinics.[21]

Thanks to the first official Foreign Military Training Report (FMTR) published in 1999, transparent reporting of annual US-Malian security cooperation became more readily available. Before 9/11, Mali was an annual recipient of professional military education (IMET), aviation training (ALP), peacekeeping training (ACRI), regional relationship building (ACSS), and JCET training (Miscellaneous DoD-funded, non-security assistance). Beginning in 2001, Mali began receiving FMF and FMS in addition to the above programs, which provided for a combination of military and intelligence training, technical assistance, logistics management expenses, spare parts (aircraft) and construction.

In the development sphere, once Mali became a multiparty democracy in 1992, USAID sought to refine Malian economic growth by increasing private sector investment, particularly in agriculture-based activities, and the condition and delivery of health care, family planning, and educational programs. In 1999, USAID Mali reinforced the Government of Mali's pledged decentralization programs by supporting capacity building in northern Mali rather than direct infrastructure development.[22] From 1996 until 2001, the 3rd SFG (A) was responsible for the

Terror, Ohio University Research in International Studies. Global and Comparative Studies Series, n° 19 (Athens (Ohio): Ohio university press, 2018), 342.

[19] ACSS was established as a part of the National Defense University in Washington, DC. Pierre Abramovici, "Activisme Militaire de Washington En Afrique," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Juillet 2004.

[20] Abramovici, "Le cas du Mali."

[21] Milovanovic, "Scenesetter for Codel Marshall Visit to Mali."

[22] Gillian Milovanovic, "A Trip to Gao Highlights Mission Objectives," Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy (Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, October 22, 2009), https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO686_a.html; Terrence K. McCulley, "Working with the Malians on

continent of Africa. It would engage with African partners through JCETs in various locations as requested by the Embassy and the government of Mali. This US engagement was neither organized, strategically determined, nor frequent, but in support of the ACOTA program.[23]

In the aftermath of 9/11, heightened US attention toward counterterrorism cooperation eclipsed traditional development concerns. It became the most important element in US policy and engagement toward Mali, even though it was not publicly disclosed.[24] Between 2001 and the military coup of 2012, Mali received military assistance from multiple donors and through numerous funding streams, with the most significant packages coming from the US and France. This research uses 9/11 in the US and the Malian coup in March 2012 as the two major events bracketing its analysis. The onset of the conflict and the military coup in 2012 brought a qualitative change in the Malian situation and ended the US's significant counterterrorism assistance program. Examining military assistance (and Malian capacity) prior to 2012 allows us to focus on programs delivered in an environment that was fragile but short of open, large-scale conflict. Security engagement after 2012 changed significantly. As a result of the coup, all US security assistance to Mali was terminated, and the ensuing security cooperation efforts of other international partners were of a fundamentally different magnitude, encompassing a sizable international military intervention.

After 9/11, deployment requirements to Afghanistan and Iraq caused the geographic alignment of the SFGs to be rearranged, and the African continent was handed over from the 3rd SFG(A) to the 10th SFG(A). More specifically, an assigned force of EUCOM, the 1st Battalion, 10th SFG [1/10th SFG(A)] directly supported EUCOM's requirements, including Africa.[25] The Government of Mali was an active, immediate African supporter of the early US war on

Sahel Security," Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy (Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, May 30, 2008), https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08BAMAKO485_a.html.

[23] Interview with retired Colonel Mark Rosengard, former JSOTF-TS Commander (2005-2008) on May 10, 2018.

[24] Pringle, "Democratization in Mali: Putting History to Work," 64.

[25] SOCEUR has three components: 1st Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group Airborne [1/10 SFG (A)], the Army Special Operations (ARSOF) component; Naval Special Warfare Unit 2 (NSWU-2), the Naval Special Operations (NAVSOF) component; and the 352d Special Operations Group (352d SOG), the Air Force Special Operations (AFSOF) component. Interview with retired Colonel Mark Rosengard, former JSOTF-TS Commander (2005-2008) on May 10, 2018, Jeff McKaughan, "International SOF Warrior," Special Operations Technology, May 17, 2006, https://web.archive.org/web/20060517101148/http://www.special-operations-technology.com/print_article.cfm?DocID=1172.

terrorism, signing a US base access agreement in 2003 for Gao, which became the headquarters for the PSI mission.[26] The US was also granted permission from Algeria to deploy P-3 Orion aerial surveillance aircraft from the airfield at Tamanrasset in southern Algeria and permitted refueling rights under an agreement signed by Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika in September 2003.[27] The US Embassy in Bamako doubled in size between 2000 and 2006 due to growing development and counterterrorism cooperation and programs. An OIG inspection report of the Embassy in 2006 highlighted security cooperation, "military-to-military contact, and humanitarian civic action programs in the far north" as important growth initiatives.[28] Operation Enduring Freedom-Trans-Sahara transitioned from an operation to a program of record with dedicated resources in December 2006.[29]

When the US DoD and the DoS together launched the PSI in October 2002, key leaders visited the four countries to brief partner nations on how the initiative would help build partner nation capacity. Each country was promised light infantry training that would focus on small unit maneuver skills (basic marksmanship, planning, communications, land navigation, patrolling, and medical care). Initial technical assessments took place in each country starting in November 2002 to help identify training and other capacity building needs and resources. Senior military and civilian officials from the four countries were brought together to encourage greater regional cooperation and information exchange on counterterrorism and border security issues.[30] In 2003,

[26] Phillip Ulmer, "1/10 Special Forces Group Supports Pan Sahel Initiative," EUCOM, March 4, 2004, https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2004/03/mil-040304-eucom01.htm.
[27] Mali was an active partner in the war against terrorism and ratified all UN counterterrorism conventions. Under base access agreements, the United States gains access to local military bases and other facilities so that they can be used by American forces as transit bases or as forward operating bases for combat, surveillance, and other military operations. They remain the property of the host African government and are not American bases in a legal sense, so that US government officials are telling the truth—at least technically—when they deny that the United States has bases in these countries. Jon R. Anderson, "EUCOM-Based Troops Training Mali, Mauritania Militaries for Border Patrols," Stars and Stripes, March 17, 2004, https://www.stripes.com/news/eucom-based-troops-training-mali-mauritania-militaries-for-border-patrols-1.17748; Farrell and Komich, "USAID/DCHA/CMM Assessment: Northern Mali"; Eric Schmitt, "Threats and Responses: Expanding U.S. Presence Pentagon Seeking New Access Pacts For Africa Bases," *The New York Times*, July 5, 2003, sec. World, https://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/05/world/threats-responses-expanding-us-presence-pentagon-seeking-new-access-pacts-for.html; Mustafa Barth, "Sand Castles in the Sahara: US Military Basing in Algeria," *Review of African Political Economy* 30, no. 98 (2003): 679–85.
[28] "Inspection of Embassy Bamako, Mali" (Embassy Bamako, Mali: US Department of State, Office of the Inspector General (OIG), February 2006).
[29] David Quintero et al., "Operation Enduring Freedom-Trans Sahara (OEF-TS) Train and Equip Information Brief" (Stuttgart, Germany, April 2011), 11.
[30] Interview with EUCOM Sahel Desk Officer (2001-2005) on February 26, 2025; Editor, "Pan Sahel Initiative (PSI)."

Mali hosted a regional seminar on combating terrorism in North and West Africa with Algeria, Chad, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal participating.[31]

The goal of the PSI (and US military counterterrorism assistance) was to generate capable, advanced infantry units and prepare them for a counterterrorism mission, narrowly defined in terms of offensive military operations. The JSOTF-TS identified the hypothetical goal of assaulting a terrorist base in northern Mali as the capacity that the training was trying to bestow. This objective required the partner nation to be able "to mount a complex, coordinated attack involving indirect fire synchronized with mounted and dismounted fire and maneuver."[32] Accompanying the training, each country received basic non-lethal equipment such as uniforms and helmets, generators, fuel containers, communications gear, and medical supplies.[33]

The US Congress approved $6.25 million in military assistance for the initial tranche of PSI FY 2004 funds.[34] This $6.25 million for the four countries broke down into $1.05 million to EUCOM to conduct assessments and military training, $4.3 million to a contractor to obtain, transport, install, and train on related equipment, and $900 thousand to the DSCA for aircraft maintenance. Mali's share of the FY 2004 PSI funds was $3.5 million for military training and accompanying equipment (vehicles, communications, and navigation). This included $550 thousand for four military training teams to conduct rapid response training for company-sized elements, $1.8 million for approximately 50 vehicles and spare parts packages, $350 thousand for communication equipment and maintenance for the radios, $600 thousand for non-lethal equipment and supplies to include GPS, maps, observation gear, flak vests and uniforms, and $200 thousand for the sustainment of and associated training on Mali's BT-67 aircraft.[35]

[31] Abramovici, "Activisme Militaire de Washington En Afrique."
[32] Shurkin et al., "Building Armies, Building Nations," 171.
[33] Alex Belida, "Pentagon/Pan-Sahel," *Voice of America*, November 14, 2003, https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2003/11/mil-031114-2fe6bfc0.htm.
[34] Jessica Piombo, "Terrorism and U.S. Counter-Terrorism Programs in Africa: An Overview," *Strategic Insights* VI, no. 1 (January 2007): 11.
[35] Smith, "EUCOM Pan-Sahel Initiative Brief 2003."

The PSI entered its training phase between November 2003 and March 2004. Training events were coordinated by the cell, which was the precursor to the JSOTF-TS.[36] Training events in each country consisted of JCETs led by a 12-man Special Forces Operational Detachment Alphas (SFODA or "A" Teams), plus any additional support personnel (approximately 25 total). The PSI's goal for each country was to develop a rapid reaction force that could enhance border security and pursue potential terrorist elements.

Units receiving the training and equipment had been identified to conduct rapid-reaction operations to stem the flow of illicit arms, goods, and people across Saharan borders and to preclude terrorists and terrorist organizations from seeking or establishing sanctuaries in the Sahel.[37] Key aspects of the training included basic marksmanship, planning, communications, land navigation, patrolling, and medical care. Each two-month PSI session included training 130 to 150 soldiers via three modules on 1) basic marksmanship, 2) planning and communications, and 3) first aid.

In November 2003, Mali hosted its first PSI four-week, train-the-trainer, squad-level mission focusing on small unit tactics, including basic rifle marksmanship, mounted infantry tactics, land navigation, and communications.[38] Elements of 1/10 SFG(A) led the effort in Timbuktu. Once the initial four-week training was concluded, the mission shifted to training the entire company. That included everything from basic individual infantry skills to squad-level and then platoon-level training.[39] "At this point, we've shown them all the basic skills they need," said an officer on the training team.[40] The training concluded with multi-platoon exercises. In March 2004, Mali again hosted trainers from 1/10th SFG(A) to train three companies in Timbuktu, Gao, and Bamako. Through the PSI, seven motorized infantry companies were trained in the four

[36] The JSTOF-TS was stood up in December of 2006. Interview with Christopher Call, former J3 of the JSTOF-TS (2006-2009) on May 17, 2018.
[37] "Islamist Terrorism in the Sahel: Fact or Fiction?," March 31, 2005, 30, https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/chad/islamist-terrorism-sahel-fact-or-fiction.
[38] Belida, "Pentagon/Pan-Sahel."
[39] Phillip Ulmer, "Airmen Support Pan Sahel Initiative," EUCOM, March 17, 2004, https://www.globalsecurity.org/military///library/news/2004/03/mil-040317-eucom01.htm.
[40] Anderson, "EUCOM-Based Troops Training Mali, Mauritania Militaries for Border Patrols."

countries to monitor borders in a region larger than half of the continental US.[41] Three of the seven companies were in Mali.

Under TSCTI–which then quickly transitioned to TSCTP–the initiative became a true inter-agency, "3D approach" with programs focused on development, good governance, and security throughout the region.[42] TSCTP had two components: counterterrorism (CT) and counter-violent extremism (CVE).[43] Counter terrorism programs covered the "hard" side of TSCTP, meaning direct military-to-military assistance. The CVE component, otherwise known as the "soft" side of TSCTP, included DoD-sponsored humanitarian assistance, USAID development programs, and public diplomacy outreach. US Embassy Bamako's slogan for TSCTP in Mali was "*No Security, No Development.*"[44] The initiative's development focus was geared towards promoting good governance, providing economic opportunities, and engaging populations vulnerable to extremist ideologies. Mali TSCTP CVE efforts attempted to increase civic participation, reduce inter-group tension and violence, and strengthen the resistance of vulnerable groups to recruitment by terrorist groups through activities such as constructing community radio stations, capacity building for local governments, reading programs, micro-finance initiatives, and supporting madrasas throughout the country.[45] The Embassy's Public Affairs office used cultural preservation grants to help Mali honor its Islamic heritage by protecting thousands of ancient Islamic manuscripts in Djenné and Timbuktu and helping to preserve an ancient mosque in Gao.[46] The State Department's side of TSCTP included public diplomacy efforts, provided

[41] Smith, "EUCOM Pan-Sahel Initiative Brief 2003."
[42] Very shortly after the PSI became the TSCTI, the initiative was again adjusted to the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) to add more emphasis to the partnership aspect of the effort and Burkina Faso was added in December 2008. "3D" translated into development, diplomacy, and defense. "Country Reports on Terrorism 2009" (Washington, DC: US Department of State, August 5, 2010), 3, //2009-2017.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2009/140883.htm.
[43] McCulley, "Working with the Malians on Sahel Security."
[44] The heading on a US Embassy cable back to DC. Terrence K. McCulley, "Working with the Malians on Sahel Security," Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy (US Embassy Bamako, May 30, 2008), https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08BAMAKO485_a.html.
[45] "Mid-Term Evaluation of USAID's Counter-Extremism Programming in Africa" (Washington, DC: US Agency for International Development, February 1, 2011), https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pdacr583.pdf.
[46] Terrence K. McCulley, "Working with the Malians on Sahel Security," Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy (US Embassy Bamako, May 30, 2008), https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08BAMAKO485_a.html.

support for embassy security, and supported counterterrorism training for law enforcement officers.[47]

In February and March 2003, 32 European tourists were kidnapped by the GSPC's Abderrezak El-Para (Amari Saïfi) in northern Mali. Following the kidnapping, General Charles Wald, EUCOM's Deputy Commander, created opportunities to convene the military chiefs of nine North and West African nations in various groupings in Stuttgart.[48] Army Colonel (ret) Victor Nelson, who oversaw the PSI on behalf of the Pentagon's Office of International Security Affairs, stated that the program "opened the door to regional and subregional cooperation."[49] These gatherings were the first opportunity any of these leaders had to meet, communicate, and jointly strategize future avenues for enhanced cross-border coordination. The African Center for Strategic Studies chose Bamako to host the first regional seminar on countering terrorism in mid-2003, again creating an opportunity for regional senior defense officials to gather, this time on the continent. These gatherings developed into the signing of a regional border cooperation agreement amongst Mauritania, Mali, Chad, and Niger in July 2003 that involved patrolling borders, increasing intelligence sharing, and joint military exercises.[50] In March 2004, the Chiefs of Defense of Algeria, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, and Tunisia took part in a meeting at EUCOM headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany which focused on enhancing communication and coordination regarding terrorism and terrorist groups in the region. Wald recounted that it was the first time the defense chiefs of neighboring Niger and Chad had ever met in person.[51] These regional relationship-building opportunities positively contributed to the coordinated pursuit and apprehension of the GSPC's El-Para later that month, in March 2004. US-furnished intelligence enabled the Algerian, Malian, and Nigerien militaries to pursue the

[47] Lesley Anne Warner, "The Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership" (Center for Naval Analysis, March 2014), 1–2, https://www.cna.org/reports/2014/crm-2014-u-007203-final%20%281%29.pdf.
[48] Anderson, "EUCOM-Based Troops Training Mali, Mauritania Militaries for Border Patrols"; Smith, "U.S. Training African Forces to Uproot Terrorists."
[49] Jim Fisher-Thompson, "U.S.-African Partnership Helps Counter Terrorists in Sahel Region," *Washington File*, March 23, 2004, https://web.archive.org/web/20101128162453/http://www.america.gov/st/washfile-english/2004/March/20040323170343r1EJrehsiF0.1366693.html.
[50] Interview with EUCOM J5M Desk Officer for the Sahel (2001-2005), on February 26, 2025; Fisher-Thompson; Stephen Ellis, "Briefing: The Pan-Sahel Initiative," *African Affairs* 103, no. 412 (July 1, 2004): 459–64, https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adh067.
[51] Charles F. Wald, "U.S. National Security Interests in Africa" (American Enterprise Institute, April 13, 2004), https://www.c-span.org/video/?181352-5/us-national-security-interests-africa&event=181352&playEvent.

armed group on a country-by-country basis from Mali to Niger and into Chad. Chadian forces intercepted the 45-fighter unit, seized its arsenal, destroyed vehicles, and killed multiple fighters.[52]

TSCTI jump-started in June 2005 by launching Exercise Flintlock, a multi-national force training exercise that hosted 1,000 US SOF and more than 3,000 soldiers in six different countries (Algeria, Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, and Chad).[53] Former JSOTF-TS Commander, Colonel (ret) Mark Rosengard, reflected, "We were able to move what was previously Exercise Flintlock in Europe to Flintlock in Africa, an organized set of events that previously had been done in an unrelated way."[54] Three weeks of tactical training and exercises covered airborne operations, small-unit tactics, security operations, land navigation, marksmanship, medical skills, human rights training, and land warfare. It was designed to help facilitate the development of regional partnerships, encourage the partners to ramp up patrols in their undergoverned territories, and help coordinate a regional security approach to the region's porous borders.[55] Flintlock also afforded partners the opportunity to practice exercising command and control in fast-changing environments and putting to use the communications systems (phone, radio, and text communication) furnished by the US. Developing these capabilities, in theory, could help support future combined humanitarian, peacekeeping, or disaster relief operations. Rosengard recounted that it was "the largest US footprint in Africa since World War II."[56] US SOF, civil affairs personnel, and Air Force Special Operations personnel all contributed to the exercise. A 4-day command-post exercise capped 2 weeks of field training. While the Senior Defense Official / Defense Attaché (SDO/DATT) in Mali, Lieutenant Colonel (ret) Eric Dalton, noted that the early years (2006 to 2008) served principally as a "political, alliance-building tool. We were trying to get the Malians to talk to the Algerians and the Nigeriens, etc., about CT things, which they were always loathe to do. The Moroccans and Algerians did not like each other. They

[52] Ali Oussi, "Combats Sanglants Entre Le Gspc et l'armée Tchadienne," L'Expression, March 10, 2004, https://www.lexpressiondz.com/nationale/combats-sanglants-entre-le-gspc-et-larmee-tchadienne-17280; Oussi.
[53] Jim Garamone, "Trains Africans to Handle Defense," *Tip of the Spear*, September 2005, 8–9.
[54] Interview with Colonel (ret) Mark Rosengard, former JSOTF-TS Commander (2006-2008), on May 10, 2018.
[55] Jason Motlagh, "The Trans Sahara Counter-Terrorism Initiative: U.S. Takes Terror Fight to Africa's Wild West," *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 30, 2005.
[56] Exercise Flintlock was held 6 to 26 June 2005. Interview with Colonel (ret) Rosengard, former JSOTF-TS Commander (2006-2008), on May 10, 2018.

were [all] more focused on self-preservation than cross-border engagement. The tactical aspect was window dressing in those days."[57]

By 2011, the focus shifted to the tactical level. US Army Lieutenant Colonel John Williamson, Lead Exercise Planner for Flintlock in 2011 and 2012, noted, "Flintlock is the culmination of all military training engagements conducted at the tactical level with our host nation partners, where we bring them together at the regional level under a multi-national operational headquarters."[58] Mali hosted Flintlock multiple times (2005, 2008, and 2010) and was supposed to host again in 2012, but the exercise was canceled due to the conflict in the north.[59]

TSCTP's regional funding increased dramatically from $6.25 million in FY2004 to $16 million in FY 2005. Thirty million dollars was allocated in FY 2006, and $100 million a year for the next five years.[60] The differences in country allocations were determined by a combination of country threat assessments, partner nation needs, and their ability to absorb the assistance. Mali was also granted a sizeable $460 million Millenium Challenge Account compact in 2006, which focused on increasing agricultural production along the Niger River and expanding Mali's access to markets and trade through an infrastructure upgrade of the Bamako-Sénou International Airport.[61] With Mali joining the Millenium Challenge Corporation (MCC), the US became Mali's largest provider of bilateral aid.[62]

The approach and pace of US capacity building efforts changed markedly in 2006. Then-Rear Admiral William McRaven took over as SOCEUR Commander, having just served as Deputy Commander of the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), and then-Lieutenant Colonel Fran Beaudette became Commander of the 1/10th SFG (A), the Battalion responsible for staffing

[57] Interview with former Mali Defense Attaché Lieutenant Colonel (ret) Eric Dalton (2006-2008), on April 4, 2019.
[58] Max R Blumenfeld, "Training in Trans-Sahara Africa," December 13, 2010, https://www.africom.mil/Story/7896/training-in-trans-sahara-africa.
[59] The exercise has continued annually since then through 2025, only skipping 2021 due to COVID fears. The event shift south and has been held in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire annually since 2022. Berghezan, "La Corruption, au coeur de l'effondrement de l'état malien," 49.
[60] Piombo, "Terrorism and U.S. Counter-Terrorism Programs in Africa: An Overview."
[61] The $460 million compact was implemented between 2007 and 2012 when it was cancelled due to the 2012 coup. "Mali MCA Compact," Millennium Challenge Corporation, accessed October 7, 2024, https://www.mcc.gov/where-we-work/program/mali-compact/.
[62] Milovanovic, "A Trip to Gao Highlights Mission Objectives."

all JCETs in Africa. Before this time, there was a "capacity building for capacity's sake" model of implementing JCETs, according to Colonel Kelly Smith, former A Company Commander, 1/10th SFG(A). With this change in leadership, the approach shifted to an enemy-focused approach, whose objectives were to gain access, placement, and capability to best affect the enemy.[63] Under this new approach, the pace of JCETs markedly increased to three in 2006, seven in 2007, seven in 2008, and nine in 2010 in the north, in addition to a JPAT working full time with the 33rd RCP from mid-2010 to 2012.[64]

Accompanying this change in approach, in-depth country and regional assessments were conducted by the JSTOF-TS beginning in 2007, which helped better identify partner nation requirements. The standing up of AFRICOM in October 2007 developed a J5 planning staff, which was able to develop CT military training and equipping proposals to justify future funding. Many of these programs were awarded, and the TSCTP budget began to starkly and steadily increase. From FY 2005 through FY 2013, $255.8 million was allocated to the four original core PSI countries. Mali received 30 percent of these funds, or $77.6 million. The remaining funds broke down between Chad ($45 million), Mauritania ($58.5 million), and Niger ($74.7 million).[65] $33 million of the $77.6 million consisted of CT train and equip programs, which amounted to 43 percent of the funding Mali received through TSCTP.[66] Topical training programs were also offered bilaterally to all countries in the region, such as logistics, military intelligence, civil-military relations, and combat medical training.

The Government of Mali was the US's primary TSCTP regional partner until the 2012 coup, which was reflected in the share of TSCTP resources Mali received compared to its other

[63] Interview with Colonel (ret) Kelly Smith, former Company Commander in Mali (2006-2007) on March 18, 2025.
[64] Interview, Colonel (ret) Kelly Smith, and Interview with Colonel (ret) Sean Berg, former Company Commander, 1st Battalion 10th Special Forces Group (A) (2007-2008), on March 25, 2025.
[65] Government Accountability Office, "Combating Terrorism: Actions Needed to Enhance Implementation of Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership," July 31, 2008, https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-08-860; Government Accountability Office, "Combating Terrorism: U.S. Efforts in Northwest Africa Would Be Strengthened by Enhanced Program Management," June 2014, https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-14-518.pdf.
[66] This amount was calculated by using the author's self-assembled chart of fiscal year monies Mali received, including T22 and T10 assistance. The information was derived from the Security Assistance Monitor, annual Foreign Military Training Reports, Congressional Budget Justifications, and other internal government documents.

regional partners.[67] Security cooperation was initially limited by the Tuareg rebellion in northern Mali from 2006 to 2009. However, when the fighting ended in February 2009, an accelerated JCET and then Joint Planning and Assistance Team (JPAT) training program was implemented. A JPAT is a four-to-six-member team run out of the US Embassy in Bamako. It was there to dedicate a clear 'enduring presence' to support the Malian FAMa in "evaluating its capabilities and assisting in the crafting of training plans to bolster the force's effectiveness."[68] US military assistance to Mali focused on developing two targeted capabilities: force development and aviation capacity. Mali received 25 percent of TSCTP bilateral obligations ($31 million) from FY 2005 to FY 2007 and 12 percent in FY 2008 ($6 million).[69] Of this total TSCTP funding (which included development, governance, and security assistance), $8.9 million was obligated in military Title 22 assistance. In FY 2006, Mali received $475 thousand for Exercise Related Construction involving exercise facilities and airfield ramp upgrades at Bamako Sénou Airbase.[70] Mali received section 1206 assistance in FY 2007, FY 2009, and FY 2011. In FY 2007, $143 thousand was allocated to support a regional effort to develop secure multinational information sharing capacity.[71] In FY 2009, Mali received $5.1 million to create "a rapid reaction force capable of responding quickly and effectively to border threats in support of counterterrorism operations," which was reprogrammed from Mauritania due to the coup.[72]

In September 2007, an American C-130 cargo plane stationed in Bamako as part of Exercise Flintlock was utilized to resupply Malian counterinsurgency units engaged in fighting with Tuareg forces in Tinzaouaten. As the plane conducted its drop of food supplies, it was hit by Tuareg ground fire. No US personnel were injured, however, and the plane returned safely to the

[67] One of the reasons for this was that of the four original PSI states, Mauritania had experienced coups in August 2005 and August 2008 and Niger in February 2010.
[68] John Vandiver, "Small Team of U.S. Troops Still in Mali, on 'Stand-By,'" *Stars and Stripes*, accessed September 30, 2024, https://www.stripes.com/migration/small-team-of-u-s-troops-still-in-mali-on-stand-by-1.173547.
[69] Government Accountability Office, "Combating Terrorism: Actions Needed to Enhance Implementation of Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership," 12.
[70] Editor, "Pan Sahel Initiative (PSI)."
[71] "Section 1206 Security Assistance Program--Findings on Criteria, Coordination, and Implementation" (Washington, DC: Government Accountability Office, February 28, 2007), 25, https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-07-416r.pdf.
[72] Mali was allocated $4.5m in FY 2007 funds and $600k in FY 2009 1206 to continue supporting the rapid reaction force. Serafino, "Security Assistance Reform: 'Section 1206' Background and Issues for Congress," 26.

capital. The incident was the first time the US became involved in a national counterinsurgency combat throughout the region.[73]

The year 2008 brought with it some big changes. In October, AFRICOM was officially stood up, which meant there was one COCOM (instead of three) that US Embassies and defense personnel engaged with. Vice Admiral Robert T. Moeller, AFRICOM's Deputy Commander for Military Operations, conveyed to US Ambassador to Mali, Gillian Milovanovic, that "pre-AFRICOM assistance to Africa was episodic."[74] In his previous position as Director of Strategic Plans and Policy at CENTCOM, Vice Admiral Moeller reflected that he had been rarely able to focus on Africa (and even then, as an afterthought). Having one GCC for Africa also meant that the defense department's approach to strategy, planning, and programming became a lot more coherent. Mali's theater security cooperation objectives were identified between Mali and US forces as enhanced aircraft maintenance and logistics systems, increased interoperability with US and other regional partners, and further professionalization of the FAMa.[75]

The US Embassy in Bamako also received its first Office of Security Cooperation (OSC) in October 2008, a new, additional staff member (billet) dedicated to managing and coordinating military and security-related engagement and programs between Mali and the US. This increased the Embassy's bandwidth for engagement, and the pace and frequency of programs significantly increased from here on forward.[76] The post's first OSC noted 'It allowed us to provide more input and feedback from the country team perspective, rather than just being in a position to execute what was being pushed down from the COCOM/components."[77]

In June 2009, ATT met with US Ambassador Gillian Milovanovic, inviting US military planners to work directly with the Malian military to "help review and refine Mali's plan to engage

[73] Tiemoko Diallo, "U.S. Cargo Plane Hit by Rebel Gunfire in Mali, Officials Say," *Washington Post*, September 14, 2007, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/national/2007/09/14/us-cargo-plane-hit-by-rebel-gunfire-in-mali-officials-say/5bfafbfe-057e-432e-8691-fbbbf280c380/.
[74] Gillian Milovanovic, "AFRICOM Deputy Commander Mueller Meets with Ambassador," Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy (Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, October 19, 2009), https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO669_a.html.
[75] Paula Kurtz, "Air Forces Africa Officials Conduct Senior Leader Engagement in Mali, Senegal," November 5, 2009.
[76] Interview with Colonel (ret) Marshall Mantiply, former SDO/DATT in Mali (2008-2010), on November 14, 2018.
[77] Interview with former Security Cooperation Officer (OSC) in Mali (2009-2011), on March 28, 2019.

AQIM."[78] As a result, an AFRICOM planning team visited Mali to support ATT's request, and a plan was jointly developed to support the Government of Mali's AQIM strategy.[79] Colonel (ret) Marshall Mantiply, US Defense Attaché at the time, confirmed the planning, stating, "We are working with the Mali Ministry of Defense on a 10-year plan. We want to execute a smart plan that will lead to real capacity rather than putting a band-aid on a short-term problem."[80] As a display of good faith, the first tranche of TSCTP vehicles and communications equipment was delivered shortly thereafter to the Government of Mali, worth approximately $5.5 million.

As a result of the additional manpower of the OSC, US-Mali Training engagements began with much greater regularity in 2009, with JCETs and JPATs making regular rotations through Mali. From June 2010 until March 2012, JCETs were held with the ETIAs in the north and the JPAT worked with the 33rd RCP in Bamako to build Mali's CT capacity. The US again expanded its defense staff in 2010 when the Embassy gained a SOFLE, which specifically coordinated all SOF engagement with the partner nation in support of US-Mali security cooperation goals and objectives.[81] The SOFLE coordinated all codified SOF and JPAT missions established in Mali and further assigned to the 10th SFG(A). In 2011, Mali and the US celebrated their 50th anniversary of US-Mali cooperation.

Overview of US CT Training Programs in Mali

The lion's share of Mali's bilateral assistance was dedicated to developing Mali's ground forces. From 2003 to 2012, the program's main effort focused on training and equipping four Malian CT companies, supported by a full spectrum of mobility, communications, logistics, and integrated air/land defense capabilities. An initial assessment was conducted by SOCEUR in 2002 as a precursor to the PSI to identify potential partner units and assess their initial operating capacity. The US invested the majority of its ground-based, tactical-level training and equipping effort into ETIAs 1, 2, 4, and 6, a smaller portion into the 33rd RCP Special Forces Company (Compagnie

[78] Milovanovic, "President Toure Ready to Target AQIM, with Help," June 12, 2009.
[79] Gillian Milovanovic, "President Toure Ready to Target AQIM, with Help," Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy (Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, September 24, 2009), https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO619_a.html.
[80] Kurtz, "Air Forces Africa Officials Conduct Senior Leader Engagement in Mali, Senegal."
[81] Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), "Special Operations," JP 3-05 (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), July 16, 2014), https://irp.fas.org/doddir/dod/jp3_05.pdf.

de Forces Spéciales or CFS, and the regimental staff), staffs at the joint and regional level, the DSM, and towards the creation of a new logistics forward support company that was to be based out of Gao. The objective in military jargon was to "find, fix, and finish" the enemy. The plan was for the ETIAs to "find and fix," and the 33rd CFS would 'finish.[82] As mobility and communications capacity were both critical to Mali's ability to maneuver and pursue terrorists, developing these capabilities was also identified as a top priority. Additional operational support requirements for all training programs (food, fuel, equipment, and spare parts) were also provided. The next section will provide a detailed breakdown of all US training and equipping efforts in Mali.

Training and Equipping Four CT Companies

The JSOTF-TS had identified that a capable CT force in Mali needed to be able "to conduct coordinated attacks on fortified [AQIM] positions using effective, indirect fire, synchronized with mounted-dismounted fire and maneuver."[83] In the US armed forces, an Army rifle company would be the appropriate unit, proficient in the necessary skills to conduct such an operation independently. US Army Special Forces and Navy Seals trained the Malian forces on small-unit tactics and kinetic operations such as land navigation, mounted and dismounted patrols, checkpoint operations, ambushes, raids, and a variety of light weapons.[84] The US SOF worked with two different units: the ETIAs in the north and the 33rd RCP in Bamako, to build Mali's new capable CT companies.

[82] Interview with former Mali OSC (2011-2012), on April 29, 2019.
[83] Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 33.
[84] Find (locate enemy dispositions and hostile groups), Fix (pinpoint the target in time and space to create a pattern of life analysis), and Finish (remove the target from the system by striking it or by using other methods like recruiting or buying into the enemy's network). Charles Faint and Michael Harris, "F3EAD: Ops/Intel Fusion 'Feeds' the SOF Targeting Process," *Small Wars Journal*, January 31, 2012, https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/f3ead-opsintel-fusion-%E2%80%9Cfeeds%E2%80%9D-the-sof-targeting-process.

The Echelon Tactique Inter-Armées (ETIAs)

The Government of Mali's "unit of choice in the fight against AQIM,"[85] was the ETIAs, specialized, motorized infantry units that Mali positioned at forward locations, assembled and deployed on a six-month rotational basis.[86] ETIAs were company-sized, ethnically mixed, combined arms task forces of approximately 160 to 200 soldiers.[87] While each ETIA existed as a permanent unit, they were made up of seven to eight platoons assigned from different parts of the Malian regular army. Each fully manned ETIA was supposed to have approximately 200 men and 20 vehicles, made up of five infantry platoons, one armored vehicle platoon (usually Russian vehicles), one field artillery platoon (equipped with truck-mounted mortars), and necessary support platoons/personnel.[88] Additionally, ETIAs were supposed to be supported by a re-supply platoon, the presence of which would enable the ETIA to remain in the field beyond the 14 days it could manage without re-supply.

As a specialized task force, the ETIA was better equipped than other Malian army units of similar size. However, it is important to note that much of the ETIA's equipment was of old, Soviet, or Chinese origin. The ETIAs were supposed to receive additional equipment and transportation/ mobility capacity, although the Malian army simply did not have the resources to implement this.[89] From 2005 to 2012, SOF forces trained ETIAs 1 (Tessalit), 2 (Kidal),[90] 4 (Timbuktu), and 6 (Nampala).[91] The goal was to increase the capacity of the ETIAs to an operational level to conduct offensive operations to kill or capture enemy AQIM units.

[85] Gillian Milovanovic, "Mali Using Specialized Units in Fight Against AQIM," Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy (Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, August 12, 2009), https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO538_a.html.
[86] Mark Schroeder, "FOR COMMENT - U.S. COUNTERTERRORISM IN THE SAHEL," February 21, 2013, https://wikileaks.org/gifiles/docs/18/1854962_re-for-comment-u-s-counterterrorism-in-the-sahel-.html.
[87] Simon J. Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No: Lessons for SOF from Mali" (Thesis, Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School, 2013), 18, https://calhoun.nps.edu/handle/10945/38996.
[88] Milovanovic, "Mali Using Specialized Units in Fight Against AQIM."
[89] Milovanovic.
[90] ETIA 2 began training in late 2009/early 2010. Powelson, 18.
[91] ETIA 7 began training in October 2011, Powelson, 18.

From 2006 to 2008, the SOF conducted approximately three to seven JCETs annually in Mali. From 2009 to 2011, the pace of training significantly ramped up to 11 JCETs each year.[92] SOF forces were present in Mali year-round, consistently conducting training with the four ETIAs. From the US side, JCETs lasted 45 to 90 days and occurred back-to-back, a continuous training cycle year-round. However, from the Malian perspective, SOF forces trained one ETIA at a time. Simultaneous training only occurred during the annual Exercise Flintlock, which meant that individual ETIAs could have gone up to six to nine months (or more) between JCETs, given SOF team availability (10th SFG(A), MARSOC, and SEALs).[93]

The 33rd Régiment des Commandos Parachutistes (RCP)[94]

The 33rd RCP was an elite Malian unit that served two functions. It was a commando airborne unit based in Bamako and served as the Presidential Guard. It had a high esprit de corps and good organization, training, and accountability of its equipment and supplies. The 33rd was a battalion-sized element that had four companies; two were committed at all times to presidential security duties (static guard posts), one was on constant six-month rotation to the Kidal region, and one had a down cycle (rest and relaxation, administrative work, training, or leave).[95] In times of emergency, the unit had a history of selecting the most qualified officers from the regiment's four companies and bringing them together to form a platoon-sized, ad-hoc Special Forces Detachment (Détachement de Forces Spéciales or DFS). When DFS special missions concluded, members of the platoon would split up and return to their respective companies. The 33rd's DFS received episodic infantry training with the US and France dating back to the late 1990s through the various peacekeeping training programs (ACRI, ACOTA, and RECAMP).

[92] SOF sustained this training pace, with 11 JCETs held again in 2010. Milovanovic, "President Toure Ready to Target AQIM, with Help," September 24, 2009.
[93] Powelson, p.29
[94] Régiment is French for battalion.
[95] Gillian Milovanovic, "Codel Marshall Meets with Malian President," Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy (Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, September 17, 2009), https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO608_a.html.

US SOF gained approval from the Malian Chief of Defense, General Gabriel Poudiougou, to work with the 33rd RCP as their principal partner force in early 2010. Given existing requirements on the battalion, the overall goal of working with the 33rd RCP was to build, over time, a second 'operational' battalion capable of operations in the north. It was agreed amongst the SOFLE, the JPAT, and key Malian leaders that the higher-skilled DFS would populate the first Company of Special Forces to become the CFS and that the CFS would adopt "an organizational template similar to that of a US Army Ranger Company."[96]

The JPAT drafted a design for the new CFS that incorporated important lessons learned from previous Malian military skirmishes with AQIM and the overall nature of the threat environment in the north. First, a 152-man ground element would provide significant combat power. It would be supported by two mobility platoons (89 men and 46 4x4 trucks), including a vehicle logistics and maintenance support cell. While this task organization was consistent with the standard Malian infantry company, the desired level of unit capabilities was unique, requiring more enhanced mobility and firepower than the Malians were used to. Finally, the mobility platoons would allow for more vehicles, permitting a "greater distribution of combat power" and amplifying the company's reach.[97]

The JPAT structured a three-tiered approach for working with the CFS. Training was provided separately to lower enlisted soldiers, NCOs, and officers to grow each group's particular skills concerning their rank and responsibilities. Each group started at ground zero, focusing on common tasks such as first aid, map reading, compass use, land navigation, weapons zeroing, etc., to ensure a solid base of soldier skills was built through repetition before individuals moved on to the next task. NCOs were specifically identified and developed as trainers.

[96] The CFS was identified as the company the JPAT would engage with because it was unconstrained by the competing responsibilities the other companies had, which were in a rotating six-month tasking schedule. Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 36. Interview with Colonel (ret) Corban Spraker, former US SDO/DATT to Mali (2010-2012), on April 19, 2019.

[97] More vehicles mean that it could carry a greater load of supplies, increasing its ability to operate deep in the desert without needing to resupply.

While it was reported that Mali received 11 US JCETs in both 2009 and 2010, all details regarding these events were not captured in the FMTR as they should have been, and it is unclear how many were CFS-specific events.[98] Given that the JPAT's engagement started in earnest in June 2010, from this point until the coup in March 2012, they were in a continuous state of training. In December 2011, the Malian MDAC finally recognized the CFS as an official unit within the Malian army with the official designation as the 335th CFS.

Building a CT Training Center in Gao (Camp Firhoun)[99]

Another component of building units capable of performing against terrorist groups was conducting training in the same conditions where soldiers would be conducting live operations. A CT training center in Gao would ensure soldiers, the majority of whom were from the South, were familiar and comfortable with extreme heat. The desert sands offered necessary training conditions that were not present in the south of the country. Gao was selected as the location for the CT training center as it offered units being trained in the same conditions (terrain/climate) they would be operating under during potential future combat operations, but in an environment that was not high risk and exposed. A former OSC recounted, "Gao was that middle ground – close enough to the problem set but not so much that there was a potential loss of life."[100] Together, the US and Canada committed to constructing a CT-focused desert training center outside of Gao to prepare security forces for CT operations close to the action in the north. The training center was to augment the existing Camp Firhoun facilities, which housed and supported the 13th military regiment and had been built during the colonial period by the French.

[98] Milovanovic, "President Touré Ready to Target AQIM, with Help," September 24, 2009.
[99] The Camp is named after Firhoun Ag Alinsar, a Tuareg hero from the anti-colonial struggle. Malika Groga-Bada and Baba Ahmed, "Rébellion Touarègue : Gao, QG de l'armée et Dernier Rempart Avant Les Combats Au Nord-Mali," JeuneAfrique.com, March 27, 2012, https://www.jeuneafrique.com/142365/politique/r-bellion-touar-gue-gao-qg-de-l-arm-e-et-dernier-rempart-avant-les-combats-au-nord-mali/.
[100] Interview with former OSC in Mali (2011-2012), on April 11, 2019.

The US first began conducting JCETs in Gao during the PSI's inaugural training in November 2003.[101] Gao also served as a priority training location during the years that Mali hosted exercise Flintlock (2005, 2008, and 2010). Rudimentary buildings also existed to house SOF trainers during JCETs. Gao was identified as a middle ground – close enough to the problem set (similar climate and terrain) yet far enough away that there was no immediate security risk to training staff and soldiers.[102] An enhanced training platform would have created the capacity to have more than one training team on-site, enabled "heel-to-toe" (back-to-back) continuous training opportunities for the FAMa, and facilitated two company-sized elements to be trained at any given time.[103] While the US had been conducting JCETs in Gao since 2003, the plan was to augment the existing structure with additional, more permanent lodging quarters for US trainers, classrooms, a range, an armory, chow hall, medical facility, soccer field, and warehouses to store necessary training supplies and forward deploy necessary maintenance supplies.[104] The upgrades would have afforded SOF a more enhanced logistical footprint in Gao, which would have served as a hub for intelligence gathering and logistics in the north. It would have also worked to standardize communication procedures between Bamako and Gao and between Gao and other ODAs deployed in the north (Kidal, Tessalit, Tombouctou, and Taodenni).[105]

Maintenance and Logistics

The Malians initially reported to SOF that a functioning network of maintenance depots and supply chain stopovers, built by the French during the Colonial period, existed throughout the country. However, when SOCEUR assessment teams toured the facilities, they found collapsing buildings, no electricity, and no place for someone to work on a vehicle. Segou

[101] Political-Military Bureau, "Foreign Military Training: Joint Report to Congress, Fiscal Years 2003 and 2004" (Washington, DC: Department of State, June 2024), 18, https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/34329.pdf.
[102] Interview with former Mali OSC (2011-2012), on April 11, 2019.
[103] Interview with David Flynn, Senior Technical Advisor for SC Contracted Programs, Crisis Response Company (CRC) on March 25, 2025.
[104] Interview with former AFRICOM J35 Programs Officer, Sean Setter, on October 24, 2024. US Department of Defense & US Department of State, (2003) Foreign Military Training Report, Fiscal Years 2003 and 2004, Africa, 18. https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/34329.pdf
[105] Interview with Matthew Purdy, Assistant Detachment Commander (2008–2011), interview on December 9, 2024; and Interview with former JSOTF-TS, J5 Planning Officer (2007-2009), on November 14, 2024.

and Koulikoro were identified as critical nodes or necessary 'jumping points' for the FAMa to keep vehicles maintained, repaired, or overhauled traveling to/from the north. The JSOTF's J5 (Planning Officer) noted, "We went in expecting there to be something we could fix up, and it turned out to be a full tear down and rebuild situation."[106]

AFRICOM's theater logistics strategy with Mali focused on building progressive logistics competencies. The command and SOF worked to enable Malian partner logisticians to support the country's CT operations and conducted activities to build sustainable, transferrable logistics capacity. Training focused on developing maintenance skills to assist with vehicles, planes, and equipment at the tactical and operational levels.[107]

SOF focused on building an intermediate-level maintenance and vehicle repair forward support company in Gao, intending to provide them with a forward-deployed tactical-level mobility and maintenance capability. Multiple times throughout TSCTP, logistics packages consisting of trucks, vehicle spare parts, and fuel [were provided] to improve the "ground maneuver capacity" of the ETIAs and CFS.[108] Vehicle operations and maintenance skills were always taught as a part of each tactical JCET. The ODA's logistics cell would stress the necessity of basic logistics and offer concrete guidance on maintaining fielded forces.[109] Training offered unit-level logistics and maintenance skills and operator-level combat logistics support fundamentals for the CT units, which covered weapons and vehicles as they patrolled and potentially engaged with AQIM in the north.[110]

Communications

The Directorate of Military Communications and Telephones (Directorate des Transmissions et de Téléphone des Armées or DTTA) was responsible for the provision and maintenance of the FAMa's communications equipment. This included tactical-level communications as well as office or administrative communications. DTTA would field equipment and support based

[106] Interview with former JSOTF-TS, J5 Planning Officer (2007-2009), on November 14, 2024.
[107] "OEF-TS Culture of Maintenance and Logistics Course Brief."
[108] Milovanovic, "Malian Military Could Make Good Use of Cessna Caravans."
[109] Interview with former JSOTF-TS, Head of Strategy (2007-2009), on November 14, 2024.
[110] Mary B. Leonard, "Mali: Request for 1206 Equipment," Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy (Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, September 29, 2008), https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08BAMAKO817_a.html.

on orders from the COIA at the EMGA. The DTTA was also responsible for training the communicators within the FAMa. DTTA officers assigned to staffs conducted communications planning for garrison and tactical operations.[111]

Initial SOF assessments to inform PSI and TSCTP priorities throughout the early- and mid-2000s revealed that the FAMa did not have a headquarters-level "ops center' to provide real-time communications and force tracking capacity. Communications between Bamako and Commanders in the field or garrisons in the north were all conducted via unencrypted HF radios, satellite phones, or cell phones.[112] Close-range communication within units was conducted by simple hand-held Motorola radios. However, there were not enough radios to ensure a base level of necessary communication.[113] It was assessed that reliable and secure communication was critical for successful military operations, and communication needed to occur over vast distances due to the country's size and lack of infrastructure. An optimal radio system would also ideally be able to coordinate with regional allies across borders. If the Malian military were to utilize encrypted radios and secure satellite communication, it would protect sensitive information from falling into the hands of terrorist groups.

Under PSI, each of the four countries received a communications package of VHF and Harris Falcon radios to begin establishing a regional communications network to facilitate information sharing across borders, which was known as the Ténéré Communications Initiative.[114] Over time, the US installed 11 to 17 systems and antennas across the TSCTP countries to make up the regional network.[115] Mali received the largest share of the regional PSI communication funding, with equipment delivered in 2004.[116] Harris Falcon radios were selected due to 1) the training resources that accompanied the equipment, 2) their ruggedness and durability, and 3) the fact that a supportive ecosystem was supposed to have existed for

[111] Internal US Embassy Bamako document from Spring 2012, detailing the Malian military directorates and their service descriptions.
[112] Interview with Colonel (Ret) Joshua Burgess, former JSOTF-TS, Head of Strategy (2007-2009), on November 14, 2024.
[113] Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 25.
[114] "Operation Enduring Freedom-Trans Sahara Introductory Brief" (Stuttgart, Germany, November 10, 2010), 19.
[115] Interview with former JSOTF-TS Future Plans Officer, on November 7, 2024.
[116] Mali had three companies trained through PSI in comparison to Mauritania, Niger, and Chad, which each only had one. Smith, "EUCOM Pan-Sahel Initiative Brief 2003."

them (different kinds of equipment and systems were supposed to integrate, ensuring easy and seamless use). Mali's three PSI-trained companies received portable, manpack radios and vehicular-mounted systems. Training and user manuals were provided to help operators become proficient in their use.

In the following years under TSCTP, the US worked to develop further the Malian MDAC's communications capability with command and control, computer, and communication (C4) training and equipment. The goal was to increase Malian national and regional communications capacity so that 1) the headquarters in Bamako could communicate with its CT units in the north, and 2) units patrolling or conducting operations on different sides of national borders could communicate with each other.[117] An Embassy cable documented that in late 2009, the US Government provided another substantial provision of over "50 radios or radio systems" to improve the communications capacity of specific elements of the Malian Army.[118] A US government contractor, Pacific Architects and Engineers (PAE), provided utilization and maintenance training on the Harris Falcon radio features, including encryption, frequency hopping, satellite communication, data transmission, and standard necessary maintenance. From 2010 to 2011, two consecutive SOFLE teams focused on routinizing intelligence sharing and communications.

Civil Affairs

US Army Civil Affairs teams had multiple objectives under TSCTP in Mali. The first was access; conducting civil affairs (CA) projects afforded SOF access to important regions, people, and organizations. A second line of effort was utilizing civil affairs projects to build the legitimacy of the FAMa within the eyes of the Malian people. A third line of effort was building CA capacity within the Malian army and instilling a will within the partner unit to deploy it. The fourth and final was enabling the partner nation unit to conduct CA activities independently.[119] In Mali, this occurred through a Civil-Military Support Element (CMSE), a three to four-person SOF civil affairs team that worked out of the Embassy in Bamako and

[117] Interview with former JSOTF-TS Future Plans Officer, on November 7, 2024.
[118] Milovanovic, "Malian Military Could Make Good Use of Cessna Caravans."
[119] Interview with LTC Eric Kotouc, SOCFWD-N/WA Civil Affairs Program Manager (2013-2015), on December 5, 2024.

was staffed out of the 91st CA Battalion (Airborne), one of five battalions under the command of the 95th CA Brigade (Airborne), which supported AFRICOM.[120]

Beginning in 2008, each CMSE served six-month rotations. The first two years of CA engagement focused on securing access and placement for the JCETs and the country team. The team's goals sought to broaden the Malian public's interface with the FAMa and civil-military operations teams to build goodwill, support local governments, and improve public health.[121] The CMSE worked with USAID to generate a list of geographic priority locations and urgent health priorities to work on. They would then travel to these usually austere locations, and due to the perilous security situation, inaccessible to USAID staff. They would meet with the local health infrastructure (hospitals, clinics, etc.) and health-related NGOs to identify local community capacity, needs, and ways that the CMSE might be able to mobilize its assistance to help, and they would offer USAID access alongside them.[122] US medical planners worked to identify Mali-specific medical civic action programs. Medical, dental, and veterinary personnel embedded with the 91st Civil Affairs Battalion's CA teams or ODAs, which would be the tactical leads, and conducted Medical, Dental, and Veterinary Civic Action Programs (MEDCAP, DENTCAP, VETCAP) designed to provide medical care (consultations, vaccinations, distribution of medications, and minor treatments) to the civilian populations in partnership with local healthcare providers and organizations. First, these programs were designed to gain and maintain access to strategically important areas. These efforts were also meant to demonstrate to FAMa medical personnel the role that they could be playing with the civilian population and what benefits it brings in terms of improved civil-military relations.[123]

---

[120] Christopher R. Grez, "Modernizing Army Special Operations Civil Affairs for Strategic Competition," Civil Affairs Association, December 4, 2022, https://www.civilaffairsassoc.org/post/modernizing-army-special-operations-civil-affairs-for-strategic-competition.

[121] Michael Kelley, "Civil Affairs: Key Mission in GWOT," *Tip of the Spear*, n.d., 6–7.

[122] Interview with Rudi Lusa, former CMSE in Mali (2010), on March 26, 2025.

[123] These medical events were primarily staffed by medics from the 1st Special Operations Wing (SOW), the 27th SOW Operational Support Medicine (OSM) Flights Special Operations Surgical Teams (SOSTs), Special Operations Critical Care Evacuation Teams (SOCCETs) and Casualty Evacuation (CASEVAC) crews. Additional medical support was provided by the 6th Special Operations Squadron (SOS), 352nd Special Operations Group (SOG), 353rd SOG, 193rd SOG (Air National Guard), 919th SOG (Air Reserve Component), and AFSOC Medical Groups. Interview with John Crowe, former Medical Planner, Air Force Special Operations Command focusing on the Sahel (2009-2013) on March 11, 2025.

The CMSE teams also utilized humanitarian assistance funding to rehabilitate local wells, refurbish schools, and support health clinics as needed.[124] At the start, they worked with any unit that would partner with them. Most of the CMSE's engagement was working with medical personnel at the military hospitals in the north. Colonel (ret) Joshua Burgess, JSOTF-TS J5 noted, "Optics were always very important. It was a priority to always have civ[il]-mil[itary] efforts whenever there was a sudden influx of troops for, say, a JCET."[125] The CMSE was always very busy and in constant rotation, spending one to two weeks a month out conducting events and then one to two weeks working out of the Embassy in Bamako.[126]

Beginning in 2010, with US access secured, the CMSE's rotations were extended to 11 months, and the focus shifted to developing CMO capacity within the Malian FAMa.[127] While they continued supporting SOF's JCETs, the team's main focus was building CMO capacity, specifically within Mali's ETIAs and 33rd RCP.[128] From 2010 to 2012, the CMSE's ultimate goal in working with the host nation was to establish civil affairs education and training so that local officials could someday begin sustaining their own civil affairs needs.[129] The CMSEs also focused on training conventional forces, which were often the forces less trained and more likely to abuse the population and mistreat populations in ways that would drive them to be sympathetic to terrorist elements and operations. The SOCFWD-N/WA Civil Affairs Program Manager stated, "Serving the SOF mission didn't exclusively mean working with SOF forces, though most often that was the case."[130]

Stew Magnuson, "Mali Crisis Offers Lessons for Special Operations Command," National Defense, May 1, 2013, https://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/articles/2013/5/1/2013may-mali-crisis-offers-lessons-for-special-operations-command-updated.

[124] McCulley, "Working with the Malians on Sahel Security."

[125] Interview with Colonel (ret) Joshua Burgess, former JSOTF-TS J5 (2007-2009), on November 14, 2024.

[126] Interview with LTC John Wishart, former SOCAF West Africa Regional Civil-Military Operations Program Manager (2009-2012, 2014-2017) on December 17, 2024.

[127] Interview with Rudi Lusa, former CMSE in Mali (2010), on March 26, 2025.

[128] Interview with LTC John Wishart, former SOCAF West Africa Regional Civil-Military Operations Program Manager (2009-2012, 2014-2017) on December 17, 2024.

[129] Jaime L. Wood, "Civil Affairs Malian Aid Mission," *Tip of the Spear*, September 2006, 12.

[130] Interview with LTC Eric Kotouc, SOCFWD-N/WA Civil Affairs Program Manager (2013-2015) on December 5, 2024.

Another component of CMO in Mali was the Military Information Support Team (MIST), a four-person Army Psychological Operations Team with an operating budget of $2 million in FY 2008 that focused on Countering Violent Extremism messaging.[131] The MIST's goal was to conduct strategic messaging in support of the US Embassy and JSOTF-TS strategic objectives, which include strategic messaging on conflict management, tolerance, and US-Malian cooperation. Some of their activities included anti-conflict radio training for radio station program managers to encourage the creation of original radio programming dealing with tolerance and non-violent conflict resolution on community, local, and national levels. The MIST assisted the DIRPA in producing informational products (signs, notebooks, posters, and booklets) to help educate the general population on mine awareness. In partnership with the US Embassy and USAID, the MIST team used satellite radio to promote informational news programming on conflict resolution, counter-extremism, inter-ethnic and inter-sectarian tolerance, and health and educational issues. They conducted surveys to determine the effect of their activities (and the activities of other DoD teams like the CMSEs) on local populations' attitudes and perceptions.[132] They also distributed items to showcase US-Malian cooperation, such as school bags, soccer balls, and pagne cloth.[133] The MIST team was only permitted in country from 2008 to 2010, due to interagency friction at the Embassy.[134]

Finally, Mali participated in a national and regional civil-military relations training program, which brought together military, civilian, and internal security officers to focus on development, governance, and transnational threats to Mali as a country and the greater region.[135] The overall goal of the regional civil-military TSS was to expose West African military officers, civilians, and police, to new concepts in the civil-military arena, to provide them a forum to share and expand upon ideas and concepts with which they already had some practical experience, and to foster the creation of an active civil-military community.[136]

---

[131] "Military Information Support Team-Mali" (Bamako, Mali, 2008).
[132] Interview with LTC Christopher Lyon, former CMSE in Mali (2011) on March 17, 2025.
[133] Interview with the Officer in Charge, US Embassy Bamako, on November 16, 2008.
[134] Interview with LTC Rudi Lusa, former CMSE in Mali (2010), on March 26, 2025.
[135] DAI, "Trans-Sahara Security Symposium (TSS)," 2012, https://www.dai.com/our-work/projects/africa-trans-sahara-security-symposium-tss.
[136] Diane Chinoso Orefo, "The Obama Administration and U.S. Security Cooperation with African Countries," in *The United States' Foreign Policy in Africa in the 21st Century; Issues and Perspectives* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2014), 106–7.

Mali served as the training location for regional events where neighbors Mauritania, Senegal, Niger, and Chad would also participate (regional events were held at the peacekeeping center in Bamako).

Aviation - Integrated Air-to-Ground Defense Capabilities

In terms of aviation capacity, Mali, like most other West African nations, had a "very nascent, basic" air force.[137] From 1996 onwards, the US consistently provided Mali with pilot training, military aviation standards and procedures, technical skills and ground training, and operational familiarization through the ALP. Under the TSCTP, the US worked to develop the Malian Air Force's operational-level transport capability and to achieve tactical-level integration of air support into ground operations so that CT units operating in northern Mali could be supported and resupplied.[138] "Air mobility is a necessary component if they are to execute these missions successfully," said US Ambassador to Mali from 2008 to 2011, Gillian Milovanovic, "it plays an important role in moving people and forces and projecting security here."[139] The US repaired Mali's troop transport aircraft, the Basler (BT-67), when it experienced operational difficulties and furnished spare parts packages to assist with annual maintenance requirements. Pilot training was provided to fly and sustain the BT-67, Mali's only operational air asset capable of resupplying CT units in the north. Training was conducted both bilaterally and regionally, including pilot training, maintenance training, operational employment training, supply logistics training, English language training, and flight safety and force protection training. Multiple units out of Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) supported this Aviation Foreign Internal Defense (AvFID) mission in Mali from 2008 to 2012, such as the 6th SOS, the 818th MSAS, the 352nd SOG, and the 1st SOW.

There were additional ways that Mali benefited from US aviation security cooperation. When JCETs were held in remote areas, SOF utilized their air assets to bring USAID development personnel with them whenever possible to engage in remote access regions they would have

[137] Interview with Sean Setter, former AFRICOM J35 CT Programs Officer, on November 15, 2024.
[138] AFRICOM J5, "Mali Retrospective - Implications for Security Cooperation Paradigms and Strategy in Africa," 4.
[139] Kurtz, "Air Forces Africa Officials Conduct Senior Leader Engagement in Mali, Senegal."

otherwise been excluded from due to the tyranny of geography or their location in less safe areas.[140] Each time Mali hosted Operation Flintlock, an annual multi-national CT force training exercise, the 352nd Special Operations Wing (SOG), a unit within the US Air Force that provides support to special operations missions (and other available aviation units), would offer training opportunities for the Air Force on the sidelines of the exercise.[141]

Military Intelligence

Another CT focus area worked on strengthening Mali's military intelligence (MI) capabilities. If Mali were able to launch aerial surveillance and vehicular patrolling from bases in its remote north, it would have been able to glean real-time intelligence for its own operations.[142] Supporting such a capability would offer the FAMa "integrated and detailed intelligence information in order to conduct synchronized and effective operations." Training and equipment were provided to establish a military intelligence company (organizational clothing, individual and communication equipment, and vehicles) that had the mobility, communications, personal, and unit equipment necessary to respond quickly and effectively to counter emerging CT threats.[143] This included the creation of an analytic cell in Bamako, training on how to use information from a variety of sources, and funding to contribute to several aircraft being outfitted for aerial surveillance and intelligence-gathering purposes.[144] A former US Ambassador stated, "We had our military guys working [with the Malians] on how to interpret the intelligence they got, what can you derive from the info you know, how do you translate this to the troops."[145]

US Army staff officers conducted DSM staff training during intelligence-focused JCETs on how to receive, review, and analyze intelligence and then how to task out resulting actions to

[140] Access to such non-permissive locations became possible when development workers were accompanied by US and Malian military personnel.
[141] Another example is the Air Force's Public Affairs office would conduct training on Military Information Support Operations during exercises like Flintlock. Interview with former JSOTF-TS, Head of Strategy (2007-2009), on November 14, 2024.
[142] Milovanovic, "Dasd Huddleston Meets Att."
[143] "Operation Enduring Freedom-Trans-Sahara Train & Equip Information Brief" (Stuttgart, Germany, April 2011).
[144] Milovanovic, "Malian Military Could Make Good Use of Cessna Caravans"; Mark Schroeder, "FOR COMMENT - U.S. COUNTERTERRORISM IN THE SAHEL," February 21, 2013, https://wikileaks.org/gifiles/docs/18/1854962_re-for-comment-u-s-counterterrorism-in-the-sahel-.html.
[145] Interview with former US Ambassador to Mali, on August 2, 2019.

units in the field.[146] Training included instruction on the basic intelligence fundamentals necessary to plan, organize, lead, and conduct military intelligence operations, training to build a junior-, mid-, and senior-level officer cadre of military intelligence staff, the effective civilian oversight of intelligence agencies, intel analysis techniques, and processing.

The US shared information with the Malian government via the Creeksand Project so that they could attack terrorist groups on their territory, which was a US signals intelligence platform that surveyed and gathered intelligence "to enable host nation militaries to better understand the threat picture."[147] UAVs and manned surveillance flights were launched out of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, where a small US Joint Special Operations Air Detachment had been operating since 2007.[148] The US had a CT intel sharing agreement with Mali, sharing relevant information with General Poudiougou (the Chief of Defense Staff) at the time.

In the late 2000s, the US encouraged the creation of the CEMOC in Tamanrasset, Algeria. The CEMOC was envisioned to house officers from Algeria, Mauritania, Mali, and Niger, to facilitate regional information exchange centered around the terrorist threat in the region, and to coordinate joint cross-border CT operations as needed between the neighbors.[149] It took multiple years to get each participating nation to agree and commit on paper due to regional political dynamics between Algeria and Mali. In reality, the entity was staffed mainly by Algerians as other stakeholders failed to fill their billets.[150] In 2009, the 'Tamanrasset Plan' was to serve as a framework for regional coordination of counterterrorism operations between Algeria, Mauritania, Mali, and Niger as concerns about jihadist activities in the region escalated.[151] An intelligence center was also created in Algiers. Algeria provided

[146] Interview with Colonel (ret) Corban Spraker, former US SDO/DATT to Mali (2010-2012), on April 19, 2019.
[147] Craig Whitlock, "U.S. Expands Secret Intelligence Operations in Africa," *Washington Post*, May 20, 2023, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-expands-secret-intelligence-operations-in-africa/2012/06/13/gJQAHyvAbV_story.html.
[148] Whitlock.
[149] Kal Ben Khalid, "Evolving Approaches in Algerian Security Cooperation," *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*, June 29, 2015, 15–20.
[150] Interview with State Department Africa Bureau, Policy Officer for West Africa, on March 12, 2025.
[151] Arieff, "Algeria: Current Issues," 10.

radios for cross-border communication to each of its neighbors, and the US provided radios to each partner through TSCTP with accompanying technical training.[152]

A regional aspect of the TSCTP Military Intelligence program existed to encourage the development of intelligence relationships throughout the subregion that promoted US strategic interests and enhanced self-defense and coalition operations. Malian officers participated in eight to 12-week courses to develop the basic skills junior officers, Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs), and senior leaders needed to operate and oversee a military intelligence staff.[153] In addition, starting in FY 2008, an annual Directors of Military Intelligence conference was held, providing an opportunity for relationship building, information sharing, and pledges for enhanced coordination at the highest levels across the TSCTP region.[154]

Finally, in 2010, Mali was initially identified as the optimal country in the TSCTP region to become a Regional Intelligence Training Center.[155] The concept was to identify at least one country in the region that would become the nexus and host for most TSCTP regional MI training. Bamako hosted one of ECOWAS's three regional peacekeeping training centers, the EMP, which served as the training location for all regional MI classes in Mali.[156] Modest enhancements were identified in terms of necessary barracks and facility upgrades (access to electricity and water) to ensure program success.[157]

---

[152] Milovanovic, "New Algerian Ambassador to Meets with Ambassador."
[153] These courses included basic level courses for officers and NCOs (Military Intelligence Basic Officers Course-Africa (MIBOCA), Military Intelligence Non-Commissioned Officer's Course-Africa (MINOC-A)), and a more advanced level Military Intelligence Professional Course (MIPC). US Africa Command, "U.S. Africa Command Hosts Military Intelligence Course in Nigeria," www.army.mil, July 27, 2009, https://www.army.mil/article/25010/u_s_africa_command_hosts_military_intelligence_course_in_nigeria; Tatum Vayavananda, "U.S., African Intelligence Professionals of MINOC-A Lead Way for Sustainable Multilateral Engagements," Marine Corps Forces Europe & Africa, accessed December 10, 2024, https://www.marforeur.marines.mil/In-the-News/Stories/Article/Article/521027/us-african-intelligence-professionals-of-minoc-a-lead-way-for-sustainable-multi/https%3A%2F%2Fwww.marforeur.marines.mil%2FIn-the-News%2FStories%2FArticle%2FArticle%2F521027%2Fus-african-intelligence-professionals-of-minoc-a-lead-way-for-sustainable-multi%2F.
[154] "Operation Enduring Freedom-Trans-Sahara Train & Equip Information Brief."
[155] Interview with Sean Setter, former AFRICOM J35 CT Programs Officer, on October 24, 2024.
[156] "L'Ecole de Maintien de La Paix - The Alioune Blondin Beye Peacekeeping School," accessed December 10, 2024, https://www.empbamako.org/en/.
[157] Interview with former AFRICOM J2 Military Intelligence Training Program Manager (2008-2014) on November 26, 2024.

Medical Stability Operations

In 2009, Air Force Special Operations Command stood up an Irregular Warfare/Medical Stability Operations (IW/MSO) Division to organize, train, equip, and employ medical forces to execute IW (COIN, FID, etc.) and medical stability missions and operations in support of the GCCs, the Theater Special Operations Command's, and the Theater Strategic Objectives.[158] IW/MSO missions include the full spectrum of medical building partnerships and BPC scenarios involving IW operations.[159] The ultimate focus of IW/MSO missions and operations is on the PN military and civilian populations. Exposing the local Malian population to positive contacts with US and foreign military medical personnel through medical opportunities is part of the effort to win 'hearts and minds,' gaining or securing their support.[160]

Mali received important combat medical training, which sought to equip its military personnel with the knowledge and skills to provide effective medical care in the chaotic and challenging environment of combat, ultimately improving the chances of survival and recovery for injured FAMa. Training on tactical combat casualty care, medical evacuation, casualty evacuation procedures, and related equipment was provided during JCETs. Doctors and veterinarians would assist in tracking progress with overall program goal/objective attainment.

March 2012 Coup d'état

At the end of 2011, a former OSC in Mali described the US's military cooperation program in Mali as 'robust.'[161] The Defense Attache from 2010 to 2012 noted, "We had a constant flow of ODAs and JCETs and every flavor of SOF team coming in here, and Mali was happy to take all

[158] It was part of a broader effort to enhance capabilities in irregular warfare and medical stability operations, which are crucial for counterinsurgency and stability operations in conflict zones. The focus on medical stability operations reflects the growing recognition of the importance of humanitarian and medical support in irregular warfare environments. Donald C. Wurster, "AFSOC Irregular Warfare/Medical Stability Operations CONOPS" (Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC), November 15, 2010).
[159] Wurster.
[160] Darrick Lee, "Medical Team Aids SOF Role in Mali," *Tip of the Spear*, January 2007, 12–13.
[161] Former US Security Cooperation Officer in Bamako, "Mali Way Ahead" document, May 2012.

of them."[162] In January 2012, a Tuareg separatist group and multiple Islamist groups launched a rebellion in northern Mali to establish an independent Azawad state. The rebellion began with coordinated attacks on towns and military bases in the north, including Ménaka, Aguelhok, and Tessalit.[163] Despite a resupply drop from a US Air Force C-130, the Tessalit garrison fell to AAD on March 12th.[164] From March 21 to 22, 2012, mutinying Malian soldiers rebelled and deposed ATT, Mali's democratically elected President, one month before the next Presidential elections. The US immediately suspended all US non-critical assistance to Mali's government, though a small SOF team remained at the American embassy.[165] US legislation prohibits foreign assistance from being issued to any country whose elected head of government has been removed by a military coup.[166] On April 19, 2012, US security assistance to Mali was formally shut off.[167]

Conclusion

This chapter traces the historical trajectory of US–Malian security cooperation from Mali's independence in 1960 to the 2012 coup, highlighting how the bilateral relationship shifted from limited Cold War engagement to intensified post-9/11 counterterrorism collaboration. It examines how US military assistance was operationalized through programs like the PSI and TSCTP, detailing efforts to build Malian capacity across key military domains such as infantry, logistics, communications, civil affairs, aviation, military intelligence, and medical stability operations. The chapter also introduces an analytical framework based on policy documents and interviews to clarify US strategic objectives in Mali, including defeating terrorist threats and

[162] Interview with Colonel (ret) Corban Spraker, former US SDO/DATT (2010-2012), to Mali on April 16, 2019.
[163] Issa Kaba, "L'opération militaire «BADEN KO» : Discrète, mais très efficace," *maliweb.net* (blog), février 2013, https://www.maliweb.net/armee/loperation-militaire-baden-ko-discrete-mais-tres-efficace-127502.html.
[164] Interview with Colonel (ret) Corban Spraker, former US SDO/DATT to Mali (2010-2012), on April 19, 2019.
[165] US law prohibits assistance to the government of any country whose duly elected head of government is deposed by a military coup. This was in accordance with Section 7008 of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act of 2012. US foreign assistance was officially terminated on April 10, 2012. "INL's Mali Programs," U.S. Department of State, accessed October 11, 2024, //2009-2017.state.gov/j/inl/rls/fs/187466.htm. US Congress, "Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (as Ammended)," Pub. L. No. (P.L. 87–195), § 656, 253 (n.d.), https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/COMPS-1071/pdf/COMPS-1071.pdf; "Assessing Developments in Mali: Restoring Democracy and Reclaiming the North" (Committee on Foreign Relations, December 5, 2012), https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-112shrg79799/html/CHRG-112shrg79799.htm; Earl Gast, "Mali: Current Threats to Development Gains and the Way Forward," *Hampton Roads International Security Quarterly*, January 1, 2013, 118.
[166] "U.S. Relations With Mali," U.S. Embassy in Mali, December 4, 2020, https://ml.usembassy.gov/our-relationship/policy-history/.
[167] Interview with former OSC in Mali (2011-2012), on May 9, 2019.

strengthening state legitimacy, laying the groundwork for assessing the outcomes of this assistance in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN
MALIAN COUNTERTERRORISM PROGRAM ANALYSIS, IMPACT, AND FINDINGS

To examine and identify whether tactical capacity was built across the different CT lines of effort in Mali, it is necessary to properly evaluate each of the seven components and evaluate the corresponding effects. Underlying strategic and operational factors affected US CT capacity building efforts at the tactical level.

Strategic Factors

Several strategic-level factors shaped the trajectory and limited the impact of US capacity building efforts in Mali. The four major factors included the US and Mali's diverging perspectives on the threat environment in the north, the impact and implications of the FAMa's withdrawal from the north in the 1990s on their operational readiness, the influence of corruption in Mali writ large and its defense sector, and the lack of civilian oversight over the security sector.

The US and Mali had diverging perspectives on the threat that terrorism posed to the Malian state and the priority, therefore, of CT training efforts.

On the US side, the entry point for US interest and engagement in the post-9/11 environment was countering terrorism. US authorities, funding, and military training programs were all tied to this justification. Former AFRICOM Deputy Security Cooperation Division Chief, Hap Harlow, related, "The tool we had at the time was CT and CT money; the only aperture was CT. We used the wrong tool to get at an underlying issue of a lack of defense sector capacity."[1] It meant that the tools used were not able to be directed towards the underlying issues preventing the Malian defense sector from functioning. They were only able to try to build CT capacity. "No one talked about the Tuareg problem" or the underlying, long-standing Tuareg grievances, which culminated in the three previous rebellions (1963-1964, 1990-1996, and 2006-2009) and ultimately led to the coup in 2012.[2] This meant that US security cooperation engagement was focused on the tactical level, and US SOF were the

[1] Interview with Hap Harlow, former AFRICOM Deputy Security Cooperation Division Chief, J5 (Directorate for Strategic Plans and Policy), on November 11, 2024.
[2] Interview with Hap Harlow, former AFRICOM Deputy Security Cooperation Division Chief, J5 (Directorate for Strategic Plans and Policy), on November 11, 2024.

only real possible US engagement partner. The US spent approximately $56 million on total US security cooperation in Mali, with $46 million dedicated explicitly to tactical-level CT capacity (this will be evaluated further in the sections below).[3] On the Malian side, ATT viewed the greatest existential threat to his presidency–and the Malian state–as the potential for a Tuareg rebellion. A cable from US Embassy Bamako in May 2008 captured that President Touré still saw potential action against AQIM at this time as "counter to fundamental [Malian] national interests" and risked "further stirring up trouble in the north."[4] The brewing rebellion in the north displaced all other Malian security concerns. This clashing threat perspective greatly affected the Malian government's political will to prioritize US CT capacity building efforts.

The various peace accords the Malian government signed with the Tuareg since independence led to the FAMa's gradual withdrawal from the north
This withdrawal was significant in that, strategically, the country did not prioritize and orient its military to operate in the northern half of the country, even though persistent security threats emanated from that region. Yet rather than dealing with the causes of the underlying grievances and instability in the north, ATT decided to withdraw the state's presence further. The Malian state, therefore, lacked operational readiness to project force or resupply its forces in the north. The deterioration of ongoing combat operations from 2011 to 2012 and the ultimate breakdown of the state stemmed directly from the inability of the armed forces to sustain and maintain their forces in combat. ETIA and 33rd RCP units were fielded to combat Islamist and terrorist groups in the north. Operationally, the FAMa did not–or was not able to–resupply them, as was evidenced from January 17-31, 2012, by fighting in Kidal, Tessalit, and Tinzawaten. The attacks launched on each of these cities and the ensuing carnage in Aguelhok became a chain of events that ultimately led to the protests, the Kati

[3] The author's analysis of security cooperation and Title 22 and Title 10 CT-related program fiscal accounts drawn from Security Assistance Monitor database and other US government internal documents.
[4] Malians writ large believed the GSPC was an Algerian problem that posed a risk not to Malians but to Algerians and the occasional Western tourist who gambled a venture deep into the Sahara Desert. The GSPC-AQ merger to form AQIM in early 2007 altered this outlook only marginally. The December 2007 murders of four French tourists in Mauritania and the kidnapping of Austrian hostages in Tunisia made the local implications of terrorism in the Sahel more apparent for the Malian government. McCulley, "Working with the Malians on Sahel Security"; Christopher S. Chivvis and Andrew Liepman, "North Africa's Menace: AQIM's Evolution and the U.S. Policy Response" (Washington, DC: RAND Corporation, September 9, 2013), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR415.html.

insurrection, and the larger coup d'état. Horrific accounts of the brutal execution of FAMa troops in Aguelhok on January 27, 2012, led Malian women to protest, enraged over the massacre and the broad lack of essential support (food and ammunition) that their soldier husbands were receiving. The public's outrage over the government's handling of the rebellion and war mounted and ultimately led to the coup.[5]

Corruption played a deleterious role within the Malian government and security sector

Shortly after ATT won the election in 2002, Transparency International ranked Mali 77th of 182 in its Corruption Perceptions Index, but the country had fallen to 118th by 2011.[6] A report based on World Bank Enterprise surveys identified that 66 percent of Malian businesses paid bribes prior to the coup to win bids.[7] As detailed in the Malian defense sector assessment, whether ATT turned a blind eye to the trafficking in the north, or allowed what little government presence existed in the region to allow it, the government was involved, which greatly increased corruption within the Malian government. Corruption was not properly evaluated nor incorporated as a pre-identified challenge at the launch (design) of TSCTP due to the primacy of tactical military considerations. The role that corruption played within Malian society and the Malian defense sector was ignored. Yet it fundamentally impacted the FAMa's cohesion and the effectiveness of US CT capacity building efforts.[8] A former OSC to Mali described this well, noting, "The tendency is if you don't want to see the ugly stuff because it ruins your vision, you turn a blind eye to it. You don't want to turn the rock over because that would force you to acknowledge that we can't work with these guys

[5] Jessica Horn, Crisis in Mali: Fundamentalist, Women's Rights, and Cultural Resistance, April 19, 2012, https://www.mewc.org/index.php/gender-issues/human-rights-of-women/3357-mali-crisis-in-mali-fundamentalist-womens-rights-and-cultural-resistance; Brian J. Peterson, "The Malian Political Crisis: Taking Grievances Seriously," *African Arguments* (blog), March 27, 2012, https://africanarguments.org/2012/03/the-malian-political-crisis-taking-grievances-seriously-by-brian-j-peterson/.

[6] *Corruption Perceptions Index 2003*, accessed December 19, 2024, http://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2003; Transparency International, "Corruption Perceptions Index 2011," accessed December 19, 2024, http://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2011.

[7] "Rebels and Putschists," *Africa Confidential* 53, no. 7 (March 30, 2012): 5.

[8] Interview with Colonel (ret) Victor Nelson, West Africa Desk Officer, Office of the Secretary of Defense for Africa (2003-2006) and Policy Officer for West Africa, State Department Bureau of Counterterrorism (2006-2019), on March 12, 2025.

in principle. And if you take away your ability to work with these guys, you're done, you're shut out. Instead, you ignore the problem and hope it doesn't come up."[9]

A significant lack of civilian oversight of security and military institutions existed in Mali
Security institutions must be empowered to conduct meaningful oversight of defense institutions' funding and activities, including international aid. A culture of parliamentary oversight did not exist, nor play an active role in Mali.[10] Civilian expertise in the security sector did not exist, and civil servants should have been involved in managing all crises (or at least consulted on the appropriate response to any potential security crisis. The US could have supported this through a variety of government-to-government engagement mechanisms, such as official Congressional delegation exchanges for Mali's parliamentary defense committees, mentoring and training, and directing professional military education opportunities towards the development and cultivation of such a specialized civil-servant cadre. Specific capacity building efforts could have also been directed towards the Office of the Auditor General (BVG), security-focused civil society organizations, and/or the press.

Operational Factors

Several operational factors on the Malian and US sides influenced the impact of US capacity building programs. Three major underlying operational factors for the FAMa included the historic lack of presence of Malian security forces and military infrastructure in the north, the extremely low level of human capital throughout the security sector, the repercussions of regular unauthorized intelligence disclosures to enemy forces, and the impact of regional dynamics on the PN's ability to reap the benefits of the regional CEMOC. On the US side, the effect of tactical programs was limited due to a lack of operational and strategic level engagement.

[9] One OSC recounted that years ago on employment in Iraq, an officer said "Let me explain something to you about how corruption works. The difference between good officers and bad officers is that a good officer will take a small portion out for himself and give the rest to his unit. A bad officer will take all or most for himself and give a small portion to his unit. The OSC's conclusion was that all officers in a position of respect or authority are either corrupt or potentially corrupt. The question is how corrupt, and what will they do once they're in a position to make decisions. Interview with former OSC in Mali (2011-2012), on April 29, 2019.
[10] Adedeji Ebo and Boubacar N'Diaye, "Mali," in *Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Sector in West Africa* (Geneva, Switzerland: Democratic Control of the Armed Forces (DCAF), 2008), 173.

The Lack of Malian Security Forces in the North led to the Fractioning and Disintegration of the FAMa over Time

The security components of the 1991 Tamanrasset Agreement, the 1992 Pact National, and the 2006 Algiers Accords led to a further withdrawal of the Malian armed forces from the north. This was a serious miscalculation, which led to the further fractioning and disintegration of the armed forces over time. The lack of integrated units and the FAMa's general presence in the north allowed security to be appropriated by "various actors," whose security interests varied from the Malian government. Given the additional lack of development in the north, tourism had traditionally served as the cornerstone of the economy. As the security situation deteriorated in northern Mali from 2003 onward due to the threat of kidnapping and then the Tuareg rebellion, tourism plummeted. Complicating matters further, no formal trade agreement existed between Mali and Mauritania or Mali and Algeria. Therefore, any goods that crossed national boundaries were considered illicit trade. The government's sparse regional military outposts (constructed by the French during the colonial period) were left to deteriorate in the desert. After more than 15 years of absence from the region, it was very difficult for the FAMa to re-initiate the staging of its troops in the north and re-integrate the outposts into their operational culture.

Limited Defense Sector Human Capital Set a Low Starting Point for US Training Efforts

Mali had an extremely low level of human capital throughout the security sector, combined with a military culture that doesn't value systematic analysis and planning, which concretely affected US training efforts. The education level of Malian soldiers significantly impacted what was achievable through US cooperation and assistance efforts. The country's 33 percent adult literacy rate spanned all US training efforts and affected whether students could read, critically think, or drive vehicles. This impacted US trainers to re-write training curricula and expand the length of training to adjust and cover the gap of much more base-level education. This went hand-in-hand with a clear lack of a culture of training throughout the FAMa. Maintaining a steady state training process focused on all levels (tactical, operational, and strategic) would have been imperative to institutionalizing the lasting impact of the FAMa's training opportunities. Even in a poorly resourced military, infantry units that receive a given JCET can continue training together on the basic infantry tactics and maneuvers they were exposed to. However, despite the constant JCET operational tempo in northern Mali, FAMa

mechanisms to sustain and improve upon previous training remained nonexistent. While individual units were required to go to rifle ranges and shoot different weapons, a common and comprehensive understanding of standards and qualifications across the force did not exist. A former OSC relayed, "You could talk to one individual or unit, and they may have been qualified at a certain level, but you definitely couldn't count on the individual or unit level to produce individual soldiers or collective units that could perform tasks to standards on a consistent and reliable basis."[11] This was due to the absence of a culture of training and incentives to improve. A systematic process across the FAMa for individual and collective task training in preparation for war did not exist. COL (ret) Marshall Mantiply recounted, "If that's how training is being handled, no amount of training provided by us or the French (or anyone else) will move the needle."[12]

On the US implementer side, there were also critical operational factors that impacted program implementation.

Tactical Gains were Limited by Insufficient Operational-Level Engagement

Multiple examples document the limitations US tactical programs experienced because SOF was not also engaging sufficiently at the important and appropriate operational and strategic levels. Concrete opportunities existed across the different CT training programs to engage at the staff, operational, or headquarters level, but they were not pursued. A former OSC recounted, "Indeed, one of the most valuable lessons of Mali is that influencing partner nation ministries can be a critical, even essential component of capacity building."[13] Former 33rd RCP Commander Yssouf Traoré recounted, "Other support functions were necessary to enable the tactical units to have their critical effect."[14] Had the US approach been more balanced, more significant tactical gains could have been made. Unfortunately, the US defense sector hesitates to move beyond engagement at the tactical level. Lieutenant Colonel (ret) Eric Dalton recounted, "They had some tactical successes here and there, but no

[11] Interview with former OSC in Mali (2011-2012), on April 11, 2019.
[12] Interview with Colonel (ret) Marshall Mantiply, former SDO/DATT in Mali (2008-2010), on January 7, 2019.
[13] Moyar, "Countering Violent Extremism in Mali," 55.
[14] Yssouf Traoré, Three Questions to Our Guests, accessed August 22, 2024, https://sahelresearch.africa.ufl.edu/events-activities/three-questions/.

strategic wins. Focusing on the tactical level has momentary effects. You can improve marksmanship, but once the US leaves, the officers don't have any gas to put in their trucks or bullets to put in their weapons to train on; [the tactical training] doesn't do them any good."[15] A former OSC to Mali added, "[Above the tactical level] things become much more squishy. What should it look like, and what does success look like?"[16] Another question is who within the US government is even capable of conducting such operational or strategic level capacity building engagement. The lessons learned identified below, organized by each of the critical CT functional areas, highlight opportunities where operational or strategic level engagement would have been critical.

Necessary and Sufficient BPC Best Practices were not Included in US efforts to BPC in Mali, Limiting Effectiveness

These include ensuring alignment of partner nation and donor objectives, securing partner nation contribution to the effort, ensuring the PN can sustain the investments, and utilizing conditionality as an incentive to engagement.[17] First, the US's objective was to combat terrorism in the north, while ATT's objective was specifically not to have a security presence in the north. These objectives clearly worked at cross purposes with each other. US leadership knew from an early point that the US and Mali did not have the same objectives, yet continued with BPC efforts nonetheless.[18] Second, identifying areas where the partner nation feels ownership and pride in making an impact, is a key driver of success.

Second, until 2013, there was no focus on PN sustainment of training or equipment provided within TSCTP. A former SDO/DATT in Mali recounted, "There was no guidance from Stuttgart or DC on getting the Malians to commit to sustainment." Colonel (ret) Marshall Mantiply, concurred that he doesn't ever remember discussing the Malians' potential contribution towards sustainment in the absence of US training, recounting, "One of the big hurdles that should have been worked on was to find a way for the Malians to sustain their

[15] Interview with former Mali SDO/DATT (2006-2008), on April 4, 2019.
[16] Interview with former OSC in Mali (2011-2012), on April 11, 2019.
[17] Paul et al., "What Works Best When Building Partner Capacity and Under What Circumstances?," 21–22.
[18] US leadership was also divided on their analysis of the threat environment and US tools for a response. The DoD saw instability in the north through a CT lens, and the State Department and USAID assessed continued instability in the north as a Malian internal security situation. The two ended up colliding and melding in 2012 when the Tuareg and Islamists joined forces.

training." If a PN is complimenting US initiatives with their own contributions, it is a clear sign of PN buy-in and shared prioritization of the effort. Thirdly, the concept of conditionality should underpin CT efforts, providing a carrot-and-stick framework for engagement. Former SDO/DATT in Nigeria, Colonel (ret) Victor Nelson identified, "You have to get iron-clad conditions agreed to in writing before starting any of this stuff, or it will not work."[19] A former SOFLE in Mali added, "Our message to the Malians should have been "Take it [equipment] and use it so you can see the effects of the training and maintain it. Then we'll give you more stuff."[20] Unfortunately, OSC's were so overwhelmed by the load of just processing heavy loads of T&E program equipment provisions entering the country that their ability to conduct end-use monitoring of the equipment provided to verify whether it was fulfilling its intended use, was virtually non-existent except for a country assessment trip that would happen every three to four years.[21] However, a former OSC to Mali, duly noted that "There are built in inefficiencies in our system that I don't think we can overcome. As OSC's we can't say [to the Malian government] "We're not going to give you this, until you do that," when we've got the full weight of the SC enterprise pushing us to get the funds implemented by the end of the fiscal year. And if it's a policy priority, we definitely can't put the breaks on and say no."[22] None of these important mechanisms, which have been identified as important BPC best practices, were taken into consideration or implemented as a component of US-Malian SC and BPC efforts.

Determining Effects is Impossible without Adequate Monitoring and Evaluation.

No monitoring and evaluation system existed to track whether US CT capacity building programs were having their intended effects. This challenge ran from the strategic to the tactical levels. DoD did not issue guidance on how to monitor and evaluate SC programs until the 2017 DoDI on AM&E. Therefore, between 2001 and 2012, scant monitoring and evaluation requirements existed. Multiple Government Accountability Office (GAO) and

[19] Interview with Colonel (ret) Victor Nelson, West Africa Desk Officer, Office of the Secretary of Defense for Africa (2003-2006) and Policy Officer for West Africa, State Department Bureau of Counterterrorism (2006-2019), via email on March 11, 2025.
[20] Interview with former SOFLE in Mali (2010-2011), on April 18, 2019.
[21] This was calculated based on the author's own experiences working for the State and Defense departments and on the frequency of JSOTF-TS and other implementer assessment trips reviewed as a part of this research.
[22] Interview with a former OSC in Mali (2011-2012), on May 9, 2019.

Office of the Inspector General (OIG) reports have captured this specifically for the region, yet nothing was done.[23] To start, the objectives in the overarching USG TSCTP strategy were politically defined, and it was not clear how the tactical objectives of the various military programs worked together to achieve the program's larger strategic objectives. Second, in military terms, a clear end state wasn't identified. A well-defined end state was necessary to assess and plan the necessary resources accurately. Had a geographic area such as a 1,000 square kilometer space been delineated, the DoD could have identified the necessary requirements for that territory to be actively patrolled at X frequency and result in Y number of stops or interactions with potential suspects. A clear analysis should have been conducted of how many vehicles and how many soldiers such an effort would have taken. A secondary analysis should have included what the maintenance, staffing, and support requirements would have entailed to sustain such a battle rhythm. Former Defense Attaché Corban Spraker said, "We should have looked at this across a five to 15-year horizon. We could have then worked to estimate what our end state would have cost and how long it would have taken. It would have probably been in the billions, but we would have been able to identify what it would have taken to get there. Instead, the US, through a limited lens of CT train and equip programming and its associated resources and authorities, made some notable tactical but short-lived gains. Those training wins were unfortunately insufficient against the backdrop of a crucially underdeveloped and sprawling country.[24] Colonel (ret) Marshall Mantiply concurred that had we been upfront in identifying the necessary requirements to build a capable Malian force and "outlined the capabilities they would have needed, and then we would have been able to honestly discuss the resources that would have been required to

[23] Government Accountability Office, "Combating Terrorism: Actions Needed to Enhance Implementation of Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership"; Government Accountability Office, "Defense Management: Improved Planning, Training, and Interagency Collaboration Could Strengthen DoD's Efforts in Africa," July 28, 2010, https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-10-794.pdf; Government Accountability Office, "Combating Terrorism: U.S. Efforts in Northwest Africa Would Be Strengthened by Enhanced Program Management"; Government Accountability Office, "SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES; Better Data Necessary to Improve Oversight and Address Command and Control Challenges" (Government Accountability Office, October 2022), gao.gov/assets/730/723204.pdf; Office of Inspector General, "Management Assistance Report: The Bureau of African Affairs Should Improve Performance Work Statements and Increase Subject Matter Expertise for Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership Projects" (Washington, DC: US Department of State, April 2020), https://www.stateoig.gov/uploads/report/report_pdf_file/aud-mero-20-29_1.pdf; "Audit of the Department of State Bureau of African Affairs Monitoring and Coordination of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership Program" (Washington, DC: US Department of State, September 2020), https://www.stateoig.gov/uploads/report/report_pdf_file/aud-mero-20-42_1.pdf.

[24] Interview with Colonel (ret) Corban Spraker, former US SDO/DATT to Mali (2010-2012), on April 16, 2019.

enable them and us to do that."[25] Third, as there was no Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD)-issued guidance on M&E, each program was collecting different data (if any), mostly on measures of performance. This made it very difficult to document and compare program effects across the seven tactical CT component areas. Finally, within the different CT programs, very little focus was placed on teaching the partner nation how to train and attempt to measure the effects of training in expanding the capacity of their force. This meant that SOF's Malian partners never gained an understanding of how well they were doing (or how much further they needed to go) across the various disciplines and to what ultimate goal.

Tactical Factors

A critical examination of each of the seven components of CT capacity attempted to be built by US programs is of utmost importance in determining the programs' effects.

Training and Equipping Four CT Companies

The JSOTF identified that a capable CT force in Mali needed to be able to conduct classic desert warfare. In the most detailed account of US CT capacity building efforts in Mali to date, Simon Powelson clarified a capable CT force would be able to "conduct coordinated attacks on fortified [AQIM] positions using effective indirect fire, synchronized with mounted-dismounted fire and maneuver."[26] French doctrine on the use of ground forces in desert and semi-desert areas analyzed in 2013 that while indigenous Sahelian forces, such as AQIM and Tuareg rebels, are proficient in desert warfare, Malian (and other Sahelian governments') security services, which employ more traditional operations with conventionally organized forces, are inept at it.[27]

It is important to clarify multiple points before a more detailed analysis is conducted. First, SOF engaged episodically with ETIAs 1, 2, 4, and 6 within the FAMa straight through the coup in 2012. Starting in 2003 they also trained episodically with the 33rd RCP's CFS until mid-2010, when they shifted to a JPAT, an enduring training relationship until the coup in

[25] Interview with Colonel (ret) Marshall Mantiply, former SDO/DATT in Mali (2008-2010), on November 14, 2018.
[26] Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 33.
[27] "Centre de Doctrine et d'emploi Des Forces, Doctrine d'emploi Des Forces Terrestres En Zones Désertique et Semi-Désertique," édition provisoire (Paris, France: Armée de Terre, 2013), https://bibliotheques-numeriques.defense.gouv.fr/document/7af4bee4-5d52-4797-a848-99bc08856cef.

March 2012.[28] There was no concerted effort by SOF, or anyone else, to build the capacity of the Malian army writ large. Despite setting out to augment Mali's combat effectiveness as early as 2002, the FAMa had, at most, benefited from one or two training events per year. US military CT capacity building efforts focused on specific units and did not commence in earnest until 2006, when training efforts jumped from three JCETs in 2005 to five in 2006.[29]

Between 2002 and 2012, the US spent approximately $23,811,900 building the capacity of the ETIAs and 33rd RCP.[30] Approximately $18 million was spent on tactical CT training and equipment, and approximately $5,934,000 was spent on logistics and maintenance training and equipment. In examining the US CT training effort in Mali, tactical effects need to be examined across the three distinct units the US focused on. SOF conducted episodic CT training with the ETIAs in the north and enduring engagement with the 33rd RCP in Bamako. SOF also worked with a third element, Mali's Air Force, to support air-to-ground integration with the CT units on the ground (the Air Force will be examined in component 5 on Aviation below).

The Echelon Tactique Inter-Armées (ETIAs)

From 2005 to 2009, SOF trained units stationed in the north in Timbuktu and Gao. Starting in 2009, SOF forces began training with ETIAs 1 (Tessalit), 2 (Kidal), 4 (Tombouctou), and 6 (Nampala). The operational headquarters was in Gao and did not have its own ETIA.[31] The goal was to increase the capacity of the ETIAs to an operational level to conduct offensive operations to kill or capture enemy AQIM units. From the outset, this training effort focused on generating small unit tactics and capacity, not capabilities. There was no focus on

[28] The CFS was the Compagnie de forces speciales, the company within the 33rd RCP that the US focused its CT capacity building on.
[29] The State and Defense Departments' annual reporting mechanism for military training is the Foreign Military Training Report, which began its publication in 1999. The format has advanced and changed throughout the years, resulting in inconsistent data presentation. For some years, the number of training events and soldiers trained are not precise. From FY 1999 through FY 2005, activities were measured by the number of students trained and the dollar value expended per activity. Beginning in FY 2006, course count began being captured, making it easier to understand how many JCETs or training events were implemented. However, the ratio of dollars spent per participant varies greatly from year to year, depending on the training. Tankel, "MALI," 265.
[30] Author's calculation from a variety of government tracking budget documents. This estimate included $17,877,900 in CT company train and equip and $5,934,000 in logistics and maintenance training and equipment.
[31] ETIA 2 began training in late 2009/early 2010. ETIA 7 began training in October 2011, Powelson, 18.

doctrinal, organizational, material, leadership and educational, personnel, facilities, or policy levels.[32]

Figure 7.1 Makeshift Range Training in Timbuktu, Mali[33]



Source: Hill, Malian Defense Soldiers Learn Logistics with U.S. Army Special Forces (2011)

As of mid-2009, SOF began partnering with the ETIAs in a more organized fashion. Initial training revealed that each ETIA's starting unit capacity was 'shocking;' an almost total lack of basic soldier skills and much less than US military trainers expected.[34] The inherently short, six-month deployment timeline of the task force critically affected unit cohesion, training participation, equipment disbursement, and the prospects for successive training opportunities. Simon Powelson conveyed that "the constant rotation of personnel in and out of the ETIAs presented "significant and essentially insurmountable problems for building unit capabilities."[35]

[32] Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2015a
[33] Allison D. Hill, "Malian Defense Soldiers Learn Logistics with U.S. Army Special Forces," www.army.mil, December 8, 2011, https://www.army.mil/article/70474/malian_defense_soldiers_learn_logistics_with_u_s_army_special_forces.
[34] Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 29.
[35] Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No."

Figure 7.2 JCET Training with ETIA in Gao (2010)[36]



Source: Photo provided by Marshall Mantiply

Many clear challenges became quickly apparent. First, one of the key underlying failures of the ETIA construct was that FAMa, as an organization, did not have competent and capable individuals to pull from to staff the ETIAs.[37] The education level of ETIA soldiers was incredibly low. Factors like illiteracy and lack of proficiency in vehicle operations and basic weapons systems were common and translated into serious losses on the battlefield. Multiple soldiers said that they had never fired a weapon before in their lives, and often, there was only one rifle magazine available for each soldier.[38] One PSI trainer related that 70 percent of casualties in the PSI units he encountered typically resulted from "friendly fire."[39] When the survivors of the July 4, 2009 ambush were asked why they had left behind so many vehicles (that ended up captured by AQIM), they said the slain drivers were the only men in the unit who knew how to drive. Similarly, when asked why they had not used their heavy machine gun to defend themselves, they answered that the gunner had also been killed, and he was the

[36] Photo provided by Colonel (ret) Marshall Mantiply.
[37] Interview with former Mali OSC (2011-2012), on May 9, 2019.
[38] Gillian Milovanovic, "Ambassador Attends Closing Ceremony of JCET Training of Malian Army ETIA 6," Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy (Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, December 16, 2009), https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO813_a.html.
[39] "Islamist Terrorism in the Sahel: Fact or Fiction?," March 31, 2005, 30, https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/chad/islamist-terrorism-sahel-fact-or-fiction.

only one proficient in its use.[40] SOF had to adjust and lengthen the JCET training period to try to overcome these hurdles.

Figure 7.3 1/10th SFG(A) teaches mounted infantry tactics to soldiers in Timbuktu (2006)[41]



Source: COMSOCEUR's Strategic Vision Brief, Mark Rosengard (2008)

Second, six-month deployments meant no consistency of officers from one JCET to the next. Each time an ODA arrived, trainers had to begin again with the very basics, including weapons safety, individual movement techniques, basic rifle marksmanship, driver training, crew-served weapons familiarization, etc. Even when there may have been some ETIA personnel that carried over from a preceding training event, "their presence did not translate into any significant increase in unit capability or negate the necessity to re-start training from square one" with basic soldier tasks.[42] Furthermore, when soldiers would return to their regular Malian infantry units, training was not kept up daily throughout the force, causing unit competence and readiness to quickly degrade.

Third, the deployment timeline resulted in unit cohesion that was fragmented at best and dysfunctional at worst. Deploying for just six months at a time undermined trust. The ETIAs suffered from low morale, they greatly lacked an Esprit de Corps, and they suffered from

[40] Gillian Milovanovic, "Closing Ceremony of JCET Training of Malian Army ETIA 4 in Gao," Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy (US Embassy Bamako, December 17, 2009), https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO815_a.html.
[41] Marc Rosengard, "COMSOCEUR's Strategic Vision" (Stuttgart, Germany, 2008).
[42] BasicC skills training included: weapons safety, individual movement techniques, basic rifle marksmanship (to 100m), driver's training, crew-served weapons familiarization, and many other similar tasks. Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 30.

divided (home unit versus ETIA) loyalties. Fourth, the ETIAs were rarely composed of platoons that had spent time deployed to the north, forcing them to engage with and depend on local militias for critical local knowledge of the terrain and its communities.[43] This created a significant legal constraint for the US, as security assistance is limited to engagement with and for the benefit of statutory forces.[44]

Finally, the US furnished both individual and unit equipment to the ETIAs, which traveled with the different officers back to their original units once their deployment with the ETIAs was complete. As a result, it was extremely rare for the entire ETIA to possess the same desert combat uniforms and boots or maintain a basic level of equipment (not everyone had a spare magazine pouch). Finally, given the episodic nature of US training, US trainers did not conduct adequate needs assessments on how equipment could best serve the needs and capacity levels of the ETIAs. Overly complex equipment, such as Harris radios (a standard within the US Army), was purchased and issued to them, which did not best correspond to their education levels and field usage needs.[45] In late 2009, the ETIAs received their first tranche of 37 new Land Cruiser 4X4 pick-up trucks, radio and communications equipment, clothing, and other individual equipment worth approximately $5.5 million.[46] The pace of US training events ramped up from three to four JCETs per year in years prior to nine to 11 per year from 2009 to 2011. A second round of additional equipment was again provided to the ETIAs in 2011.[47]

[43] Milovanovic, "Mali Using Specialized Units in Fight Against AQIM."
[44] Milovanovic.
[45] Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 22–23.
[46] This equipment was part of the FY 2007 Section 1206 security cooperation case originally destined for Mauritania but redirected to Mali after the coup. US AFRICOM Public Affairs, "U.S. Government Provides Equipment to Malian Army," U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), October 20, 2009, https://www.africom.mil/article/6953/us-government-provides-equipment-to-malian-army.
[47] This second tranche of equipment was from the 33rd Augmentation and OCIE PKO case, however the JSOTF diverted some of these resources to the ETIAs. At the time, this went against the wishes of the US Security Cooperation Chief in Bamako and the SOFLE. Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 46.

Figure 7.4 ETIA 2 Standing in Formation in Kidal[48]



Source: Photo provided by Marshall Mantiply

By the summer of 2010, it became clear to ODA Commanders that the four ETIAs "would not succeed in creating effective counter-AQIM forces."[49] Despite extending the JCETs' length (from 30 to 90 days) and holding JCETs more frequently, "a constant AAR [after action report] comment was that the capabilities of the respective ETIAs continued to remain poor despite participation in multiple JCETs."[50] Powelson recounted, "not even three-month blocks of training with the ETIAs were sufficient to address the wide array of factors required to transform ETIAs into capable counter AQIM units."[51] While at the end of a JCET training cycle, the ETIAs would demonstrate minor increased capabilities, training tended not to move beyond squad or platoon battle drills, and soldiers would never display high skill levels, such as the proficiency to conduct a coordinated assault on a fixed position.[52] One American military officer associated with the training relayed that the ETIAs were "far from meeting American military standards."[53] Colonel (ret) Marshall Mantiply stated, "Frankly, they were a mess, even after [the JCET] training. Their marksmanship and other skills

[48] Photo provided by Matthew Purdy, Assistant Detachment Commander (2008–2011), on December 23, 2024.
[49] Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 32.
[50] Powelson, 30.
[51] Powelson, 31.
[52] Powelson, 30.
[53] Milovanovic, "A Trip to Gao Highlights Mission Objectives."

atrophied between training events. I think there was a push by the US to do something to have a Malian face against AQIM, but the ETIAs were not the answer."[54] While the JCETs provided SOF with excellent training and operational experience, despite SOF training, the ETIAs were still nowhere near capable of rooting out AQIM bases in northern Mali.[55]

In the summer of 2010, a disagreement arose between the JSOTF and ODA Commanders in Mali. The JSOTF argued that despite the capacity building challenges, SOF training with the ETIAs should continue, being they were the Malian government's identified CT force and given the ETIAs' proximity to the enemy. The ODA teams and SOFLE believed the US should focus its training on a more suitable partner unit with a better chance of building capabilities over time. Despite continuing to allocate resources (JCET training, equipment, exercises) to the ETIAs throughout 2011 and 2012, the ETIAs never conducted basic combat patrols, let alone took action against the enemy.[56] Rather, monthly reports of Malian force movements throughout the north captured close to 100 percent of ETIA movements as convoy escort-type missions rather than combat patrols.[57]

There were two concrete instances where the US observed the ETIAs' performance in battle and was able to assess the impact of US CT training: Operation Djigui in June/July 2009 and the onset of the terrorist/Tuareg rebellion in early 2012.[58] These opportunities provided concrete snapshots of the ETIA unit's capacity and capability. In May 2009, British hostage Edwin Dyer was executed by AQIM in northern Mali, which was quickly followed by the assassination of the well-known and beloved Malian DGSE/FAMa Colonel Lamana Ould Bou in June. The Malian government launched Operation Djigui (Operation Hope in Bambara) to neutralize AQIM activities in northern Mali. The preceding Tuareg rebellion had concluded only five months earlier, enabling the Malian government to finally shift its attention to the threat it faced from Islamist extremism in the north. The ETIAs were

[54] Interview with former US Defense Attache in Bamako, Colonel Marshall Mantiply, on January 7, 2019.
[55] Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 30.
[56] Powelson, 32.
[57] Powelson reviewed Malian force movement reports starting in late 2010 and confirmed in 2012 that this dynamic had not changed. Powelson, 55.
[58] A third instance of ETIA engagement was in early 2009, when Tuareg militias fought alongside the ETIAs and succeeded in pushing Bahanga out of Mali and into Libya. This isn't described above as this iteration was against Tuareg rebels and not against Islamist groups in Mali.

combined into a single task force supported by Berabiche Arabs loyal to the late Colonel Ould Bou. They engaged AQIM forces on June 15, 2009, in the area of Tin-Adema, approximately 130 kilometers northwest of Tombouctou.[59] The offensive against AQIM represented a 'major undertaking' for the Malian government, which was able to kill many AQIM combatants and pursue the fleeing fighters through the desert.[60] Malian military forces soon found themselves immobilized in the desert for several days, awaiting reinforcements and resupply when they ran out of gas. The pause in the operation testified to the logistical limitations facing Malian anti-AQIM efforts and the critical nature of the FAMa's lack of military support infrastructure in the country's desert north.

During the night of July 4th, AQIM elements ambushed the incapacitated ETIA task force, which was camped for the night. The surprise attack killed 28 Malian soldiers. AQIM took six Malian soldiers hostage and damaged or destroyed four to six pick-up trucks in the fighting and seized other vehicles and supplies. The attack was the most significant single-day loss of life for the Malians since the 1991 Tuareg rebellion.[61]

The ETIA's tactical behavior revealed their extremely low level of training and capability. Not only did they fail to conduct proper patrol-based procedures, but they also did not establish observation posts for early warning, and no one remained awake and on watch to protect the sleeping camp. Four different US training events had taken place simultaneously in May, the month prior.[62] Malian troops in Gao and Tombouctou received medical training, marksmanship training, and mounted/dismounted maneuver training from SOF personnel, lasting approximately four weeks. The Tombouctou training concluded just before the end of June, which allowed newly trained soldiers to be added to the Malian column before the ambush, the first week of July.[63] The July 4 attack highlighted the vulnerability of the Malian forces to attacks by AQIM, a better-equipped and more mobile enemy. Not only did AQIM

[59] Milovanovic, "Mali Using Specialized Units in Fight Against AQIM."
[60] Milovanovic, "Running on Fumes."
[61] Milovanovic, "Ambush."
[62] Trainings took place in Tombouctou, Gao, and in Bamako. There were three tactical training events and one with the Malian Air Force. US Department of Defense and US Department of State, "Foreign Military Training Report 2009-2010" (Washington, DC, 2009), https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/155982.pdf.
[63] Trainings took place in Tombouctou, Gao, and in Bamako. There were three tactical training events and one with the Malian Air Force. Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 15.

have knowledge of the terrain, but it had unmatched maneuverability and the capacity to inflict devastating losses on untrained Malian units.[64] The CT training did not prevent the tactical and strategic disaster.

The second instance was the combined Islamist-Tuareg force's descent towards Bamako from January to April 2012. When the crisis began, the ETIAs immediately fragmented. They collapsed in combat against the mix of AQIM and rebel forces in northern Mali. Simon Powelson recounted that they "completely failed to live up to even the lowest of expectations and completely disintegrated as cohesive fighting units." A large percentage of the collapsed ETIA units' equipment was seized and flaunted in AAD and MNLA YouTube videos.[65] When put to the test, the ETIAs failed. US training with the ETIAs was episodic and did not create units capable of denying AQIM access to base areas in northern Mali.

Finding**:** While the ETIAs were the Malian government's chosen element deployed to the north, responsible for going after AQIM, they distinctively crumbled in battle. Tactical capacity was not built. The ETIAs were reactionary and never engaged the enemy.[66] Operationally and strategically, however, the presence of the ETIAs throughout the north did give the US access and placement closer to AQIM than they would have gotten from solely training the 33rd CFS in Bamako. US CT capacity building efforts were never meant to "reinforce anything up there other than a projection of power," recounted former Assistant Detachment Commander Matthew Purdy.[67] The failure of this capacity building effort with the ETIAs points to failures on both the US side in terms of training approach (episodic) and on the partner nation side in terms of the selection of the unit.[68]

Finding: The US should not have started SOF JCETs without knowing more about how the FAMa fielded its forces and how their rotations worked. The issue of ETIA personnel rotations fell under the responsibility of the Ministry of Defense. The US military did not

[64] Milovanovic, "Closing Ceremony of JCET Training of Malian Army ETIA 4 in Gao."
[65] Oumar Diakité, "Nord-Mali : Iyad Ag Ghaly Rencontre Sa Base à Gao," Maliweb.net, May 11, 2012, http://www.maliweb.net/news/armee/2012/05/11/article,65846.html.
[66] Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 32.
[67] Interview with Matthew Purdy, Assistant Detachment Commander (2008–2011), interview on December 9, 2024.
[68] The unit's composition and deployment cycle were not conducive to generating lasting results.

have personnel working out of and/or engaged at the ministerial level, which could have had an impact on the conditions that would have been necessary to make such an adjustment.[69] Had engagement occurred at that level, changes could have been made to the structure or the deployment timelines and cycles of the ETIAs.

The 33rd Régiment des Commandos Parachutistes (RCP)[70]

The 33rd RCP became the US's principal CT partner force in early 2010. The overall goal was to build, over time, a second battalion capable of operations in the north. From June 2010 until the coup in March 2012, they were in a continuous training cycle. The JPAT kicked off its engagement by conducting a capability and needs assessment of the existing DFS. The unit had just participated in Exercise Flintlock in May 2010, the month before, which Mali had again hosted.[71] The JSOTF assessed the existing DFS as performing "poorly in [all] areas from close quarters battle to weapons safety and handling."[72] This made clear that despite receiving episodic training from US and French forces for over a decade, the DFS could not effectively operate as a cohesive and effective dismounted infantry platoon, much less as a serious rival to AQIM.[73] The JPAT's assessment found the DFS "entirely deficient in every category, from personnel staffing to minimum material requirements."[74] While earlier Army Special Forces and Navy SEAL trainers had reported the eager performance and professionalism of the DFS throughout 2009, the JPAT noted their overall "low level of proficiency in the conduct of basic infantry tasks," such as zeroing, firing, or disassembling a rifle in 2010.[75] The DFS was also identified as being short on equipment and supplies.[76] Once the JPAT began training with the CFS, they identified the company as "a sharp unit" that was "picking it up quickly."[77] Considering the realities of Malian military

[69] Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 59.
[70] Régiment is French for Battalion.
[71] Michael R. Noggle, "Senegalese and Malian Soldiers Train with U.S. Special Forces in Mali," www.army.mil, May 17, 2010, https://www.army.mil/article/39221/senegalese_and_malian_soldiers_train_with_u_s_special_forces_in_mali.
[72] Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 39.
[73] The precursor unit of the 33rd conducted its first aerial jump with US SOF. US security cooperation was paused during Mali's military government from 1968-1992. The 33rd then began receiving episodic training from the US with the creation of US peacekeeping programs in the mid-1990s.
[74] Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 36.
[75] Powelson, 37.
[76] Powelson, 34–36. 43-45.
[77] Ulmer, "1/10 Special Forces Group Supports Pan Sahel Initiative."

culture, the US team estimated it would take five years for the CFS to reach the goal of "full operational capability."

Figure 7.5 US Army Jumpmaster Gives Instructions to the 33rd RCP on Proper Slipping Techniques (December 2007)[78]



Source: US Africa Command (2007)

Within a year, CFS NCOs and officers began to perform a steadily augmented role in facilitating the training. A culture of individual and collective initiative continued growing, offering all ranks leadership opportunities. By February 2011, multiple senior NCOs were noted as demonstrating a level of competence comparable to US Army NCOs. One month later, during Flintlock 2011, Mali's contingent of CFS demonstrated enhanced leadership skills and capabilities and were recognized as top performers (if not the most capable soldiers).[79] During this time, given the rapid procession of training events, in addition to developing the CFS's tactical capabilities, the JPAT also significantly increased requests for Malian staff actions and processes that supported the daily CFS training. The JPAT was

[78] US Africa Command, *Jumpmaster Training for 33rd Para*, December 7, 2007, photo, December 7, 2007, https://www.flickr.com/photos/africom/4622109221/.
[79] Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 41.

forced to directly confront the logistical challenges associated with the Malian system, where daily training was not standard, and the equipment system in place did not typically furnish supplies for training.[80]

Having achieved basic proficiency in everyday soldier tasks and dismounted operations, the JPAT began focusing on joint training between the CFS and the Malian Air Force on integrating air-to-ground operations in the summer of 2011. At this time, the Malian fleet was extremely limited. The Air Force had minimal combat capability and could not adequately support Malian ground forces against AQIM.[81] The CFS and the Malian Air Force began training on how to move small elements or casualties by air, utilizing their Mi-24 helicopters (eight troops) and the Tetra reconnaissance aircraft (one soldier), as these were the resources available.[82] The remainder of 2011 was spent focusing on these integration efforts. For the CFS, it meant developing the unit's capability to conduct mission planning for such operations. These efforts progressed hand-in-hand with the work of French Coopérant (embedded advisor) working with the Malian Air Force, Lieutenant Colonel (ret) Lionel Damestoy, who had been supporting the Tetra reconnaissance program.[83] During these months, the CFS conducted a training deployment to Kidal (900 miles) to conduct a combined arms demonstration with the Malian Air Force for the Malian CHOD and other general officers. The opportunity proved crucial in increasing the FAMa leadership's awareness of their force's newly acquired air-to-ground capabilities.[84]

In late December 2011, the US-trained CFS (335th CFS) and another company, the Company Commandos Parachutistes (333rd CCP), received orders to deploy to Gao.[85] At this point, the CFS had been training with the JPAT for a year and a half. Their deployment enabled SOF to

[80] Powelson, 40.
[81] "Mali - Air Force."
[82] It is unclear why training was also not conducted on the Basler BT-67 as this was a troop transport craft and could have carried 20-30 wounded. Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 42.
[83] Andrus W. Chaney, "Understanding French Defense Cooperation in Africa," Substack newsletter, *FAO Journal of International Affairs* (blog), February 19, 2021, https://faoajournal.substack.com/p/understanding-french-defense-cooperation.
[84] Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 42.
[85] Interview with former 33rd RCP Commander, Yssouf Traoré on March 14, 2019.

track their operations and evaluate their combat performance. The performance of the CFS in multiple combat operations demonstrated the capacity and capabilities it had been trained for.

First, the 33rd RCP was directed to recapture and hold the city of Ménaka, which was occupied by the MNLA.[86] En route to Ménaka from Gao, the 33rd RCP was ambushed between Ansongo and Ménaka. Immediate responses to breaking an ambush require units to conduct rapid actions to minimize casualties and regain their tactical advantage. Powelson recounted the CFS "immediately maneuvered, dismounted grenade launchers, and unleashed a furious barrage of fire."[87] As a result, the ambushing force disengaged and fled, enabling the 33rd to continue to Ménaka. The 33rd RCP reacted as trained in their response to breaking the ambush.[88]

Next, when the 33rd RCP reached Ménaka, they secured the town and launched an offensive against enemy positions supported by the Malian Air Force. The 33rd was the only element in the FAMa proficient in air-to-ground operations. The Malian Air Force utilized its Tetra reconnaissance aircraft and Mi-24 helicopter gunships. Working with the Air Force to aggressively barrage the enemy forces, the rebels ultimately retreated due to the 33rd RCP's relentless pursuit and the rebel group's mounting casualties.[89]

The 33rd RCP's two companies (the CFS and CCP) held the town of Ménaka for approximately three weeks in January 2012 until their supplies ran low. Multiple requests for resupply were sent to the operational headquarters in Gao; however, there was no response. The 33rd RCP was forced to pull back to Gao, relinquishing Ménaka to the enemy forces.[90]

---

[86] Interview with former 33rd RCP Commander, Yssouf Traoré on March 14, 2019.
[87] The SPG-9 is a Soviet-designed recoilless gun that was widely used by the Soviet Union and its allies during the Cold War and beyond. Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 50.
[88] Powelson, 50–51.
[89] Camille Dubruelh, "Nord-Mali : Des Rebelles Touaregs Attaquent Ménaka," JeuneAfrique.com, January 17, 2012, https://www.jeuneafrique.com/177703/politique/nord-mali-des-rebelles-touaregs-attaquent-m-naka/; Pierre-François Naudé, "Nord-Mali : « plusieurs Morts » Dans Des Affrontements Avec Des Rebelles Touaregs," JeuneAfrique.com, January 18, 2012, https://www.jeuneafrique.com/177681/politique/nord-mali-plusieurs-morts-dans-des-affrontements-avec-des-rebelles-touaregs/.
[90] AFP, "Nord Du Mali: L'armée s'en va, Les Rebelles Touareg Entrent Dans Ménaka," JeuneAfrique.com, accessed November 21, 2024, https://www.jeuneafrique.com/depeches/59463/politique/nord-du-mali-larmee-sen-va-les-rebelles-touareg-entrent-dans-menaka/.

The 33rd RCP believed Bamako purposefully did not approve the 33rd RCP's resupply requests to target and degrade the unit. In the lead-up to the April 2012 elections, political and military leaders in Bamako feared that after two terms in office, ATT would try to remain in power and refuse to step down as the constitution demanded.[91] If this were to happen, it was assumed he would use the 33rd RCP to implement his plan, given two of the 33rd RCP's companies also served on Presidential Guard detail.

Upon arrival back in Gao, the 33rd RCP quickly refitted for follow-on operations. By then, Tessalit had been under siege for two months, and the 33rd RCP next attempted to re-supply the besieged city. On their approach to the city, heavy fighting between the 33rd RCP and AAD ensued. After some time, the 33rd RCP maintained control of the area, and the enemy elements were compelled to withdraw. The 33rd RCP again found itself short on supplies, and the regiment in Gao did not respond. Unable to continue active operations without resupply, the CFS appealed directly to the 33rd RCP headquarters in Bamako. The 33rd RCP, together with the support of the JPAT, leveraged relationships and its history of joint training with the Malian Air Force to request resupply. The Air Force used its Basler cargo plane to successfully deliver the air resupply bundles to the 33rd RCP under Colonel Major Ag Gamou outside of Tessalit.[92] The resupply, however, only provided the unit with enough supplies to safely make it back to Gao, not to press on and maintain operations to finish taking the city. The Tessalit mission demonstrated that the CFS again exhibited its proficiency in conducting offensive operations against enemy elements. The CFS successfully gained control of contested terrain, collaborated with partner units, and coordinated air support for ground operations.[93]

Finding: Given that the coup halted US security cooperation in April 2012, the goal of generating a full Battalion-sized element for the 33rd RCP was never realized. However, tactical capacity was successfully built in the CFS. Their performance in multiple combat operations provided concrete demonstrations of the very capabilities the unit had been

[91] Interview with former 33rd RCP Commander, Yssouf Traoré on March 14, 2019.
[92] Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 52.
[93] Powelson, 52.

created and trained for. In total, various SOF trainers assessed that the CFS put their 1.5 years of JPAT training "to great effect. The CFS consistently demonstrated their ability to operate as a combined arms team and defeat rebel elements of a larger size."[94] In a post-mortem review, the JPAT analyzed the CFS's combat performance as "remarkable."[95]

Finding: The JPAT worked twice to move the CFS to conduct training (in Timbuktu) and its air-to-ground demonstration with the Malian Air Force (in Kidal). These two experiences provided the CFS valuable experience in moving a unit over long distances followed by definite operations. The exercises helped develop both the unit's expeditionary capability and the headquarters' capability to battle track a subordinate unit. The unit was able to employ recently donated vehicles from the US, which added a logistical element to the initiative, and the creation of the temporary JOC helped create a link between the operational units and the DSM.

Finding: Once the JPAT was in place in the summer of 2010 and conducting heel-to-toe training with the 33rd, their pace of requests for FAMa staff actions and processes that supported the daily CFS training significantly increased. The JPAT was directly confronted with the systemic logistical challenges within the FAMa, where daily training was not standard, and the equipment system in place did not typically furnish supplies for training.[96] This could have provided an important possible point of entry for SOF to focus on trying to affect systems-level change at the operational, staff level in supporting and ensuring the 33rd's operational needs were met (as well as those of other important CT-focused units [ETIAs]).

Finding: Training could have been much more effective if SOF had focused on developing an internal culture of training within the 33rd. Had a strong internal organizational culture focused on continuous training, the unit's ability to generate soldiers with a higher task

[94] This assessment was identified when Powelson interviewed various SOF personnel who had been training with the 333rd and CFS. Powelson, 54.
[95] At this point, the CFS was only 1.5 years into a 5-year plan to grow their capabilities. While trained as basic light infantry, the CFS had not yet received training on mortar, sniper, or RPG systems, nor had training focused on integrating the different systems. Furthermore, the unit's support mobility platoon had not yet been trained and was not yet in place. Powelson, 54.
[96] Powelson, 40.

standard beyond the CFS would have been possible. The author would like to note that the potential existence of additional qualified 33rd RCP companies would not have automatically guaranteed that ATT would have been willing to deploy them for combat operations (taking them away from their Presidential Guard duties in Bamako). However, it does mean that there would have been a higher percentage of qualified soldiers to feed and support the CFS.

Building a CT Training Center in Gao (Camp Firhoun)

The US CT Training Center was a separate footprint, located southwest of Camp Firhoun, just outside the camp's perimeter. Each year that Mali had hosted Exercise Flintlock (2005, 2008, and 2010), SOF were able to utilize Exercise-Related Construction (ERC) funding to ensure the necessary facilities and infrastructure were in place to support Flintlock's large-scale exercises.[97] In Gao, this included two cement block bunker-type buildings, which served as rudimentary offices and lodging for the ODAs.[98] Warehouses were also erected to forward deploy equipment so that it didn't need to be flown in for each training, and generators, running water, and a minimal office with computers were also present.[99]

The effort to formally enhance Camp Firhoun's capacity as a CT regional training center began in 2010 but was never completed. A hardback gravel road was laid leading to the site from Camp Firhoun.[100] The operational intent of an augmented Camp Firhoun was to create a more permanent Advanced Operations Base (AOB) for the US training in the north. The upgrades would have afforded SOF a more enhanced logistical footprint in Gao (wells, pump infrastructure, sewage), which would have served as a hub for coordination, intelligence gathering, communications, and logistics to support the various SOFODAs teams conducting JCETs in Kidal, Tessalit, Tombouctou, and Taodenni.[101] The project entailed constructing new billets, abolition units, classrooms, a range, and an armory. The footings for the various

[97] Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller)/Chief Financial Officer, "US Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Request" (Arlington, VA: Department of Defense, March 2024), 3–23, https://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/FY2025/FY2025_Budget_Request_Overview_Book.pdf.
[98] Interview w LTC Christopher Lyon, former CMSE in Mali (2011), on March 17, 2025.
[99] Interview with David Flynn, Senior Technical Advisor for SC Contracted Programs, Crisis Response Company (CRC) on March 25, 2025.
[100] Interview with David Flynn, Senior Technical Advisor for SC Contracted Programs, Crisis Response Company (CRC) on March 25, 2025.
[101] Interview with Matthew Purdy, Assistant Detachment Commander (2008–2011), interview on December 9, 2024.

new buildings had been poured, and the building supplies and construction materials were on site and stored in the different warehouses, awaiting use.[102] The last JCET was held in Gao from November to December 2011, and then the city of Gao–and Camp Firhoun with it–was overrun by rebel/Islamist forces on March 31, 2012.[103] The US had spent 86 percent of project funds up until March 2012, when the effort was shut down due to the coup.[104] Given the project was not completed it is impossible to determine whether the training center's objectives would have been realized.

Building infrastructure in support of CT capacity building programs has its risks in that the donor nation has no guarantees it will be able to affect the project after the build is complete. Newly provided infrastructure can potentially be used to serve special interest groups or for purposes previously unintended at the start of a program. In this case, given the new buildings had not yet been erected (the project was far from complete), it did not provide any additional benefits to the rebels/Islamists who took it over, other than the original buildings that housed the 13th regiment.

Finding: ATT consistently requested the "physical reinforcement of northern outpost bases," dating back to mid-2007.[105] While the US did provide Hesco barriers for the base in Gao, and a rock perimeter wall surrounded the base in Tessalit, Mali had "no defensible outposts in northern Mali outside of the major cities."[106] A June 2009 cable from Bamako identified the "critical nature of Mali's lack of military support infrastructure in the country's desert north. If Mali is to secure its northern regions, its military support infrastructure will have to be expanded, and training will have to be improved."[107] While the US offered training to the FAMa, it did nothing to affect the military support infrastructure. A SOCAF/JSOTF-TS

[102] Interview with Sean Setter, former AFRICOM J35 Programs Officer, on October 24, 2024.
[103] Interview with former OSC in Mali (2011-2012), on May 9, 2019.
[104] $3,163,387 of the $3,684,114 project (or 89 percent when including Canada's contribution $4,437,387 of the $4,959,114).
[105] Milovanovic, "Ambassador's Meeting with Malian President Amadou Toumani Toure."
[106] Hesco barriers are a type of modular protective barrier used for fortifications, flood control, and perimeter security. They are made of wire mesh that can be filled with sand, dirt, or gravel to create walls or embankments. They are used by military forces around the world to create protective walls for bases, camps, and other military installations, providing defense against small arms fire, shrapnel, and blast effects from explosives. "Hesco Barriers," Hesco, accessed December 30, 2024, https://www.hesco.com/about/; Milovanovic, "Running on Fumes."
[107] Milovanovic, Running on Fumes June 25, 2009

assessment team sent to evaluate the FAMa's bases in the north after the June 2009 deadly ambush on Malian forces reported they were "isolated from logistical supplies and reinforcements" and had "virtually nonexistent defensive capabilities." Malian forces faced the clear possibility of life-threatening reprisal attacks for which they had no cover or defense. The US's decision not to support the Malians' assistance request was driven by the State Department's fear that such infrastructure support would appear the US was taking sides in the Malian government's internal struggle with the Tuareg.[108]

Exercise Flintlock

Each year after its inception in 2005, the multi-national exercise implemented by SOCAF grew, in size, partners, geographic reach, and overall complexity. The first positive effect was that it served as an annual opportunity to strengthen strategic partnerships both between the Sahelian countries and the international partners. Second, it served as an element of deterrence. An annual exercise of this nature consistently demonstrated a show of force and reinforced military presence throughout a region that has had multiple contested and undergoverned spaces. Third, it tested and validated military capabilities, providing an opportunity to learn important small unit tactics and utilize different weapons systems. Fourth, it worked to strengthen interoperability, enabling regional neighbors to practice working together using a shared set of tactics, technology, and communication protocols. Fifth, it served as a mechanism to enhance readiness and preparedness at the national level. Each of the nations had to strategically plan to ensure their troops, equipment, and logistics systems were ready for deployment, an experience that would better enable them in the future should they be called upon to prepare for rapid deployment during a potential future crisis. Critiques of the exercise include that "it's done with great intentions, but there are not well-defined goals."[109]

Figure 7.6 Malian Soldiers Conduct Fast Rope Operations out of a MH-47 Chinook Helicopter outside of Bamako at Flintlock (2008)[110]

[108] McCulley, "Working with the Malians on Sahel Security."
[109] Interview with Colonel (ret) Corban Spraker, former US SDO/DATT to Mali (2010-2012), on April 16, 2019.
[110] "Exercise Flintlock," *America's Codebook: Africa* (blog), November 6, 2013, https://codebookafrica.wordpress.com/exercises/exercise-flintlock/.



Source: Exercise Flintlock, America's Codebook (2013)

Finding: Given exercises do reinforce military presence in contested regions, this played decisively in the lead up to the cancelled 2012 Flintlock in Mali. In late 2011, as the exercise was approaching (February 2012) and the security environment in northern Mali was becoming more and more tenuous, there was a very unclear intelligence situation of who was working with who up there. SOCAF contemplated using Flintlock as an operational response and presence. On the one hand, bringing together 11 countries and thousands of forces could have served as an incredible deterrent to the armed group presence in Mali's north. On the other hand, an exercise should be conducted in a permissive environment, not in an environment that exposes its participants to a serious military threat. While the Malians were very forward-leaning and trying to be supportive of the US exercise, the last-minute decision was that Mali would have borne the responsibility had anything happened to any of those forces, and the exercise was canceled.[111]

Finding: Eight years of regional and international relationship-building ended up laying the groundwork for the international coalition that came together to respond to the crisis in Mali in 2012. Colonel (ret) Christopher Call, former JSOTF J3 (Operations), noted "The same personalities came together year after year, which ended up forming a regional coalition that then came together to address the Islamist incursion in northern Mali in 2012. It served as a

[111] Interview with Colonel (ret) Corban Spraker, former US SDO/DATT to Mali (2010-2012), on April 16, 2019.

big rehearsal for what the French did with Serval. They came in and inherited what the JSOTF had created and used it effectively."[112]

Finding: Exercise Flintlock was not leveraged to its fullest possible extent**.** SOCAF missed the critical opportunity of using Flintlock as an annual opportunity to evaluate PN CT capacity. Had monitoring and evaluation been more effectively and strategically utilized, SOF could have tracked a yearly understanding of country-level capacity and improvements over time.[113] This could have been utilized in higher-level conversations with PNs and CHODs about the status and progress of US CT T&E efforts.

Finding: Flintlock could have been utilized as a mechanism to teach the PNs about exercise execution. Colonel (ret) Marshall Mantiply reflected on the way that Flintlock has expanded over the years, "the way it's been, the PNs never could have run it themselves."[114] A former SOFLE agreed, stating, "I think we make it too complicated. We think of it as a building block experience, but 80 to 90 percent of soldiers (on our end and the PN) are experiencing it for the first time."[115] 2025 marks the twentieth anniversary of Exercise Flintlock in the Sahel. Had the exercise been kept to a more modest scale, SOF could have (over time) handed the planning and execution to the PNs, with each TSCTP partner taking turns acting as the exercise host and organizer. This would have worked to instill PN ownership, strategic planning capacity, and regional peer competition, and it would have also served to encourage professionalization – driving PN desire to excel and succeed.

Maintenance and Logistics Capacity

Developing a robust military logistics capability is critical for ensuring operational readiness, sustaining forces in the field, and maintaining strategic flexibility in both peacetime and conflict. It involves establishing and optimizing systems, processes, and resources that ensure the effective and efficient supply, maintenance, and transportation of personnel, equipment,

[112] Interview with Colonel (ret) Christopher Call, former JSOTF-TS J3 Head of Operations (2006-2009), on May 17, 2018.
[113] While it wasn't guaranteed that the same soldiers/units would represent their countries each year, the regional exercise did offer an annual evaluative opportunity to use the representative country unit as a reflection of each country's general capabilities.
[114] Interview with Colonel (ret) Marshal Mantiply, former SDO/DATT to Mali (2008-2010), on November 14, 2018.
[115] Interview with former SOFLE in Mali (2010-2011), on April 18, 2019.

and materials needed for military operations. Ground maneuver capability is critical as it refers to a military force's ability to move, deploy, and engage on land effectively. It encompasses both the physical and tactical capabilities units require to dominate on the battlefield and achieve objectives, integrating elements such as mobility, firepower, protection, and flexibility, enabling forces to respond dynamically to threats.

Mobility was critical to mission success. However, considering the immensity of the desert, Mali had significant logistical limitations and lacked military support infrastructure throughout the north. During peacetime, Malian territory is divided into eight military regions overseen by a garrison and regional headquarters.[116] During times of conflict or war, the President designates a particular region as a 'zone,' or an operational formation, and all the security forces (NG, GN, Police, ETIA) within that geographic area are designated under the jurisdiction of a Zone Commander. When the situation changes from region to zone, the logistical supply chain is affected. During times of stability, the Commander of a military region had to order supplies through the DMHTA (and this rarely resulted in supplies being delivered). During times of war, however, Zone Commanders were allocated a budget to purchase supplies (food, fuel, ammunition) on the local market, as these supplies are deemed mission-critical and time-sensitive for their operations. Together, these factors severely impacted the FAMa's anti-AQIM operations.[117] First, even the most basic support for routine garrison operations was challenging. A poor road network and limited aviation network, combined with inclement weather, were significant constraints in supporting units in the field. The FAMa was forced to push out three months of rations before the rainy season each year as there was no way to get vehicles through the Adrar des Ifoghas mountains during this time.

Second, the Army's ability to logistically support their units was exceptionally limited. A logistics document, written in 2007, captured the Minister and CEMGA's view of how they wanted the Army to do business (as they were the biggest branch of the FAMa).[118]

[116] Interview with Matthew Purdy, Assistant Detachment Commander (2008–2011), on December 9, 2024; Malian Telephone Directory of the Operational Command "*Annuaire telephonique du commandement operationnel*"
[117] Interview with former Mali OSC (2011-2012), on May 9, 2019.
[118] Interview with Colonel Yssouf Traoré, former Commander of the 33rd RCP on October 17, 2018.

TSCTP provided training on Level 1 (operator level) and Level 2 (unit level) logistics and maintenance under TSCTP PKO, which worked on vehicles and weapons. Mali's equivalent of Level 3 (forward support Battalion) and Level 4 (depot level) logistics were both located at the Logistics Command headquarters in Kati, which focused on administrative and operational readiness and how the FAMa budgeted money for its maintenance needs. A French Cooperant was embedded within the DMHTA in Kati and brought in training teams occasionally to engage with various Command components.[119] Logistics and maintenance capacity is another example where training cannot just occur at the tactical level. Operational and institutional level change needs to be affected if real capacity is to be built over time. Countries like the US can provide operator- and unit-level logistics and maintenance training. However, at some point, the spare parts provided are going to get used up, the tools are going to break, and the people trained will be rotated out of their original units. The logistics system needs to be supported and sustained. If the political will is not in place to keep such a training cycle in motion and the institution does not support it, everything will fall apart, which is what happened.

Third, Malian ground maneuver capability was severely affected by its lack of mobility platforms. In June 2010, the SOFLE assessed the ETIA's existing vehicles as having been neglected and run down. Conducting movements with the old fleet was time-consuming due to repeated flat tires or breakdowns. Convoys or patrols often had to halt to repair their vehicles or proceed at very slow speeds to decrease the likelihood of equipment or engine malfunction. The new US trucks provided an "instant boost to unit capacity."[120] All elements of the FAMa were very familiar with the Toyota Land Cruiser, as similar vehicles were already commonly utilized throughout the FAMa, Mali, and the region.[121] The ETIAs could, therefore, immediately operate and deploy the vehicles upon receipt. The new trucks greatly improved transit time and unit morale. Given the ETIAs' familiarity with the trucks, the units' vehicle maintenance on the Land Cruisers was "generally good," with one unit even keeping a logbook for vehicle repairs, inventorying and securely storing all equipment, and

[119] Interview with former Mali OSC (2011-2012), on May 9, 2019.
[120] Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 22.
[121] Additionally, this is a dual use vehicle, and the parts can be found easily in the commercial market, which is not the case for other equipment made just for military use.

developing and putting in place an approval process for the utilization of spare parts.[122] Providing a robust spare parts package also facilitated a positive culture of maintenance and repair. Simon Powelson captured that "there is no question that US-provided vehicles granted the ETIAs an increased capacity for rapid and reliable movement."[123] While Powelson made this determination, no concrete data confirmed that ETIA patrol hours increased with the new vehicles' receipt. Finally, the intermediate-level support mobility company in Gao was never actualized prior to the March 2012 coup.

Finding: Units were not supported with basic supplies (fuel, water, and ammunition), which were considered "nice to haves" and not "need to haves."[124] While troops were used to a general lack of support from Bamako for routine garrison operations, a tipping point occurred in Aguelhok on January 24, 2012. After days of intense fighting, the Malian army ran out of ammunition and surrendered. In response, Tuareg rebels of the NMLA summarily executed 41 soldiers by slitting their throats or putting bullets to their heads. Photos of the massacre circulated on social media, and the FAMa felt abandoned and abused. A former OSC recounted, "There was a general feeling across the FAMa that the system and powers that be were not going to support [them] properly and leave [them] out to dry." Multiple smaller northern posts quickly surrendered and did not even try to fight. They refused to wait until they were at the decisive point where they potentially had to surrender and risk a similar fate. The Malian government reached that critical balance where they were unable to support their troops in the field, the repercussions of which tipped the fate of the nation.

Figure 7.7 TSCTP Vehicles Delivered to the Gao Support Company[125]

[122] ETIA 4 in Tombouctou displayed impressive (and superior) vehicle maintenance capacity to the other ETIA units. Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 23.
[123] Powelson, 23.
[124] Interview with former Mali OSC (2011-2012), on May 9, 2019.
[125] Photos provided by former OSC in Mali (2011-2012) on July 25, 2019.




Source: Photos provided by Matthew Purdy

Finding: Despite having received approximately $5,934,000 in vehicles, spare parts, and fuel for both the ETIAs and the CFS, and tactical- and operational-level maintenance and logistics training leading up to the 2012 conflict, Bamako had very limited logistical capacity without foreign partners' assistance.[126] The above cargo trucks, fuel trucks, and ambulances were inventoried and handed over to the FAMa in December 2011.[127] The FAMa could not sustain its forces in the field or ensure their operational readiness. This was demonstrated time and again when FAMa units pursuing AQIM elements in the north were forced to halt operations to await fuel or reinforcements, leaving them vulnerably exposed for weeks at a time until they were resupplied.[128] The JPAT was clear in their assessment that "the biggest limiting factor to greater CFS success was the complete failure of the Malian logistical system to meet their sustainment requirements in the harsh and remote desert environment."[129]

US SOF focused on tactical maintenance logistics support, not capacity building at the operational or strategic levels. While these efforts directly supported mission execution by focusing on the immediate and short-term needs of the combat units, it was not enough. Tactical level logistics support provided by the US focused on supplying ammunition, fuel,

[126] Interview with former AFRICOM J35 Programs Officer, Sean Setter, on October 4, 2024.
[127] Interview with former OSC in Mali (2011-2012) on July 25, 2019.
[128] During Operation Djigui in June 2009, the Malian government launched to neutralize AQIM activities in the north. Severe logistical limitations impaired the military's ability to engage with terrorist groups. In hot pursuit of AQIM elements, Malian forces ran out of gas and sat stranded in the open desert for a week until they were resupplied by land. By this time, their ability to pursue AQIM had evaporated. Guichaoua and Pellerin, "Making Peace, Building the State; Relations between Central Government and the Sahelian Peripheries in Niger and Mali," 47; Milovanovic, "Running on Fumes."
[129] Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 54.

and food to troops. It supported the maintenance and repair of vehicles and equipment in the field. It emphasized mobility and sustainment during combat.

Finding: Focusing on operational capacity resulted in greater effects than just tactical training. In November 2011, the JPAT facilitated a CFS training deployment to Tombouctou, over approximately 600 miles.[130] The deployment's mobility benefitted greatly from new vehicles recently delivered by the US. The long-range movement also justified the JPAT's engagement with the 33rd RCP headquarters, monitoring and mentoring how it battle-tracked its subordinate unit (the CFS) up to Tombouctou. A small operations room within the 33rd RCP headquarters was established to oversee, guide, and communicate with the CFS. It served as a confidence-building measure for the CFS, proving that reach-back support was available. The JPAT also facilitated coordination between the FAMa's military intelligence apparatus, the DSM, and the 33rd RCP headquarters. The successful movement allowed tremendous training benefits, ensuring the unit trained in the same environment and conditions they would be deployed.[131] It also demonstrated to the Ministry of Defense the expeditionary capability of the CFS, whose headquarters were in Bamako.[132] The combined training event proved "immensely valuable" to new and senior CFS deployed members and the different components of the MDAC that the JPAT had engaged with (RCP headquarters and DSM) in providing an operational model for how all of FAMa's long-range movements should be conducted.

Finding: If the US had applied capacity building efforts at the operational and strategic levels, it would have greatly improved the chances of the FAMa's resupply in their time of need. Strategic level logistics engagement could have focused on national resource management, including long-term acquisition planning, policy development, and coordination with international stakeholders. This could have strengthened key functions that ended up directly limiting the 33rd CFS's tactical success against AQIM (mainly resource allocation, procurement, and functioning supply chains). At the operational level, logistics

[130] Powelson, 48–49.
[131] Upon reaching Tombouctou, the CFS conducted various training iterations in the desert. The training covered dismounted maneuvers, driver's training, patrol base operations, and live fire full mission rehearsals.
[132] Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 49.

spans the gap between the strategic and tactical levels. It ensures that resources procured are effectively distributed to support operations in the field. US operational level capacity building efforts could have focused on identifying spare parts resupply requirements, planning supply lines for missions, working to maintain important technical staffing requirements, and managing regional distribution hubs and transit points. An example of this was that weapons training required ammunition. If the existing Malian infrastructure was unable to meet this requirement, it was the duty of the enduring SOF team to explore the reasons why. In this case, the problem could have been that there was no formal request process, that requests were not reaching the right individuals (DMHTA), or that the Ministry was not allocating money for the purchase of ammunition. Regardless, no one was working at this level and trying to address and affect these critical challenges. Engaging at either of these levels would have worked to strengthen the maintenance and logistics systems in Mali – a much stronger and deeper investment, given tactical realities on the ground.

Communications

The training plan for enhancing communication capacity involved training a core group of trainers from the DTTA and select members of the ETIA. It was then the responsibility of these individuals to train a larger unit on the use of US-provided radios. However, in a military absent from a culture of training and lacking personal initiative, this plan was less than successful for obvious reasons. DTTA trainers failed to ensure the unit personnel received adequate training, and the individuals trained in the units either forgot, never really learned how to operate the radios in the first place or rotated into other positions where their skills quickly deteriorated from lack of use.[133]

Figure 7.8 10th Group Soldiers Demonstrate Communications Equipment to Malian Forces[134]

[133] Powelson, 23.
[134] Jennifer Whittle, "10th Special Forces Group Soldiers Work SOCEUR Mission," April 2004, 15.



Source: Whittle, 10th Special Forces Group Soldiers Work SOCEUR Mission (2004)

During the PSI, Mali received $350K for communication equipment and maintenance for VHF and HF radios, which were delivered in 2004. Mali's three PSI-trained companies received portable, manpack radios and vehicular-mounted systems. An Embassy cable documented that again in 2009, the US Government again provided over "50 radios or radio systems" to improve the communications capacity of the ETIAs, and a final tranche was provided in 2011.[135] Whenever vehicles were provided, the majority contained mounted communications systems in the

Figure 7.9 US-Provided Harris Radios in Tessalit (left) and Vehicle Setup in Kidal (right)[136]



Source: Photos provided by Matt Purdy

[135] Milovanovic, "Malian Military Could Make Good Use of Cessna Caravans."
[136] Photo provided by Matthew Purdy, Assistant Detachment Commander (2008–2011), on December 23, 2024.

The communications equipment provided to the FAMa through TSCTP was unsuitable for the Malian operating environment, the FAMa's technical needs, and its sustainment capabilities. A disconnect existed between Malian operational, technical, and sustainment communications requirements and the equipment SOF provided. Harris radios were inappropriate for the ETIAs for multiple reasons. First, Mali's north has harsh terrain. The FAMa experienced significant logistical challenges in deploying and maintaining the communication equipment in remote areas with limited infrastructure. The Harris radios were finicky and did not demonstrate as flexible a range as the soldiers' previous model. Second, the Harris Falcon radios ended up being way too advanced for the simple needs of the Malian army operating in the north. "We supplied them with equipment we thought they would use," a JSOTF officer recounted.[137] A JSOTF assessment team traveled north in 2008 to conduct end-use monitoring of Mali's communications equipment. The team checked the donated gear and examined how it was used. One assessor said, "Every time we went up there, all their systems were broken and didn't work. The Harris systems I saw were covered in dust and didn't look like they were being used."[138] The team learned that when the unit went out on patrol or pursued a target, six to eight soldiers would ride in the back of each Toyota Land Cruiser, holding on. If anyone happened to grab the antenna and the radio was in use, the person would have gotten electrocuted. It was observed that the officers had learned and unplugged the antenna or turned the radios off, leading to their lack of use. In 2011, a Harris technician conducting technical training found the Harris radios to be "far too advanced for the needs of the Malian army" and that a far simpler technology would have better suited the soldiers' requirements.[139] Matthew Purdy, Assistant Detachment Commander in Bamako in 2011, recounted, "The issue wasn't with the tranches of radios distributed. It had to do with the usability and sustainability of the systems."[140] The ETIAs in the north were dependent on cell phones, which depended on the day-to-day capacity of the Orange cell service network. The ETIAs continued using the Chinese high-frequency (HF) radios for long-distance communications with Bamako via Morse code. The combination of desert terrain and lack of

[137] Interview with former JSOTF-TS Future Plans Officer, on November 7, 2024.
[138] Interview with former JSOTF-TS Future Plans Officer, on November 7, 2024.
[139] Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 26.
[140] Interview with Matthew Purdy, Assistant Detachment Commander (2008–2011), on December 9, 2024.

repeaters for line-of-site long distance communications resulted in better communications over HF than a handheld VHF/UHF.[141] Making matters worse, the deliveries of the US-furnished Harris radios (the times the devices were issued to the unit), at times, did not coincide with SOF training events. This meant the devices were issued and no training was provided, which, given the complexity of the devices, caused extremely low levels of usability.[142] Finally, Harris radios were expensive to maintain, which was not in line with the non-existent maintenance budget of the Malian army. The radios depended on proprietary $700 batteries that cost the same as rechargeable batteries (and cost outrageously more than the units received from headquarters for their supplies budget). Therefore, once the original batteries were used up, the devices became inoperable. While some SOF teams tried to use alternative sources of funding to purchase rechargeable batteries for the units, there was very little electricity in the north (at some posts, two to three hours per day). Those who were issued rechargeable batteries did not prioritize their scant electricity for the batteries.[143] A tactical example was the Battle of Ouagadou (June 2011), when Malian and Mauritanian forces launched a multi-week joint offensive into the Ouagadou Forest. Operation "Benkan" (meaning 'unity' in Bambara) sought to root out known AQIM forces, which had set up bases in the forest. The FAMa relied on communications by phone, not by Morse code, let alone the US-provided Harris radios.[144]

Efforts to further develop the COIA achieved mixed results. Despite the presence of a Harris radio base station in the corner, communications between Bamako and Commanders in the field or regimental headquarters in the north were all conducted on a Chinese radio via Morse code, satellite, or cell phone.[145] Routine check-ins between Bamako and the regional command centers happened daily, but neither operational reports nor orders out to the field were ever issued.[146]

Figure 7.10 Example of HF Morse Code Radio utilized in Kidal and COIA in Bamako[147]

[141] Interview with Matthew Purdy, Assistant Detachment Commander (2008–2011), on December 9, 2024.
[142] Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 22–23.
[143] Interview with Matthew Purdy, Assistant Detachment Commander (2008–2011), on December 9, 2024.
[144] Interview with Matthew Purdy, Assistant Detachment Commander (2008–2011), on December 9, 2024.
[145] Interview with LTC Yssouf Traoré, former 33rd RCP Commander (2013-2017), on November 22, 2024.
[146] Interview with Matthew Purdy, Assistant Detachment Commander in Bamako (2008–2011), on December 9, 2024.
[147] Photo received from Matthew Purdy, Assistant Detachment Commander (2008–2011), on December 23, 2024.



Source: Photo provided by Matthew Purdy

Finding: Conducting a comprehensive end-user assessment before equipment is provided to a partner nation is extremely important. A thorough analysis was never conducted at the beginning during PSI (2002-2005) on 1) the operational conditions in northern Mali, 2) the FAMa's existing communications systems and operational needs, and 3) their sustainment capability and allowances. It is hard to believe that a different equipment system would not have been identified and provided if such an analysis had been conducted. Former OSC in Nigeria, Colonel Sean McClure, noted, "We give them what we have, not what they need," due to factors such as market availability, US procurement laws, and other constraints on the security cooperation system.[148] To ensure operability, once the initial radio systems were furnished in 2003 and 2004, follow-on equipment purchases did not course correct and identify a more appropriate system, despite a 2008 assessment that determined most Harris Falcon systems were not being used. The former JSOTF-TS Officer noted, "FAMa officers were trained on [the radios], but it was not something that they kept up with. If it's not part of their strategy and system, it's not going to be used."[149] In discussing the implementation of the Ténéré Communications Initiative that the US supported through its provision of

[148] Interview with a Defense Department official from the US Embassy in Nigeria (2016-2019), on December 5, 2024.
[149] Interview with JSOTF-TS Officer (2008-2014), interview on December 9, 2024.

compatible Harris radios to the four PSI nations to facilitate the sharing of information, Algerian Ambassador Nourredine Ayadi accused Mali of not even taking them [radios] out of their plastic wrapping in February 2010.[150] Finally, multiple JCET trainers noted that Harris systems were technically complicated even for US forces without a base level of training. Similar frustrations were experienced working with other partner nations where Harris radios were not user-friendly and would end up cobwebbed in a corner.[151] Despite having access to Harris radios (furnished by the US), the Malians established their COIA with an HF Morse Code Key radio, which had been furnished by the Chinese.

Finding: The initiative to train a core group of trainers from the DTTA and select members of the ETIAs was the only train-the-trainer initiative the researcher has come across in her interviews, which is extremely positive. However, the train-the-trainer concept had some fundamental flaws. First, making it the responsibility of the DTTA graduates to train their larger unit in Harris radio communication capacity without additional US training support was incredibly short-sighted. Second, it was clear from the outset that the FAMa lacked a formal military training and education system (and a culture of training and personal initiative), so it was incredibly over-ambitious to expect them to hypothetically train the larger FAMa communications apparatus. Third, a regular component of train-the-trainer programs includes building in workarounds to ensure trainees receive multiple opportunities to train and learn (and therefore won't forget the knowledge and skill bestowed through the training). Fourth, practical, hands-on exercises are used to verify trainees have truly absorbed and can implement the basis of the training. Finally, mechanisms are put in place to ensure the continued training of the basic workforce so that even if personnel or deployment rotations remove trained and qualified personnel, there are other officers with skills to rotate in in their absence.[152] Only the first step was conducted in SOF's train-the-trainer model. Unsurprisingly, it did not have positive results.

Finding: A more operational and strategic focused approach by teams on the ground could have assessed what systems the COIA was using and for what purpose and could have taught

[150] Milovanovic, "New Algerian Ambassador to Meets with Ambassador."
[151] Interview with JSOTF-TS Officer (2008-2014), interview on December 9, 2024.
[152] Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 23.

them how to use them more efficiently. On the officer side, SOF could have worked on developing a battle rhythm, which would have developed new standard operating procedures regarding the COIA's daily communication with field Commanders on operations and training, and they could have developed and formalized new information collection requirements for regional Commanders in the field reporting back to the COIA.[153]

Civil Affairs

From 2008 to 2010, CMSE teams in Mali saw immediate results. Initial civic action programs generated the desired inroads regarding goodwill and support from local mayors, governments, and NGOs. A former Ambassador stated, "MEDCAPs and VETCAPs were the best thing [the military] did back then. There's nothing better than going into villages and vaccinating kids, doing eye tests, and giving out glasses – that's a real effective use of resources."[154] Civil Affairs opened access and placement for the JCETs and other organizations, especially in the north. Despite receiving no guidance from AFRICOM (or OSD) on monitoring and evaluation requirements, the CA program managers did utilize a system to monitor and measure the program's efficacy.

Figure 7.11 Resident of Segou receives Deworming Medicine and Instructions from a Malian Military Doctor during a MEDCAP[155]



Source: Photo provided by John Crowe

[153] Interview with Matthew Purdy, Assistant Detachment Commander (2008–2011), interview on December 9, 2024.
[154] Interview with former US Ambassador to Mali, on July 3, 2019.
[155] Donald Sparks, *AFRICOM: Flintlock 10 Hundreds of Malians Receive Medical Care*, December 13, 2007, photo, December 13, 2007, https://www.flickr.com/photos/africom/4615199388/.

SOCAF, the component command that oversaw the program's implementation, measured the change it depicted over time in the team's access, relationships, and information. Indicators for access included the number, frequency, and geographic reach of the CMSE's CA activities. Priority geographic areas were identified, and the CMSEs would encourage the ETIAs to move and conduct CA activities with local populations in those areas. For example, in 2011, the CMSE influenced ETIA 4 in Tombouctou to move north and the 33rd in Bamako to move northwest towards the Mauritanian border near Néma so that the CMSE could conduct CA activities and access additional populations in new priority areas. From 2008 to 2011, the CMSE's access in the north increased from Tombouctou to Gao to Tessalit to Kidal. In the west, they expanded from Sévaré east and then from Bamako north up to the Mauritania border near Néma. Finally, access was also measured by the type of access the CMSE had to different ethnic groups. Indicators of expanding relationships included the number and importance of the individuals, local organizations, and local government personnel the CMSE sought to connect with.

The team also conducted what is known in US military terms as 'preparation of the environment' or passive reconnaissance on who does what and to whom – all in support of the CT mission. Indicators included how much information the teams gleaned from the local population regarding terrorist persons of interest, their whereabouts, how and when they would transit the country, and their influence over local populations. The CMSE would then mentor and oversee ETIA officers in the field as they transmitted any desirable information received via CA activities to their higher headquarters in Bamako, where the SOFLE would be working with ETIA leadership on the receiving end. They would then push that information to the DSM within the FAMa.

SOCAF West Africa Regional Program Manager, Lieutenant Colonel (ret) John Wishart, posited that Mali was the best mission SOCAF had going on at the time in the region. He recounted, "Everything you wanted to see happen was happening in Mali."[156] During 2011, the CMSE team was in constant rotation, implementing events once to twice a month

[156] Interview with LTC John Wishart, former SOCAF West Africa Regional Civil-Military Operations Program Manager (2009-2012, 2014-2017) on December 17, 2024.

depending on the location (Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal, and Tessalit, etc.).[157] The CMSE was able to improve the MEDCAP process to maximize Malian civilian access to medical-related supplies and be seen by a healthcare professional if needed. The CMSE was also successful on two occasions in creating civil-military linkages between ETIAs and NGOs. First, in early 2010, Ambassador Milovanovic asked the CMSE if they could assist in Gao with guinea worm eradication efforts, as there had been reports of increasing rates of the disease in recent months. The Carter Foundation, an international NGO on the ground at the time in Mali, was interested in providing drinking straws to support anti-guinea worm efforts, but didn't have any way to get to Gao. The CMSE had access to a Cassa 212 plane and agreed to assist the Carter Foundation staff with a ride to Gao. The CMSE connected the team with local health professionals at the government clinic, and the anti-guinea worm efforts were successfully able to take place.[158] Then, in January 2011, a local NGO that focused on infant mortality and vaccinations was operating in the Bamba/Gourma area but was limited in its ability to get out and access local populations due to the tenuous security situation. They had money to pay for fuel to transport them to the local communities they were trying to vaccinate, but they had no security. The CMSE connected the NGO with the nearest ETIA in Timbuktu. The ETIA was able to provide protection but was not patrolling due to fuel limitations. This created a mutually beneficial situation for both parties supportive of improving civil-military relations in support of CT operations: the ETIAs were able to patrol and provide the NGO with security, with gas paid for by the NGO, and the NGO was afforded access to the local surrounding communities to vaccinate infants and document healthcare and vaccination data. [159]

In June 2011, successful CA implementation by the Malian military culminated in Operation Benkan (the joint Malian/Mauritanian operation against AQIM), a component of which was CMO-focused. The Malians were able to coordinate CA operations between their units and the Mauritanian Action Civilo-Militaire (ACM) across the border.[160]

[157] Interview with LTC John Wishart, former SOCAF West Africa Regional Civil-Military Operations Program Manager (2009-2012, 2014-2017) on December 17, 2024.
[158] Interview with LTC Christopher Lyon, former CMSE in Mali (2011) on March 17, 2025.
[159] Interview with LTC (ret) Rudi Lusa, former CMSE in Mali (2010-2011), on March 26, 2025
[160] Action civil-militaire were specialized CMO units that the Mauritanian armed forces had established within their Special Intervention Units (Groupement Special d'Intervention).

The CA program in Mali did experience challenges at times. Its ability to conduct activities and travel to desired geographic areas was occasionally limited due to the threat of terrorist group activity. As a result, the team's movement was restricted to the capital, which had the potential to disrupt planned events. However, access limitations did not impact the team's ability to track program effects. Another challenge was the limited effectiveness of the MIST. Within the Embassy, the MIST fell under the Public Affairs Officer (PAO), who was worried that the team might inflame tensions given State and DoD's conflicting viewpoints on the threat in the north. The PAO utilized the team to cover Embassy stories rather than permitting it to conduct exit survey polling of populations that had accessed US-organized civic engagement activities in the north. This, more traditional activity set for MIST teams, would have enabled them to get atmospherics at different locations to determine where to hold potential future events or to reflect on the effectiveness of distinct US civil affairs activities.[161] Because the MIST was not being utilized for its intended effect and was not even permitted to leave the capital, the team requested that it be removed from the country.[162]

Figure 7.12 A Malian Participant Leading a Breakout Session (2011)[163]



Source: Photo provided by Andrea Walther-Puri

The TSS was implemented from 2007 to 2012, bringing together over 900 civilian, law enforcement, and military officials from ten TSCTP countries to discuss shared regional

[161] Interview with LTC Christopher Lyon, former CMSE in Mali (2011) on March 17, 2025.
[162] Interview with Michael Dawdy, Mali Civil Affairs Team Lead (2009-2010), on April 10, 2025.
[163] Andrea Walther, "Civil-Military Operations in Support of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Program" (Bethesda, MD: DAI, December 2010), 24.

threats to governance, development, and security. The program focused on generating an alumni community that would return year after year to keep civil-military relationships alive and active.[164] A consistent topic of conversation and debate amongst the regional civil-military operations/relations training program under TSCTP was unresolved feelings of frustration amongst civil-military participants with underlying corruption in the security sector. The TSS provided a venue at which participants could freely discuss issues of corruption, start conceptualizing the impact of corrupt practices on the effectiveness of state institutions, and build an established community of civil-military focused security sector officials for times of crisis. For many, a US trainer observed this was the first time in their careers that participants had the chance to reflect on the performance of their institutions, the impact of corrupt practices on professionalism, and the condition of governance institutions.[165] Participant feedback consistently offered new ideas for prioritizing and strengthening civil-military interactions in their jobs and organizations. Such ideas included: rebuilding critical infrastructure important to civilians (i.e. bridges, markets, etc.), going into schools and clinics to educate citizens on the concept of civil-military relations and to improve the image of security forces in the eyes of the public, and incorporating civil-military education into their home institution training and curriculum offerings.[166] Chadian instructor Zakaria Ousman Ramadan noted, "Military and civilians are working together and across borders. They are sharing email addresses, phone numbers, and photos. When an emergency strikes, they know who is on the other end of the telephone because they have already worked together."[167] Finally, the symposia opened access for the JSOTF to meet rising civil-military leaders throughout the TSCTP countries. TSS symposia offered a consistent platform for relationship building and afforded the JSOTF an active understanding of the regional security leadership's perspectives on critical issues throughout the TSCTP region.

[164] DAI Publications, "Linking Soldiers, Civilians Across West-Central Africa to Increase Stability, Security," 2012, https://dai-global-developments.com/articles/linking-soldiers-civilians-across-west-central-africa-to-increase-stability-security/.
[165] MacLachlan, *Security Assistance, Corruption and Fragile Environments; Exploring the Case of Mali 2001-2012*, 30.
[166] Walther, "Civil-Military Operations in Support of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Program."
[167] DAI Publications, "Linking Soldiers, Civilians Across West-Central Africa to Increase Stability, Security."

Figure 7.13 TSS Senegalese Senior Military Mentor, Colonel Boubacar Seck, confers with Colonel Nestor Sadler, JSOTF-TS Commander, during the TSS Senior Leader Symposium in March 2011[168]



Source: Photo provided by Andrea Walther-Puri

Finding: The CMO program accomplished its objectives of increased access, relationships, and information, both for US and Malian forces, and enhanced PN legitimacy and CMO capacity. Malian forces within the ETIAs and the 33rd RCP did learn how to conduct CA activities. They came to understand the positive influence CA had in building the FAMa's legitimacy in the eyes of local communities. They displayed their ability to implement CMO activities independently of US forces. Two examples are in January 2011 with ETIA 4 in Timbuktu partnered with an NGO in the Bamba/Gourma area. This partnership enabled the ETIA to conduct patrolling, and the NGO accompanied to vaccinate infants. The second instance was during the Battle of Ouagadou in June 2011, which was conducted in cooperation with Mauritania's ACM units across the border. The CA program's identification of concrete program objectives and indicators at the very outset of the program enabled the measurement of program effects and impact.

Finding: In Mali, CMSE teams tactically focused on implementing CA events and engaged with the FAMa. However, they fell short of building Malian CA training capacity within FAMa units (the ETIAs and the 33rd RCP), which would have enabled them to continue independently growing their own CA teams and activities.[169] This did occur in some

[168] US Africa Command, *AFRICOM TSS Senior Leader Symposium*, March 3, 2011, photo, March 3, 2011, https://www.flickr.com/photos/africom/5525622646/.
[169] Interview with former JSOTF-TS, Head of Strategy (2007-2009), on November 14, 2024.

neighboring TSCTP countries, such as Mauritania, where ACM units were stood up within the various Mauritanian CT units (Special Intervention Units, Groupement Special d'Intervention).[170]

Finding: The TSS epitomized AFRICOM's talking point of BPC "by, with, and through" partner nations. A West African instructional team presented localized examples of crisis and disaster response. Participants were afforded the critical thinking space to step outside of the regular bounds of their individual hierarchical rank-conscious security structures. The trainings were conducted in the host countries' native language and often dipped into Arabic when there were conversations about religion. The only other BPC program that came close to this approach was the 6th SOS's aviation training, which was also conducted in French. This should have been part of a broader CT approach. The TSS offered Sahelian security officials often the first chance to learning the full range of the civil-military sphere in their countries and experiencing civilian perspectives from throughout the security sector. Most left with a new appreciation of those who worked in security but weren't wearing a uniform. That willingness to consider that the civilian perspective and respect their place in was critical.

Aviation: Integrated Air/Land Defense Capabilities

Given its vast territory and threat environment, aviation capacity was a critical component of the Malian government's ability to project power, conduct successful ground operations, and evacuate soldiers wounded in combat. Despite Mali's clear and desperate need for additional airlift capacity to extend the reach of the state into its immense northern territory, the US did not provide new aircraft. The Pentagon was firmly against it, concerned that the Malian government would arm the Cessnas and use them for internal security purposes to target Tuareg groups in the north.[171] The Deputy Assistant Secretary for Defense for Africa, Vikki Huddleston, who had also served as Ambassador to Mali from 2002 to 2005, visited Mali in 2009 to discuss the potential investment, yet remained firmly against the 1206 proposal.[172]

[170] Interview with LTC John Wishart, former SOCAF West Africa Regional Civil-Military Operations Program Manager (2009-2012, 2014-2017) on December 17, 2024.
[171] Interview with former US Defense Attache in Bamako, Colonel Marshall Mantiply, on January 7, 2019.
[172] Interview with former US Defense Attache in Bamako, Colonel Marshall Mantiply, on January 7, 2019.

Providing them with “new aircraft...just look at what they've done with these," a Pentagon officer noted about the state of the US-furnished Basler BT-67 and 3 Cessna O-2s in 2009.[173] However, the US Embassy in Bamako’s opinion differed quite starkly. In a December 2009 cable from Bamako, Ambassador Milovanovic documented Mali’s positive track record with respect to aircraft maintenance. The Malian Air Force was maintaining the BT-67 and keeping it in the air on a “regular” basis. While FMF had assisted since the 1990s with spare parts acquisition, the US Embassy in Bamako pointed out that in recent years, Mali had not received FMF, yet the Basler was still flying, which they attributed as a credit to the Malian Air Force.[174] The Embassy pointed out that the US-provided Cessnas were 26 years old when they were delivered to Mali, relics from the US war in Vietnam. Colonel (ret) Marshall Mantiply, stated, “We expected the Malians to maintain and operate aircraft that we'd sent to the boneyard because they were too expensive for us to maintain and operate, and parts were becoming too hard to find. It made zero sense.”[175] One of the two Cessnas had not even been flyable upon delivery.

A basic cost-benefit analysis revealed that keeping the Cessna O-2s and the Basler BT-67 airborne rather than purchasing new aircraft hindered the CT mission. While the Cessna O-2 served principally as an observational aircraft, it was too small for much else. It also didn’t have the range to support ground troops in the North. A Cessna Caravan in its modular ISR or light transport configuration could have provided surveillance, transport, and the possibility for medical evacuations.[176] The Basler BT-67 had the necessary range and carrying capacity but was very expensive to operate. This older, World War II aircraft was no longer suited to rapid loading/unloading procedures, as it had no rear loading ramp.[177] Colonel (ret) Marshall Mantiply recounted, “The Basler [BT-67] was supposed to be for the

[173] The Basler was down for maintenance and repair purposes more than it was flying. One Cessna had been cannibalized for parts, the second had a broken engine, and it was unclear why the third was not operational. Interview with former US Defense Attache in Bamako, Colonel Marshall Mantiply, on January 7, 2019.
[174] Milovanovic, “Malian Military Could Make Good Use of Cessna Caravans.”
[175] Interview with former US Defense Attache in Bamako, Colonel Marshall Mantiply, on January 7, 2019.
[176] Cessna 0-2 aircraft have 2 cockpit seats for the primary crew and possibly one or two additional passengers. The Cessna Caravan has a larger fuselage and a capacity for up to 14 passengers. “Cessna Aircraft,” accessed November 15, 2024, https://cessna.txtav.com/.
[177] Interview with Colonel (Retired) Lionel Damestoy, former French Cooperant in the Malian Air Force (2010-2013) on December 10, 2024.

33rd [RCP] to jump out of, but more times than not it was used for distinguished visitor travel."[178]

In 2008 and 2009, Embassy Bamako requested two Cessna Caravans via the DoD Section 1206 program, which would have been "a vital step toward Malian effort to regain control of the vast, under-governed areas of northern Mali."[179] Given Mali's extremely low operational and tactical mobility, the two Cessna Caravans would have provided the Malians with "over-the-horizon visibility to better locate the enemy and avoid running into ambushes," which had been leading to increased casualties and decreased morale. They would have also tied directly into the military intelligence and medical stability operations programs. The US could have provided the two Cessna Caravans, a training package, and a spare parts package via 1206 funding, while follow-on PKO funding could have been used to add an appropriate sensor package once the Malians had demonstrated proper utilization against terrorist (and not Tuareg) groups, which had been a State Department concern.

Finding: A critical limiting factor of Mali's access and reach into the north was being able to maintain capable air assets. The decision against providing Section 1206-furnished Cessnas was an unfortunate decision. Taking into consideration the delivery timelines of DoD Section 1206 programs during these years, had the Embassy's proposal been approved, Mali would have seen the delivery of those airframes sometime by 2010. They could have been integrated into and contributed towards multiple components of the TSCTP CT programs, supporting the Malian government's ability to project power, conduct successful ground operations, and evacuate soldiers wounded in combat.

Figure 7.14 6th SOS Conducting Pre-Flight Checks with Malian BT-67 Pilots[180]

[178] Interview with Colonel (ret) Marshall Mantiply, former SDO/DATT in Mali (2008-2010), on March 13, 2019.
[179] Milovanovic, "Malian Military Could Make Good Use of Cessna Caravans."
[180] Nathan Hodge, "Special Forces Fly Secondhand Skies in Africa," *Wired*, May 22, 2009, https://www.wired.com/2009/05/special-forces-fly-secondhand-skies-in-africa/.



Source: Hodge, Wired, (2009)

In the summer of 2011, the JPAT began focusing on joint training between the CFS and the Malian Air Force on air-to-ground integration. Multiple units within AFSOC assisted with providing AvFID through mobility operations. The 6th SOS, 818th MSAS, 253 SOG worked with the Malian Air Force on air mobility, airlift operations, flight training, and maintenance.

Figure 7.15 Basler BT-67 Maintenance and Supply Mobile Training Team (MTT)[181]



Source: 818th MSAS Mission Synopsis Brief

[181] 818th MSAS, "Mali #18-21 Basler BT-67 Maintenance & Supply MTT AAR" (US Air Force, March 27, 2018).

At this time, the Malian Air Force's fleet was extremely limited. Former French Coopérant, Colonel Lionel Damestoy, who was embedded in the Malian Air Force between 2010 and 2012, recounted, "the Malian Army knew very little about conducting air operations or joint operations and had difficulty in conceptualizing air support in all its forms (reconnaissance, transport, and close air support) as conceived by the US or NATO (France)."[182] The Malian Air Force had minimal combat capability and was not able to support its ground forces against AQIM.[183] The Air Force's work with the CFS to practice moving small elements or casualties by air with its Mi-24 helicopters and Tetras, proved crucial for developing its air-to-ground capabilities.

For the Air Force to be able to provide air support to Army operations, several basic things were required. First and foremost, aircraft had to be equipped with a suitable, projectable maintenance echelon to accompany the units during their deployment. Second, sufficient maintenance and spare parts packages were required. Third, it needed a trained combined tactical and strategic staff to integrate air and ground operations in synergy.[184] Finally, training opportunities and exercises like its work with the CFS during the summer and fall of 2011 and aviation exercises it conducted with international partners served as important, real-life examples of the capabilities that the Air Force needed to be able to provide and sustain.

Six months later, in early February 2012, the Air Force participated in the aerial logistics and resupply Exercise Atlas Accord. In the days leading up to the exercise, as the security situation in Mali's north rapidly deteriorated, the Malian CEMGA ordered all FAMa troops and aircraft slated to participate in Atlas Accord to redirect and instead support ongoing combat operations. The Chief of the Air Force challenged the orders, insisting the relevant battlefield skills the Exercise would provide were too critical for the Air Force to miss.[185]

[182] Interview with Colonel (Retired) Lionel Damestoy, former French Cooperant in the Malian Air Force (2010-2013), on December 10, 2024.
[183] "Mali - Air Force."
[184] A Joint Terminal Attack Controller (JTAC) is a highly trained individual who coordinates and directs close air support (CAS) missions in support of ground forces. They are responsible for ensuring that airstrikes or other aerial support are accurately and effectively delivered on targets while minimizing the risk to friendly forces. David L Goldfein, *Joint Publication 3-09.3 Close Air Support* (Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2014), https://irp.fas.org/doddir/dod/jp3_09_3.pdf.
[185] Hill, "Malian Defense Soldiers Learn Logistics with U.S. Army Special Forces."

Figure 7.16 Training for the 33rd on Drop Zone Selection and Requesting Aerial Resupply (2011)[186]



Source: Hill, Malian Defense Soldiers Learn Logistics with US Army Special Forces (2011)

In the months that followed, the Air Force was called upon multiple times to project power, support military operations, and assist with combat evacuation. Each of these instances demonstrated that it had successfully integrated air-to-ground operations.[187] First, in January 2012, the Malian Air Force utilized its Tetra reconnaissance aircraft and Mi-24 helicopter gunships to support the 33rd RCP's Task Force assault to take the city of Ménaka. The Tetras performed pre-strike reconnaissance, advanced air guidance (on-scene command) for the Mi-35 assault helicopters, and post-strike reconnaissance. This enabled them to avoid fratricidal fire on Malian forces and to give more precise pursuit of the engaged rebel forces.[188] Working with the 33rd to aggressively barrage the enemy forces, the rebels ultimately retreated due to the Malians' relentless pursuit and the rebel group's mounting casualties.[189] Second, days after Atlas Accord concluded, the Air Force conducted its first tactical-level aerial resupply in combat.

[186] Hill.
[187] The first time Mali successfully used air support as documented by Embassy Bamako was against Ibrahim Bahanga when he attempted to block the FAMa's ability to resupply Kidal in April 2008. The Air Force attacked Bahanga with its 2 Hind-D helicopters near Alket, 25km southwest of Kidal. The close air support enabled a military resupply column to circumvent the fighting and successfully reach Kidal. Leonard, "Mali Uses Helicopters to Attack Bahanga Near Kidal."
[188] Interview with Colonel (Retired) Lionel Damestoy, former French Cooperant in the Malian Air Force (2010-2013) on December 10, 2024.
[189] Dubruelh, "Nord-Mali"; Naudé, "Nord-Mali."

Figure 7.17 Photos of the Malian Tetras Conducting Aerial Resupply (2011)



Source: Photos provided by Colonel Lionel Damestoy, French Cooperant embedded within the Malian Air Force from 2010 to 2012.

Thanks to its recent training, life-saving food and water were dropped to elements of the 33rd RCP and Colonel-Major Ag Gamou's militia, averting both units' otherwise definite surrender in Tessalit.[190] Finally, on February 25th, the Air Force used its Tetras to evacuate the wounded after intense fighting around Tessalit. All soldiers requiring advanced care were successfully evacuated to higher-tier medical centers.[191] Despite the positive capability demonstrated in January and February 2012, the Air Force could not provide the support the FAMa needed to maintain control of Mali's north.[192]

Finding: The Air Force was called upon multiple times to project power, support military operations, and assist with combat evacuation. Each time it demonstrated successful air-to-ground integration.[193] The Air Force differed from the rest of the FAMa. It was a better-educated force that embraced a culture of maintenance (because aircraft would crash if not properly maintained). It received consistent training from the 6th SOS at first and later 818th

[190] Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 52.
[191] Powelson, 52.
[192] The positive support provided included close air support for the 33rd CFS in Menaka, close air support in Tessalit, and combat evacuation in Tessalit. Jane's Air Force, p.2
[193] The first time Mali successfully used air support as documented by Embassy Bamako was against Ibrahim Bahanga when he attempted to block the FAMa's ability to resupply Kidal in April 2008. The Air Force attacked Bahanga with its two Hind-D helicopters near Alket, 25km southwest of Kidal. The close air support enabled a military resupply column to circumvent the fighting and successfully reach Kidal. Leonard, "Mali Uses Helicopters to Attack Bahanga Near Kidal."

MSAS on Maintenance and Logistics, which built a solid cadre of maintainers in the Malian Air Force leading up to 2012.

Finding: In 2012, the Air Force began taking steps to identify and address their deficiencies. The 33rd RCP was working with the US and the Malian Air Force on air-to-ground integration. The Air Force knew it didn't have the correct equipment or training to best support such operations. A former OSC recounted the Air Force Chief of Staff, saying, "We need to be able to know how to do this." The Air Force didn't think the Mi-24 was an appropriate platform for close air support, given that they were maintenance-heavy fuel hogs, and the Air Force had limited capability to fly and maintain them.[194] They independently assessed that they needed a fuel-efficient, fixed-wing, close-air support platform with a long flight duration and the ability to deliver its payload accurately on the ground. After the Malian Air Force identified the refitted Tucano as a potential option, which was on the market as an aerial platform for ISR and close air support, they called the OSC to validate their selection.

Finding: The Malian Air Force demonstrated their own critical assessment of their airframe needs and came to the US for feedback, validation, and support for their proposed vision and plan forward. They also had identified Malian funding to procure the airplanes themselves. This is a clear example of a partner nation demonstrating determination, drive, and resourcefulness in trying to overcome a challenge. Had the coup not happened, this would have been an optimal engagement opportunity for the US to support.

Military Intelligence

In the developing world, intelligence is used for leadership decision-making purposes and not for staff decision-making. Assistant Detachment Commander Matthew Purdy recounted, "Oftentimes Malian officers did not want to share intel because information was power."[195] Former JSTOF-TS Commander MG (Ret) Kurt Crytzer recounted, "You can get all the intel

[194] Mali contracted Ukrainian pilots to fly and maintain their Hind Mi-24s. Interview with LTC Lionel Damestoy, former French Coopérant in Mali (Conseiller Chef d'Etat-Major Armée de l'air Malienne et Chef de projet Aviation Légère d'Observation, 2010-2013), on December 10, 2024.
[195] Interview with Matthew Purdy, Assistant Detachment Commander (2008–2011), interview on December 9, 2024.

in the world, but if you're not helping your force by disseminating it out, it's kind of worthless. We had identified that the structures just weren't there. Culturally, the Malians believed that information was power, and they liked to keep it close hold. Close hold vs. information sharing is hard, and it did not happen effectively at all."[196]

In July 2011, the head of DSM, General Youssouf Goïta, stood up a joint task force on intelligence to operate out of the COIA. US attempts to develop further and professionalize the COIA and other regional command centers (Tessalit and Kidal) succeeded in their intended effect. Before renovations to the Tessalit outpost, only junior officers came to and operated out of the COIA. After new tables, chairs, and maps were purchased and erected, "the leadership wanted to go in and preside."[197] The Director of the DSM, General Goïta, established a joint task force composed of representatives from the different national intelligence agencies, the DSM, the General Directorate of the National Gendarmerie (DGGN), the second office (B2) of the National Guard, the Army, the Air Force, and the COIA intelligence unit. Representatives of the National Police and the National Customs could be invited to join on an as-needed basis. The mission of the joint task force was to "share and consolidate operational intelligence. Shall identify the priority information needs of the command, collectively analyze information on threats to the national security of the country and jointly develop the capacities of representatives of the various intelligence and security services to ensure interoperability and effectiveness of intelligence Operational support."[198] The COIA had an organizational chart and a telephone roster. However, the place was seldom staffed during the day except for a junior officer and meetings were only held on a weekly basis.[199]

Following the Battle of Ouagadou, CEMGA General Gabriel Poudiougou briefed members of the press on the ongoing operations from the COIA in Bamako, which offered a professional backdrop for such an important opportunity. However, while routine check-ins

[196] Interview with MG (Ret) Kurt Crytzer, former JSOTF-TS Commander (2009-2010) on December 3, 2024.
[197] Interview with Matthew Purdy, Assistant Detachment Commander (2008–2011), on December 9, 2024.
[198] Youssouf Goita, "Establishment of the Joint Task Force on Intelligence" (Forces armées Maliennes, July 19, 2011).
[199] Interview with Matthew Purdy, Assistant Detachment Commander (2008–2011), on December 9, 2024.

between Bamako and the regional command centers happened daily, neither operational reports nor orders out to the field were ever issued.[200]

Figure 7.18 CEMGA General Gabriel Poudiougou briefs members of the Malian press on the Battle of Ouagadou from the COIA (2011)[201]



Source: Gabriel Poudiougou, Bing, (2025)

Intelligence-focused JCETs were implemented to focus on synthesizing, processing, and analyzing information. Persistent US Army staff officers rotated in and did constant staff training within the COIA to standardize its function and legitimize its use. Efforts to integrate intelligence into operations through a liaison officer from the DSM to the COIA were attempted but were marginally successful due to cultural inertia and a tendency to tightly control information.[202] While information from the different military regions could be transmitted as necessary via a US-provided Harris base station, communications between Bamako and Commanders in the field or regimental headquarters in the north were all conducted on a Chinese radio via Morse code, satellite, or cell phone.[203] While routine

[200] Interview with Matthew Purdy, Assistant Detachment Commander (2008–2011), on December 9, 2024.
[201] "Général de Division Gabriel Poudiougou," Bing, accessed March 20, 2025, https://www.bing.com/images/search?view=detailV2&ccid=wm%2BM0GFA&id=137C726B5BB99C4A42AEC8044C988D9D7D0B0C6B&thid=OIP.wm-M0GFAqes-8IsMrHsv6gHaHa&mediaurl=https%3A%2F%2Fi1.sndcdn.com%2Fartworks-000350797917-xhn9ip-t500x500.jpg&cdnurl=https%3A%2F%2Fth.bing.com%2Fth%2Fid%2FR.c26f8cd06140a9eb3ef08b0cac7b2fea%3Frik%3DawwLfZ2NmEwEyA%26pid%3DImgRaw%26r%3D0&exph=500&expw=500&q=général+de+division+gabriel+poudiougou&simid=608052144659042881&form=IRPRST&ck=49C323811731E3C8CF494F7C03C8692E&selectedindex=0&itb=0&ajaxhist=0&ajaxserp=0&vt=2&sim=15,0&ajaxhist=0&ajaxserp=0.
[202] Internal US Embassy Bamako document from Spring 2012, detailing the Malian military directorates and their service descriptions.
[203] Interview with former 33rd RCP Commander, Yssouf Traoré on November 22, 2024.

check-ins between Bamako and the regional command centers happened daily, neither operational reports nor orders out to the field were ever issued.[204] Furthermore, Mali rarely shared intelligence with the US. Indeed, much of the threat information the US received came from open-source reporting rather than from their Malian counterparts.[205] Colonel (ret) Corban Spraker recounted, "The structures just weren't there. It was hard to teach that there were other uses of intelligence than going straight to the President. A country can use information operationally and can have a staff that puts some analysis into it. There are people who can use it and who need to know."[206]

One positive showcase of Malian military intelligence capacity was in the Ouagadou Forrest, during Operation Benkan in June 2011. The FAMa arrived after the battle and conducted sensitive site exploitation in coordination with the armed forces of Mauritania.[207] Reconnaissance was conducted with Tetra aircraft escorting convoys from Timbuktu in support of Malian troops who were doing ground sweeps.[208] Assistant Detachment Commander, Matthew Purdy recounted, "The operation provided an opportunity to gauge whether the officers retained the MI training from the US. Sensitive site exploitation was carried out, but we were not let in on any of the details in the aftermath or how they ended up using the information gleaned."[209]

One of the things US programs do well is that they teach other partner nations how intelligence should be critical to assisting their nation's military in the development of military plans. For example, what does the operating environment look like? What do the risks and opportunities look like? All these questions, and not just planning but the full spectrum operations, should have been informed by the Malian military's intelligence

[204] Interview with Matthew Purdy, Assistant Detachment Commander (2008–2011), on December 9, 2024.
[205] The US got more intelligence from the American-sponsored Native Prospector program, which relied on Malian nationals who aggregated information from local sources, than it did from the Malian military. Moyar, "Countering Violent Extremism in Mali," 22.
[206] Interview with Colonel (ret) Corban Spraker, former US SDO/DATT to Mali (2010-2012), on April 16, 2019.
[207] Séga Diarrah, "Raid anti-Aqmi dimanche de l'aviation mauritanienne au Mali," Mali Actu, March 12, 2012, https://maliactu.net/raid-anti-aqmi-dimanche-de-laviation-mauritanienne-au-mali/.
[208] Interview with Colonel (Retired) Lionel Damestoy, former French Cooperant in the Malian Air Force (2010-2013) on December 10, 2024.
[209] Interview with Matthew Purdy, Assistant Detachment Commander (2008–2011), on December 9, 2024.

system, providing intelligence support to planning and decision-making, from targeting to post-action battle damage assessments.[210]

Mali's participation in the regional TSCTP military intelligence training program involved one to two trainings a year at the officer level. A former AFRICOM J2 officer recounted that understanding the program's potential effects was "way more art than science. There were not a lot of metrics other than throughput metrics or programming resourcing metrics" that the program was looking at.[211] With the standing up of AFRICOM in 2008, the initial message from General Ward to all the different CT programs was to find a way to get in there, engage with as many partner nations as possible, and then re-evaluate the training approach. The principal way the AFRICOM J2 measured effectiveness was mainly through the 'demand signal from the attachés.' Feedback from the Defense Attachés would identify who the relevant partners were, their requirements, and/or whether they were valid. The AFRICOM J2 would then review all the requirements for the region and rank them in priority order.[212]

Figure 7.19 Mali Hosts a Regional Military Intelligence Professional Course (MIPC)[213]



Source: Bartell, Army.mil, (2011)

[210] Interview with former AFRICOM J2 Military Intelligence Training Program Manager (2008-2014) on November 26, 2024.
[211] Interview with former AFRICOM J2 Military Intelligence Training Program Manager (2008-2014) on November 26, 2024.
[212] Interview with former AFRICOM J2 Military Intelligence Training Program Manager (2008-2014) on November 26, 2024.
[213] Mali hosted a Military Intelligence Professional Course at the Ecole de maintien de la paix in April 2011. Rich Bartell, "Intelligence Course in Bamako, Mali, Fosters Cooperation Among West African Neighbors," www.army.mil, April 20, 2011, https://www.army.mil/article/55219/intelligence_course_in_bamako_mali_fosters_cooperation_among_west_african_neighbors.

One way the program could see its impact was by identifying and using promising students as future trainers. The course instructors would identify the top two to four students in each class. The Defense Attaché would request their continued participation in future training by name from the Director of National Intelligence. Returning capable officers would be utilized to train different modules or segments of the course during future iterations. This served as a train-the-trainer aspect of the program and provided these officers with valuable instructional on-the-job training that they could hypothetically continue to use back in the individual capitals should their Directorate continue using them in that capacity. The AFRICOM J2 program manager recounted, "We always received the feedback that the partner nations were utilizing the trainers once they returned home, but we had no mechanism in place to verify this ourselves."[214]

At the regional level, the key to the success of the Tamanrasset Plan and the CEMOC centered around intelligence sharing between the four member countries.[215] Communication and information flow between countries was only successfully documented between Algeria and Mauritania and Algeria and Niger.[216] As Libya deteriorated in 2011, the CEMOC did not appear operational, let alone coordinating regional responses.[217] In 2012, it became sidelined once the French intervened in northern Mali.[218] The center was significantly limited by several political dynamics regarding Algeria's role in the Sahel. First, Algeria maintained a strict national policy of non-intervention outside its national borders. Second, Algeria had a greater sensitivity towards accepting involvement and assistance from the US and former colonial power, France, than did Mauritania, Mali, and Niger.[219] Third, Algeria-Mali CT cooperation was complex. Algeria accused Mali of not being committed to CT (given its

[214] The AFRICOM J2 was able to verify that the Senegalese J2 had put a formal training program in place as they received a tour in 2013 as part of the Women Peace and Security program. Senegal was able to increase their intelligence capacity by 20 percent in less than six months as a result. Interview with former AFRICOM J2 Military Intelligence Training Program Manager (2008-2014) on November 26, 2024.
[215] Adama Diarra, "Lutte Contre Le Terrorisme : Le CEMOC Explore Les Possibilités de Coopération," Maliweb, May 6, 2016, https://site.maliweb.net/lutte-contre-terrorisme-cemoc-explore-possibilites-de-cooperation-1569122.html.
[216] Milovanovic, "New Algerian Ambassador to Meets with Ambassador."
[217] Arieff, "Algeria: Current Issues," 10.
[218] Ben Khalid, "Evolving Approaches in Algerian Security Cooperation."
[219] Ben Khalid.

refusal to control trafficking in the north), unable to properly handle and safeguard shared intelligence, and corrupt in its involvement in the negotiations of prisoner release agreements and ransom payments to terrorist groups. Mali accused Algeria of being responsible for the creation of AQIM and was very critical of Algeria's unwillingness to utilize its better-resourced military to pursue terrorist groups onto Malian soil (like Mauritania did).[220]

Finally, the initiative to make Bamako a Regional Intelligence Training Center was never carried out due to the 2012 coup.[221] A military intelligence training officer from the AFRICOM J2 recounted, "Everyone was so disappointed in 2012. We had invested sweat equity in the program, which never materialized." While some modest electrical and WIFI upgrades had been implemented at the EMP, investment had been modest and did not include military construction.[222]

Finding: Funding never materialized to support FAMa aircraft being outfitted for aerial surveillance and intelligence-gathering purposes. Mali was, therefore, not able to launch an aerial surveillance capability. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Africa, Vikki Huddleston, refused to approve the funding for the necessary Cessna Caravans, justifying her refusal on the fear that the Malians would utilize the capability to target the Tuareg.

Finding: One Malian weakness was the propensity for information leaks from the Malian FAMa to different armed groups. Lieutenant Colonel Lionel Damestoy, the former French Cooperant embedded in the Malian Air Force (2010 to 2012), recounted that there was constant "double-dealing by certain soldiers" and described different ways the US and French would withhold information on training and operations until the very last minute given the potential for these leaks.[223] Algeria and Mauritania both accused Mali of being unable to properly handle and safeguard shared intelligence, and that operations had been

[220] Alexis Arieff, "Algeria and the Crisis in Mali," July 19, 2012, 5.
[221] Interview with Sean Setter, former AFRICOM J35 CT Programs Officer on October 24, 2024.
[222] Interview with former AFRICOM J2 Military Intelligence Training Program Manager (2008-2014) on November 26, 2024.
[223] Coopérants are French military cooperation officers deployed in foreign countries, who served as embedded advisors within the various Ministries in support of local defense sector reform efforts. Interview with LTC Lionel Damestoy, former French Coopérant in Mali (Conseiller Chef d'Etat-Major Armée de l'air Malienne et Chef de projet Aviation Légère d'Observation, 2010-2013), on December 10, 2024.

compromised and soldiers killed because "AQIM had been tipped off in advance."[224] Each nation proceeded to establish bilateral rights to conduct hot pursuit across borders and would initiate operations without notifying Mali due to fear of the operations being compromised.[225]

Finding: Efforts to engage with the DSM to build the COIA's intel capacity did have some success. CEMGA General Gabriel Poudiougou chose to brief members of the press on the ongoing operations of the Battle of Ouagadou (June 2011) in front of the COIA facility in Bamako, which offered a professional backdrop for such an important opportunity. Conducting continued engagement at the leadership level could have capitalized on these gains and continued to improve the FAMa's use of the facility. Had SOF been able to maintain a long-term dedicated officer embedded in the COIA, such a placement could have helped move this initiative forward. While there was a SOF officer dedicated to the COIA, they were on six-month rotational cycles. Given the sensitive nature of military intelligence and operations, these individuals were not given access

Finding: Once they analyzed the country's deficiencies, the AFRICOM J2 should have focused on developing Mali's full staff process in the intelligence sphere. Such an initiative could have examined how the FAMa's intelligence, operations, and plans sections should have all interacted and worked together. "I think it might have been a missed opportunity [that we didn't] teach a headquarters staff how to utilize their J2. Such training could have asked what happens when a J3 says, 'We don't know X. Therefore, we must choose this course of action, rather than submitting an intel requirement that drives production that might answer the question. Instead, they would decide without exploring what they did not know."[226] Perhaps, as a result, while US military intelligence programs were able to revamp the COIA, with equipment and training for staff, there were no fundamental changes to how the Malians collected and managed their intelligence over the course of the TSCTP program.

[224] Milovanovic, "New Algerian Ambassador to Meets with Ambassador."
[225] The Mauritanians launched Operation Benkan on AQIM forces at the Mauritania-Mali border in June 2011. Benkan was supposed to be a joint operation, however, the initiated the operation without Mali for this exact reason. FAMa units arrived after fighting had concluded and they conducted recon and medevac.
[226] Interview with former AFRICOM J2 Military Intelligence Training Program Manager (2008-2014) on November 26, 2024.

Finding: Amongst the CEMOC countries, each partner's national capacity to carry out successful communications, information sharing, and force mobilization varied and was generally at a low- to very low-capacity level. It is, therefore, not surprising that these national-level weaknesses impacted the different countries' contributions to a larger regional information-sharing and CT operational effort. If such a construct had functioned, embedded advisors at both the CEMOC and national headquarters levels could have affected intelligence sharing at both ends. Also, bilateral intelligence-sharing agreements could have been used as a carrot for requiring/instituting such embedded advisors and mentoring constructs.

Medical Stability Operations

There were two specific examples when the FAMa demonstrated a successful combat medical casualty care capability. First, in the wake of the June 2011 operation in the Ouagadou Forest, Malian CEMGA General Gabriel Poudiougou said that the two militaries operated in 'parallel' and in 'mutual support' of each other.[227] Mauritanian CT units clashed with terrorist groups over some intense fighting. The Malian army supported the Mauritanian army by providing MEDEVAC support.[228] Control of the Ouagadou forest then became the responsibility of the Malians, which used its two combat helicopters to conduct patrols.[229]

Figure 7.20 The 33rd RCP receives Tactical Combat Casualty Care Training (2011)[230]

[227] "Le Chef d'Etat Major Malien Parle de l'opération de Wagadou," Alakhbar, juillet 2011, https://fr.alakhbar.info/269-0-Le-chef-dEtat-Major-malien-parle-de-loperation-de-Wagadou.html.
[228] "Le Chef d'Etat Major Malien Parle de l'opération de Wagadou."
[229] "Le Mali et la Mauritanie délogent Aqmi de la forêt du Wagadou - Jeune Afrique.com," JeuneAfrique.com, accessed December 16, 2024, https://www.jeuneafrique.com/180258/politique/le-mali-et-la-mauritanie-d-logent-aqmi-de-la-for-t-du-wagadou/.
[230] The 1st Special Operations Wing provides Tactical Combat Care to Mali's 33rd RCP in 2011. Photo provided by John Crowe, former Medical Planner, Air Force Special Operations Command, Sahel (2009-2013) on March 20, 2025.



Source: Photos provided by John Crowe

The second was the resupply of Tessalit in March 2012. After the 33rd RCP's CFS engaged in heavy combat with AAD elements in their attempt to resupply other elements surrounding the town, they attempted to evacuate the wounded. The CFS set up a makeshift Tetra landing zone and coordinated with the Malian Air Force for their evacuation. All Malian wounded requiring further treatment were successfully evaluated to higher levels of care.[231]

Finding: US basic combat medical training achieved the desired effect, to improve the FAMa's ability to supply critical medical care to units operating in combat. The Tetras, however, could only seat a pilot and an observer. The FAMa would have had to remove the observer to evacuate any wounded soldiers. Had the Malian Air Force had the Cessna Caravans that Embassy Bamako had requested, they would have had a more active and supportive MEDEVAC capacity.

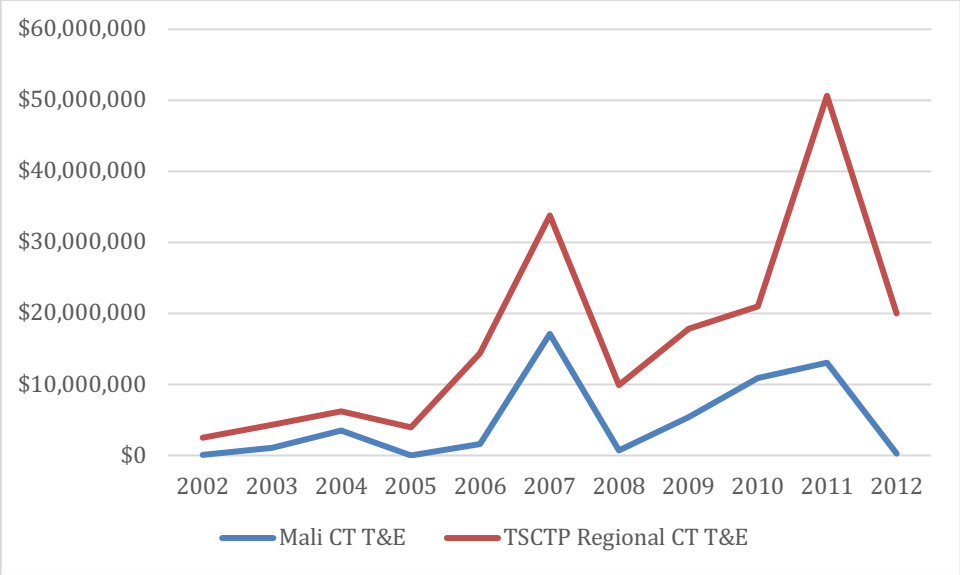
Conclusion

Between FY 2001 and FY 2012, 29 percent of regional TSCTP funds went to Mali, as can be seen in Figure 7.20 below. As Mali was one of ten TSCTP countries, receiving 30 percent of

[231] Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 51–52.

regional funding was a significant amount. Mali was supposed to receive a significant package of CT programs in FY 2012. However, they were all reprogrammed due to the coup.

Figure 7.20 Mali Share of TSCTP Regional Counterterrorism Train and Equip Funds (FY 2002–FY 2012)

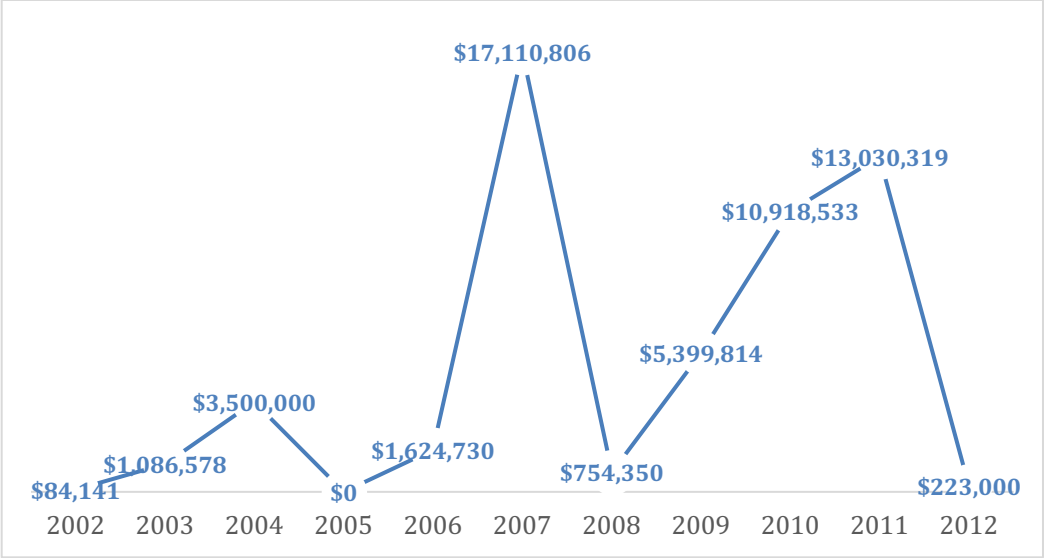


Source: Author's compilation of Security Assistance Monitor Database (2025)

Figure 7.21 reflects that of the roughly $59 million the US obligated towards security cooperation in Mali between FY 2002 and FY 2012, 91 percent—approximately $54 million—was directed toward counterterrorism programs.[232]

Figure 7.21 Mali's Counterterrorism Train and Equip Programs (FY 2002–FY 2012)

[232] US security assistance was halted in April 2012 due to the coup in Mali. The author calculated these amounts from a variety of government budget documents.



Source: Author's compilation of Security Assistance Monitor Database (2025)

Differing US and Malian security priorities, the Malian Government's lack of military infrastructure and presence in the north, high levels of corruption within the government and defense sector, and a lack of civilian oversight of Mali's security and military institutions were strategic-level impediments to the effort's success. Mali's extremely low level of human capital throughout the security sector and nonexistent training culture, combined with the Malian Government's inability to operationally and logistically support its forces in the north, negatively impacted the engagement at the operational level. On the US side, SOF CT capacity building efforts were stymied by their acute focus on tactical and not operational or strategic level opportunities and a lack of focus on program results. In 2012, the 33rd RCP's CFS and the Malian Air Force demonstrated tactical CT capacity improvements from US SOF training and engagement in small unit tactics and air-to-ground maneuvering, whereas the ETIAs did not.

CHAPTER EIGHT
GENERAL FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

If we examine US CT engagement in Mali, which began with the launching of PSI in 2002, it is imperative to frame our understanding of potential impact in the context of the level of ongoing engagement throughout the lifetime of the CT partnership. CT capacity building goals and engagement in Mali ramped up from 2003 to 2012 but were inconsistent from year to year. The TSCTP is often considered a long-term CT program, but the engagement in Mali was highly episodic for multiple years.

Lessons Learned in Building Partner Capacity to Counterterrorism

Inaccurate Classification of the Threat Environment: Counterterrorism vs. Counterinsurgency

In the immediate post-9/11 environment, the US national security establishment overwhelmingly framed threats through a counterterrorism lens, specifically targeting and disrupting terrorist networks like al Qaeda. New and significant increases in funding were made available to counter these threats; however, they were specifically counterterrorism-related funding. A significant reluctance existed to discuss or correctly frame and reference specific threats as COIN, a much broader effort involving military, political, and civilian efforts to win support among local populations. COIN was heavily associated with the Vietnam War, which had left deep scars on US military culture, and remained almost a dirty word. Post-Vietnam, the US military had shifted its focus back towards conventional warfighting and became very reluctant to re-engage in anything that sounded like 'nation building.'[1] The US campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq were CT-focused until 2006. This approach heavily influenced the rest of the US military's efforts globally and meant that all efforts were CT-focused and not COIN.[2] It was precisely during this

[1] John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2002); David H. Ucko, *The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the U.S. Military for Modern Wars* (Georgetown University Press, 2009), https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt2tt63s; Sarah E. Kreps, *Coalitions of Convenience: United States Military Interventions after the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); US Department of the Army, "Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies," *FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5, C1*, May 2014, 1–202.

[2] Gian P. Gentile, *Wrong Turn: America's Deadly Embrace of Counterinsurgency* (New York: The New Press, 2013). In Afghanistan, the US and NATO only began shifting towards a COIN approach in 2006 after the Taliban-led insurgency escalated in 2005. The same thing happened in Iraq. After a conventional military campaign toppled Saddam Hussein's government in 2003, Iraq collapsed into chaos. In late 2003 to 2004, an insurgency grew;

2002 to 2006 time that GSPC elements, and Mokhtar Belmokhtar in particular, were strategically forging alliances via intermarriage with communities in northern Mali. This approach was also echoed in DC, where "CT was all the rage" and the ability to formulate and implement programs was directly tied to CT money.[3] If threats were framed through a COIN lens, they would not get attention or funding. The US's singular focus on terrorism affected its ability to accurately frame the threat and develop an adequate response, which was clearly visible in the approach in the Sahel.

An Enemy-Focused Approach to Combatting Terrorism in the Sahel

US military counterterrorism goals in Mali shifted over time. At first, leading up to and during the standing up of AFRICOM between 2003 and 2009, SOF took an enemy-focused approach to the region. The initial goal of PSI CT training efforts was to provide SOF with access to and placement within the operating environment. Given the US's very minimal prior security history on the continent, and specifically the West African Sahel, the US started with a very basic understanding of the operating environment (including critical infrastructure, such as airstrips, forward air refueling points, water sources, and landing areas).[4] The JSOTF wanted to get SOF personnel positioned in the north, close to the CT problem set.[5] PSI, and then TSCTI/TSCTP, purposefully staged JCETs at existing military bases in Gao, Timbuktu, Sévaré, and Mopti. Former Defense Attaché Corban Spraker noted, "Just having a US presence up there would help deter the bad folks from potentially doing something."[6] JCET training also produced military units, which had some initial capacity and direction that could potentially interdict bad elements.

The Embassy and the majority of USAID and State projects suffered from the 'tyranny of distance' in Mali.[7] With the majority of their programs located in the far north supporting

however, the US stuck to its conventional military tactics until late 2006, and implemented "the Surge," a COIN response in 2007.

[3] Interview with Colonel (ret) Victor Nelson, West Africa Desk Officer, Office of the Secretary of Defense for Africa (2003-2006) and Policy Officer for West Africa, State Department Bureau of Counterterrorism (2006-2019), on March 12, 2025.

[4] Interview with Colonel (ret) Marshall Mantiply, former SDO/DATT in Mali (2008-2010), on November 14, 2018.

[5] Interview with former OSC in Mali (2011-2012), on April 11, 2019.

[6] Interview with Colonel (ret) Corban Spraker, former US SDO/DATT to Mali (2010-2012), on April 19, 2019.

[7] 'Tyranny of the distance' is a catchphrase that many government officials working in Africa utilize to describe the sheer challenge of having to operate (logistically and otherwise) in countries of such sheer size and vast distance where infrastructure, transportation, and road networks are extremely lacking.

decentralization programs in the mid-2000s, the start of military training programs provided, at times, protection and air transport that the Embassy staff had not been used to.[8] Holding the JCETs up in Gao, Tessalit, Kidal, Timbuktu, and Nampala, brought forward deployed US SOF closer and to have eyes and ears on the enemy.[9]

This presence, not only in Mali but throughout the sub-region, enabled SOF to watch and see what happened regionally as a function of various indicators. Former JSOTF-TS Commander, Colonel (ret) Mark Rosengard, reflected, "We were interested in understanding what various illicit malfeasant organizations would do if multiple activities were going on at the same time, all heading to their center of gravity. And we saw that, and it was interesting and illustrative."[10] At the same time, the early days of training in Mali were described by many interviewees as the "wild, wild, West," where Embassy personnel and SOCEUR had very little awareness of what SOF was doing out there spread across remote training locations; "there were very few checks and balances."[11] At times, Colonel (ret) Greg Arndt recounted, "I felt they [SOF] were taking incredible leaps, taking SC authorities to do operational things. In those early years, they would go out and roll with them [PN military units] using SC justifications to do operational things."[12]

Building Partner Capacity to Counter Terrorism

It is important to historically identify that the term building partner capacity (BPC) did not enter the DoD (and public) lexicon until the Quadrennial Defense Review in 2006.[13] The QDR specifically stated, "Long-duration, complex operations involving the US military, other government agencies, and international partners will be waged simultaneously in multiple countries around the world... Maintaining a long-term, low-visibility presence in many areas of the world where US forces do not traditionally operate will be required. Building and leveraging partner capacity will also be an absolutely essential part of this approach, and the employment of

[8] Interviews with various US Embassy DoD personnel from 2006-2012 timeframe.
[9] Interview with Lieutenant Colonel (ret) Eric Dalton, former Mali SDO/DATT (2006-2008), on April 4, 2019.
[10] Interview with Colonel (ret) Mark Rosengard, former JSOTF-TS Commander (2006-2008), on May 10, 2018.
[11] Interview with Colonel (ret) Corban Spraker, former US SDO/DATT to Mali (2010-2012), on April 19, 2019.
[12] Interview with Colonel (ret) Greg Arndt, former OSC to Libya (2011-2012) and SDO/DATT to Libya (2013) on November 4, 2024.
[13] Kathleen J McInnis and Nathan J Lucas, "What Is 'Building Partner Capacity?' Issues for Congress," December 18, 2015, 1, https://sgp.fas.org/crs/natsec/R44313.pdf; Department of Defense, "2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Report" (Department of Defense, February 6, 2006), https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/quadrennial/QDR2006.pdf?ver=2014-06-25-111017-150.

surrogates will be a necessary method for achieving many goals." Stuck in counterinsurgency campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, BPC was identified as the US's exit strategy out of these wars. BPC also became the rationale behind managing regional security challenges in the Sahel. Building the CT capacity of PNs would facilitate US access and influence throughout the region. Enhancing PN CT capacity would succeed in preventing terrorist groups from launching attacks against the US, its allies, and their interests. These outcomes would together improve the overall quality of governance within each PN (by promoting democracy). While there had been only two RAND reports prior to 2006 focusing on how the Army did security cooperation, after the 2006 QDR, OSD Policy began funding substantial research into security cooperation and BPC – both seeking to define these terms and how to measure them.[14]

A 2006 RAND Corporation report, Assessing the Value of US Army International Activities, acknowledged that "applying performance measurement to security cooperation is relatively new…within the US Army and some regional Combatant Commands, there is considerable interest in employing higher-level performance measurement and assessment methods to improve the overall effectiveness of security cooperation."[15] However, no comprehensive standards or guidance had been issued by the Pentagon to communicate at what level this performance measurement (assessment, monitoring, and evaluation, or AM&E) should be taking place within the security cooperation enterprise.[16] Until 2006, US CT T&E efforts had been most active in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, in FY 2006, Section 1206 of the NDAA began granting temporary annual authority to DoD to train and equip foreign military forces for counterterrorism operations anywhere around the world, which dramatically increased annual CT T&E efforts.[17]

[14] The RAND Corporation, "Select RAND Research on Security Cooperation: 2006-2019" (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, October 7, 2021), https://www.rand.org/pubs/corporate_pubs/CPA614-3.html.
[15] Jefferson P. Marquis et al., "Assessing the Value of U.S. Army International Activities" (RAND Corporation, August 11, 2006), 13, https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG329.html.
[16] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "The Risk of Doing the Wrong Thing Perfectly: Monitoring and Evaluation of Reconstruction Contracting in Afghanistan," Lessons Learned Report (Washington, DC: Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, July 2021), 113, https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/lessonslearned/SIGAR-21-41-LL.pdf.
[17] Nina M Serafino, "Section 1206 of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY2006: A Fact Sheet on Department of Defense Authority to Train and Equip Foreign Military Forces," May 15, 2008, https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20080515_RS22855_0be75f2834bda7d294baa3a9c06674f744ea05be.pdf.

When US AFRICA Command became fully operationally capable on October 1, 2008, AFRICOM started with 959 headquarters staff.[18] The COCOM's first Commanding General, William 'Kip' Ward, conveyed to his Command that their goal was to look in each country for security cooperation opportunities and get their foot in the door wherever possible to begin creating opportunities for engagement.[19] In 2008, this mission and new staff led to a stark increase in T&E activities across the continent. Colonel (ret) Greg Arndt, stated, "During those early years, the JSOTF-TS was absorbing 90 percent of AFRICOM's attention."[20] But one former JSOTF-TS Commander noted, "We were building the airplane as it was taking off and flying. There was no real operational plan for the region or our partners in specific units to make them better."[21] However, while there was a stark increase in 2008, JSOTF was not able to implement all of the JCETs they wanted to staffing and manpower constraints, and the priority of the African continent in relation to the ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Colonel (ret) Andrew Anderson stated, "We were begging for SOF ODAs to come in to do JCETs, but they weren't available."[22]

Re-engaging US-Mali Security Cooperation after the 2012 Coup

US security assistance to Mali was suspended after the coup from April 2012 to September 2013. As the putschists handed over power to a civilian-led interim government and passably democratic elections were again held in August 2013, US sanctions were lifted immediately thereafter.[23] The US initially dedicated $83.8 million for training, equipping, and logistics support for international peacekeeping troops deploying to Mali (first under AFISMA and then MINUSMA).[24]

[18] This included 628 military positions, 318 DoD civilian positions, and 13 interagency positions (not including liaison positions) assigned, out of an approved 1,304 positions. John Pendleton, "Force Structure: Preliminary Observations on the Progress and Challenges Associated with Establishing the U.S. Africa Command," July 15, 2008, https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-08-947t.pdf.
[19] Interview with John Crowe, former Medical Service Corps Officer, Air Force Special Operations Command (2009-2013) on March 11, 2025.
[20] Interview with Colonel (ret) Greg Arndt, former OSC to Libya (2011-2012) and SDO/DATT to Libya (2013) on November 4, 2024.
[21] Interview with former JSOTF-TS Commander (2009-2010) on December 3, 2024.
[22] Interview with Colonel (ret) Andrew Anderson, former J3 of the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (2003-2005), on April 18, 2019.
[23] Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, "2014 Investment Climate Statement - Mali" (Department of State, June 2014), //2009-2017.state.gov/e/eb/rls/othr/ics/2014/227927.htm.
[24] "Congressional Budget Justification - Volume 2 Foreign Operations" (Washington, DC: Department of State, November 19, 2013), 177, https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/208290.pdf.

Assessing Security Cooperation Re-Engagement Options

The first step was for an 11-member US interagency team to conduct a security sector assessment in November 2013 to identify pathways to re-engaging security cooperation assistance.[25] The assessment trip highlighted that whatever resources the US could bring to the table in Mali would be significantly outweighed by other international actors (the EU and the UN), who were contributing in a much more significant way. In the near to medium term, the assessment team "reaffirmed our policy decision that institution building should take precedence over training and equipping" and that once engagement and capacity building at the foundational and institutional levels occur, "the conversation can shift to providing more CT-related programming and, more robust training and equipping efforts."[26]

The Obama Administration immediately restarted its economic programs. Within the defense sector, the priority focus was on security sector reform and attempting to address many defense sector weaknesses and vulnerabilities to corruption that factored into the underlying grievances of the 2012 coup. No interest existed in re-engaging tactically, given the uncertainty surrounding the role US pre-2012 train-and-equip programs had inadvertently had in contributing to the coup. As the US security assistance 'spigot' was slowly turned back on, professional military education programs, such as IMET, Counter Terrorism Fellowship Program, and ALP, were restarted, as well as strategic-level civil-military dialogue events through the ACSS.[27] The first in-country defense activity after sanctions were lifted was a VETCAP in Spring 2014. AFRICOM was wary of continuing to invest anything in Mali after the coup. The sizable presence and programs of the French, the EU, and the UN also made it easier for the US to shift its focus to other, neighboring Sahelian countries who were also in dire need of US security engagement.[28]

---

[25] The researcher was a participant on the trip representing the State Department Africa Bureau's Regional Security Affairs Office. The eleven trip members represented various Bureaus within the State Department, the Department of Justice, AFRICOM, the Pentagon, and USAID, which was an usually large delegation.

[26] Department of State, "United States Government Mali Security Sector Reform Assessment."

[27] US Department of Defense and US Department of State, "Foreign Military Training Report FY2012-FY2013 - Africa" (Washington, DC: Department of State, 2012), https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/197603.pdf; US Department of Defense and US Department of State, "Foreign Military Training Report FY2013-FY2014 - Africa" (Washington, DC: Department of State, 2012), https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/197603.pdf.

[28] Interview with Roy Weidanz, former Mali Desk Officer, AFRICOM Engagements J5 (2010-2014), on May 15, 2018.

The Security Governance Initiative in Mali

In August 2014, President Barack Obama launched the SGI, a multi-year effort between the US and Mali, which focused on improved security sector governance and the country's capacity to address threats. Malian President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita welcomed it. SGI Mali focused on aligning Ministry of Defense resources to match operational needs, supporting National Police recruitment and human resource management, and positioning the Ministry of Justice's human capital to implement a justice strategy.[29] The SGI program began in earnest in Mali in 2016.

Within the defense sector pillar, the desired end state was for the "Ministry of Defense and Malian Armed Forces [to be] able to plan and budget for current and future requirements based on a clear understanding of national-level strategic guidance, which is translated into defense strategy, policy, and directives and further substantiated by military doctrine."[30] The SGI Team attempted to address many defense sector weaknesses and vulnerabilities to corruption that factored into the underlying grievances of the 2012 coup. These included 1) improving strategic planning and financial resource management so that the MDAC and FAMa could plan and budget for current and future requirements, 2) human resource management so that the MDAC and FAMa could develop, implement, and enforce comprehensive, consistent, and transparent policies for human resource management, 3) logistics so that the MDAC and FAMa could implement a national logistics approach that provided essential supplies.

Between 2015 and 2019, while key defense sector achievements were achieved, the team felt there were only limited improvements since the signing of the JCAP:

- *Strategic Planning and Financial Resource Management:* The team facilitated the drafting of the MDAC's second five-year budget plan (Loi de Programmation Militaire 2020-2024, LOPM II), a significant improvement over the LOPM I (2015-2019). LOPD

[29] US Department of State, "Joint Country Action Plan Mali" (Washington, DC: US Department of State, October 2015).
[30] "Mali Joint Action Plan (JCAP)," n.d.

II focused on training and force readiness, whereas the LOPM I had solely focused on the procurement of new systems.[31]

- *Human Resources Management:* Improvements to MDAC career management processes and recruitment procedures included the establishment of the MDAC's first Department of Human Resources in 2017, which enabled the reform of the FAMa's recruitment procedures (centralized application process, improved selection process, and expanded recruitment effort).[32]
- *Logistics Management:* The team's efforts focusing on Logistics and Financial Resource Management had failed to achieve any significant gains. SGI's logistics line of effort focused on the development of logistics doctrine and the consolidation of a FAMa Doctrine Center, which cataloged the logistics functions of each of the branches of the FAMa for the first time. However, as of the summer of 2019, efforts to focus on developing a logistics strategy and service-level logistics reform remained in nascent stages.[33]
- *Inter-Ministerial Coordination:* A significant achievement was the creation of Mali's first National Security Council (Conseil de sécurité nationale or NSC), which became operational in July 2019. The main goal of the NSC was to strengthen inter-ministerial coordination around national security issues, which had previously been extremely disjointed. A functioning NSC will provide Mali with a dedicated, long-term strategic planning and coordinating body to respond to emerging and future threats.[34]

A 2019 SGI Monitoring and Evaluation Stocktaking Report identified that any progress in Mali should be evaluated in the context of the "deteriorating security environment [which had begun in 2015 and had] created relentless operational demands for leaders' time and other resources."[35] As detailed in depth in Chapter 4, Regional Threat Environment, the declaration of the Islamic State's global Caliphate in 2015 led to shifts in the terrorist group landscape in the Sahel. Violence skyrocketed as new factions formed, resulting in friction

[31] Interview with SGI Mali Strategic Planning Lead (2016-2019), on January 15, 2025.
[32] Interview with SGI Mali Strategic Planning Lead (2016-2019), on January 15, 2025.
[33] Interview with SGI Mali Logistics Team Lead (2016-2019), on January 17, 2025.
[34] Interview with SGI Mali Lead for Inter-Ministerial Coordination, on March 4, 2025.
[35] "SGI Monitoring and Evaluation Stocktaking Report" (Washington, DC: Department of State, September 30, 2019), 53.

and infighting, which debilitated the groups and led to high civilian casualties in 2018 and 2019. The conflict stemmed from control over access to resources.[36] Government responses and policies were often damaging, pitting groups against each other, utilizing proxy-ethnic militias in far-flung regions, and routinely committing retaliatory abuses with impunity.[37]

During this time, the US's approach to the Malian government was a combination of appeasement and encouraging longer-term security sector reform efforts. The leaders of Mali knew how to appease donors while achieving their own national goals at the same time. Major (ret) Toni Greneaux, Mali OSC (2017-2019) stated, "The smaller minutia of better financial accountability and human resources, [the FAMa agreed to focus on] this as a means to an end because we were forcing it upon them. In order to get what they wanted [tactical training and equipment], they were ok [working to] improve their logistics and financial accountability systems. They agreed to it because of our SC partnership."[38]

Re-Starting Military Tactical Train and Equip Programs

As violence exploded in Mali and the greater Sahel in 2015 and 2016, the US reconsidered tactical train and equip support for Mali. Major (ret) Toni Greneaux recounted, "We were trying to get one small program into one very specific unit to create a firebreak against insurgency and extremism. The Ambassador and I were on the same page, even if it was the smallest program, we needed to get something up and running."[39]

In 2014, Mali had begun creating a new SOF unit, the Autonomous Special Forces Battalion (Bataillon Autonome des Forces Speciales or BAFS). It took two years to select, train, and

[36] International Crisis Group, "Central Mali," 2–3.
[37] International Crisis Group, 2–3; The Economist, "States in the Sahel Have Unleashed Ethnic Gangs with Guns," *The Economist*, May 2, 2019, https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2019/05/02/states-in-the-sahel-have-unleashed-ethnic-gangs-with-guns; Heni Nsaibia, "State Atrocities in the Sahel: The Impetus for Counterinsurgency Results Is Fueling Government Attacks on Civilians," ACLED, May 20, 2020, https://acleddata.com/2020/05/20/state-atrocities-in-the-sahel-the-impetus-for-counter-insurgency-results-is-fueling-government-attacks-on-civilians/; Rémi Carayol, "Au Sahel, les massacres s'amplifient malgré le Covid-19," Orient XXI, April 28, 2020, https://orientxxi.info/magazine/au-sahel-les-massacres-s-amplifient-malgre-le-covid-19,3830.
[38] Interview with Major (ret) Toni Greneaux, OSC in Mali (2017-2019), on October 22, 2024.
[39] Interview with Major (ret) Toni Greneaux, OSC in Mali (2017-2019), on October 22, 2024.

begin operations, and the unit was officially codified in May 2018.[40] The US was initially worried that the BAFS, like the 33rd RCP before it, would be used as President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta's security force, so they waited to engage until the unit was officially codified (role, responsibilities, and reporting requirements were legally delineated).[41] The decree outlined the BAFS's mission as conducting special operations and that they reported to the CEMGA and not the President. The US first started training with the BAFS in September 2018.[42]

From September 2018 to March 2020, the US implemented four JCETs with the BAFS and had a 333 program in the works to significantly increase the pace and breadth of training efforts. In August 2020, a full-time, contracted, persistent instructor team began training and supporting the BAFS on basic medical stabilization operations and convoy movements.[43]

In June 2020, popular frustrations over the government's mismanagement of the ongoing insurgency, unceasingly high government corruption, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and a faltering economy erupted into protests. Two months later, on August 18th, 2020, the President and Prime Minister were deposed in a coup d'état. The National Committee for the Salvation of the People (Comité National pour le Salut du Peuple or CNSP), a group of high-ranking officers led by LTC Assimi Goïta, the Commander of the BAFS, took power.[44] The CNSP set up a transitional government, led by civilian Bah Ndaw as interim President and COL Goïta as Vice President, with an 18-month timeline for projected national elections. Nine months later, when the interim President and Prime Minister attempted to appoint a new government, Goïta launched a second coup on May 24, 2021, accusing them of

[40] Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, "Pourtant creation du Bataillon autonome des forces speciales et des centres d'aguerrissement," Pub. L. No. DECRET N°2018-0437, 781 (2018), https://sgg-mali.ml/JO/2018/mali-jo-2018-20.pdf.
[41] Interview with Major (ret) Toni Greneaux, OSC in Mali (2017-2019), on October 22, 2024.
[42] Interview with former ODA Commander on April 28, 2019.
[43] Interview with Defense Department official in Mali (2019-2021) on January 10, 2025.
[44] L'Enfant Peulh [@AboubacarArdo], "#Mali- Sont assis sur cette table (de gauche à droite): Col. Modibo Koné, Col. Assimi Goïta, Col- major Ismaël Wagué, Col. Malick Diaw et le Col. Sadio Camara. https://t.co/El2Q5S75UQ," Tweet, *Twitter*, August 19, 2020, https://x.com/AboubacarArdo/status/1296068955619106816.

"incompetence and above all of forming a new government without consulting him."[45] As of the publication of this dissertation in April 2025, COL Assimi Goïta is still the President of Mali, and national elections have been postponed indefinitely.[46]

Other Impacts: The Shift from 10th Group to 3rd Group

As mentioned in Chapter 6, the US-Malian Security Relationship, 10th SFG(A) was allocated initially to EUCOM and then to AFRICOM, and the JSOTF-TS was the coordinating body for all SOF's tactical activities in the Sahel. From 2014 to 2015, SOCFWD-N/WA took over the mission from the JSOTF-TS, and the 3rd SFG, which had been dedicated to the war and BPC efforts in Afghanistan, was realigned and re-gained the Africa mission.

In effect, a fundamental shift occurred in the US CT forces and approach in the Sahel. While the 10th SFG(A) had spent the past fifteen years cultivating relationships and conducting BPC efforts on the continent, the 3rd SFG(A) focused those same fifteen years on direct action in Iraq. After 10 years of building partner capacity "as an end in and of itself," 3rd SFG(A) was directed to create new effects against the enemy, what the SOCFWD-N/WA Commander, COL (ret) Kelly Smith, stated was "a philosophical shift."[47] Third Group rapidly transitioned from a BPC to an "advise and assist" (AAA) approach.[48] Congress first authorized Section 1208 of the FY 2005 NDAA to allow SOF to work with foreign irregular forces in counterterrorism operations (in 2014 they were recodified as 127-echo or 127e). Unlike broader T&E programs, 127e programs are operationally focused, where PN forces essentially act as surrogates embedded with or directly supporting SOF in combat-like missions.[49] One related official described the pace and

[45] International Crisis Group, "Mali, a Coup within a Coup" (International Crisis Group, May 27, 2021), https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/mali/mali-un-coup-dans-le-coup.
[46] Morgane Le Cam, "In Mali, Democracy Has Been Indefinitely Postponed," *Le Monde*, May 19, 2024, https://www.lemonde.fr/en/opinion/article/2024/05/19/in-mali-democracy-has-been-indefinitely-postponed_6671934_23.html.
[47] Interview with Colonel (ret) Kelly Smith, former Deputy Group Commander, 3rd SFG (A) (2016-2018) on March 28, 2018.
[48] The authority was first introduced in Section 1208 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2005. In the FY 2014 NDAA, the authority was codified into Title 10 of the U.S. Code as Section 127e. "10 USC 127e: Support of Special Operations to Combat Terrorism," accessed April 8, 2025, https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=granuleid:USC-prelim-title10-section127e&num=0&edition=prelim.
[49] Nick Turse and Alice Speri, "How the Pentagon Uses a Secretive Program to Wage Proxy Wars," *The Intercept*, July 1, 2022, https://theintercept.com/2022/07/01/pentagon-127e-proxy-wars/.

operational temp as "similar to going from driving a Honda Civic to a Lamborghini."[50] The idea was that by creating pressure on the enemy, the environment would be stabilized. Former SOCFWD-N/WA Commander COL (ret) Kelly Smith stated that it was "a fundamental shift from how we were looking at this problem…maybe even at a rate of change hard for SOCAF and AFRICOM to reconcile."[51] In Afghanistan, the 3rd SFG(A) "had clear authorities–left and right boundaries of what they could and couldn't do with their Afghan partners. But in Africa, the soldiers are working under multiple authorities and permissions while coordinating with the US State Department and other government entities across numerous countries to achieve regional effects."[52]

This new approach came to a head on October 4, 2017. Third SFG was conducting a 127e mission with Nigerien soldiers outside of the village of Tongo Tongo, in western Niger, close to the Malian border. The joint patrol was ambushed by ISIS-GS, leading to the deaths of four US SOF, four Nigerien soldiers, and an interpreter. The mission supposedly quickly and unexpectedly morphed from a reconnaissance patrol to a capture/kill mission, and SOF did not have full situational awareness or adequate support. The ambush raised public attention to the fact that the US military was operating in Africa and drew intense scrutiny over the oversight of 127e missions, rules of engagement, and command responsibility. A DoD investigation revealed failures in mission planning, approval, and risk assessment.[53] Lieutenant Colonel David Painter, commander of the 3rd SFG(A)'s second battalion, noted that in Afghanistan, 3rd SFG "had clear authorities–left and right boundaries of what they could and couldn't do with their Afghan partners. But in Africa, the soldiers work under multiple authorities and permissions while coordinating with the US State Department and other government entities across numerous countries to achieve regional effects."[54] In Tongo Tongo, the different work environment

[50] Interview with Lieutenant Colonel within 3rd Group, on March 27, 2018.
[51] Interview with Colonel (ret) Kelly Smith, former Deputy Group Commander, 3rd SFG (A) (2016-2018) on March 28, 2018.
[52] Drew Brooks, "3rd Special Forces Group 'All In' on Africa Mission," The Fayetteville Observer, July 8, 2017, https://www.fayobserver.com/story/news/military/2017/07/08/3rd-special-forces-group-all-in-on-africa-mission/20298830007/.
[53] Alice Hunt Friend, "DoD's Report on the Investigation into the 2017 Ambush in Niger," *Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)*, May 15, 2018, https://www.csis.org/analysis/DoDs-report-investigation-2017-ambush-niger.
[54] Brooks, "3rd Special Forces Group 'All In' on Africa Mission."

demonstrated the risks of partnered CT operations, where missions (especially 127e) can escalate quickly. It highlighted the challenges of working through PN forces, as there were gaps in capability and coordination between SOF and their Nigerien partners. It underscored the risk of mission creep from advising to direct action. It demonstrated that unintended consequences exist when building partner capacity. Finally, it revealed how fragile local alliances, limited infrastructure, and enemy agility can lead to mission failure and strategic consequences.

US Strategic and Operational Level Conclusions

Multiple important strategic and operational-level conclusions have come to light through this research. The defense department's limited history on the African continent impaired its understanding of its partners, analysis of the security environment, and potential US avenues for influence. There was no analysis conducted on the possible unintended consequences or larger-order effects of US military CT programs before their start. The lack of a TSCTP strategy significantly impacted program design and effectiveness. Military CT T&E efforts lacked a system to measure change, which meant there was no focus on effects over time. Finally, stove-piped international coordination efforts impaired Malian's overarching SSR achievements.

The US Lacked History in the Defense Sector on the African Continent

When AFRICOM was established as a new combatant command in 2008, very little existed in terms of the defense enterprise's experience on the continent. African militaries "were historically created not with a view to responding effectively to external threats but with the explicit goal of subjugating local communities."[55] While the traditional role of a military is "to fight and win wars," most African militaries are presented with near-impossible counterinsurgency challenges and hampered by a lack of skills, logistics, and resources. Furthermore, the most serious threats to African states come not from external aggression but from internal strife (ethnic, religious, or criminal). A former Mali OSC noted, "In Africa, we don't have the history of going in and working closely with the military."[56] No research was done to understand and prepare for engaging with this historical legacy. One individual who

[55] Jimmy D. Kandeh, "Civil-Military Relations," in *West Africa's Security Challenges Building Peace in a Troubled Region* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), 150.
[56] Interview with former Mali OSC (2011-2012), on April 29, 2019.

worked at the SOCAF J5 around the 2012 timeframe recounted, "All they had were Central Intelligence Agency world factbook chapters on these countries."[57] When program proposals were created, no defense sector analysis was conducted to capture how we and other international partners may have been already engaging, to identify potential spoilers, delicate power balances, or potential unintended consequences our programs might have, and finally, to ensure we were identifying the most effective potential points of entry. A former US Ambassador stated, "As much as they tried, they didn't have a lot of people who knew anything about Africa. The people doing the planning don't have a good sense of the situation on the ground."[58] Partnering more closely with the French and UK, allies that had more longstanding, historic ties on the continent, could have assisted in closing the knowledge gap.

First, the stark increase in money made available after 9/11 was CT-related.[59] The programs that were being developed and implemented were therefore CT-related and implemented to a large part by SOCAF and the JSOTF-TS. In the US defense sector, the institutional back end that supports and enables SOF is not their responsibility. A former Mali OSC noted, "It runs counter to what SOF want to do. SOF want to work with SOF, and it's all tactical stuff. In our world, they don't need to worry about things like acquisitions or maintenance. There's a whole logistics system in place if they need fuel, food, equipment; they're using the big system, but Mali didn't have that."[60]

No Attention Focused on Potential Unintended Consequences or Larger Order Effects

There was no focus on understanding the potential unintended consequences and larger-order effects of TSCTP. A 2015 CRS report examining building partner capacity acknowledged that "the assumptions that BPC is actually effective—and that the unintended consequences of BPC efforts are manageable—appear to have remained relatively untested."[61] A 2017 report on Mali, the G5, and international security sector assistance noted that this is not a

[57] Interview with former Special Operations Command Africa Monitoring and Evaluation Team member
[58] Interview with former US Ambassador to Mali, on July 3, 2019.
[59] Stark increases in both security assistance and security cooperation funding were laid out in detail in chapter 1.
[60] Interview with former Mali OSC (2011-2012), on April 29, 2019.
[61] McInnis and Lucas, "What Is 'Building Partner Capacity?' Issues for Congress," 15.

unique challenge the US faces alone; "the unintended consequences of security sector assistance are also largely unknown."[62]

When utilized as the main instrument of security engagement with a PN, military training programs can potentially serve at cross purposes and undermine legitimate partner nation governance. Unintended consequences of military assistance tend to materialize when 1) strategies are not clearly articulated nor have a coherent theory of change, 2) errors exist in the designation of aid recipients, 3) deficiencies occur during implementation, and 4) an exit strategy is not available.[63] Possible unintended consequences of military CT train and equip programs include creating or strengthening 'praetorian guards,' blurring the lines of internal CT capacity by over-indexing on military vs. law enforcement CT capacity, disincentivizing PN incentives for security sector reform, eroding principles of civilian supremacy, and encouraging rent-seeking behavior.[64]

CT T&E can Create or Strengthen 'Praetorian Guards'

While the US's SC relationship with the 33rd extended back to the early years of independence, the stark increases in CT training should have been grounds for serious reflection and analysis of whether Mali's most elite unit, which also had Presidential Guard duties, should have received this increased attention and support. Rolandsen, Dwyer, and Reno point out that SOF "single out small units for specialist training to make them 'good enough' to fight insurgents. Such pragmatism can exacerbate the fragmentation of armed forces."[65] The decision of who SOF partnered with was made between the SDO/DATT and the ARSOTF/JSOTF.[66] Staff Sergeant, Ben Bowman, who

[62] Dennis M. Tull, "Mali, the G5 and Security Sector Assistance: Political Obstacles to Effective Cooperation," SWP Comments (Berlin, Germany: German Institute for International and Security Affairs, December 2017), 3, https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/handle/document/55731.

[63] Ursula C. Schroeder, "Unintended Consequences of International Security Assistance: Doing More Harm than Good?," in *Rethinking Security Governance* (Routledge, 2010), 97.

[64] Stephen Watts, "Identifying and Mitigating Risks in Security Sector Assistance for Africa's Fragile States" (RAND Corporation, April 15, 2015), 16–18, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR808.html.

[65] Øystein H. Rolandsen, Maggie Dwyer, and William Reno, "Security Force Assistance to Fragile States: A Framework of Analysis," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 15, no. 5 (October 20, 2021): 565, https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2021.1988224.

[66] This decision would have typically also included the OSC, however the first OSC in Mali started in 2009, which was well after this decision had been made.

was part of the SDO/DATTs office between 2006 and 2009, recounted, "I don't ever remember there being a conversation or concern about the 33rd's Presidential Guard role as a risk. There should have been, that's a no brainer, but I can't think of any time or discussion about potential consequences or worst-case scenario."[67] While the 33rd never displayed unprofessional behavior prior to 2012, it was perceived by the regular army to be ATT's "coup-proofing force" given that was where all the US training and equipping resources had been dedicated. Former SDO/DATT Colonel (ret) Marshall Mantiply recounted, "Since most of our authorities were tied to SOF/CT, and SOF viewed the 33rd RCP as their counterparts, that's where almost all US military attention went. The 33rd even received training from Navy SEALs at one point. The lack of 'love' being shown to the regular Army surely built resentment."[68]

CT T&E can Blur the Lines of Internal CT Capacity Building by Over-Indexing on Military vs. Law Enforcement CT Capacity

Military CT T&E accounts were much better resourced in the post-9/11 environment than CT law enforcement programs.[69] SOF existed as a ready and willing implementer, whereas the US does not have a Gendarmerie-type force like Canada and France, which could implement US law enforcement T&E programs on a similar scale to SOF. In a 2017 report on "Mali, the G5 and Security Sector Assistance: Political Obstacles to Effective Cooperation," Dennis Tull describes this as a "questionable practice," where an international donor focuses their attention on the military rather than police and gendarmerie in trying to generate internal CT capacity.[70]

---

[67] Interview with Staff Sergeant Ben Bowman, Office of the SDO/DATT in Mali (2006-2009), on May 14, 2019.
[68] Interview with Colonel (ret) Marshal Mantiply, former SDO/DATT to Mali (2008-2010) on August 26, 2024.
[69] Congressional Research Service, "Appropriations for FY2002: Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs," February 4, 2002, https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20020204_RL31011_ccf3877c3c53f86c04598b4b333c5f4230ee3c3c.pdf; Congressional Research Service, "Appropriations for FY2003: Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs," May 5, 2003, https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20030505_RL31311_36b05be2fbcd01b866d4758a9354ce901d4f7a4d.pdf; Congressional Research Service, "Appropriations for FY2004: Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs," March 23, 2004, https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20040323_RL31811_84f6028e274b1522116b481b547b164d201ec3fd.pdf.
[70] Tull, "Mali, the G5 and Security Sector Assistance: Political Obstacles to Effective Cooperation."

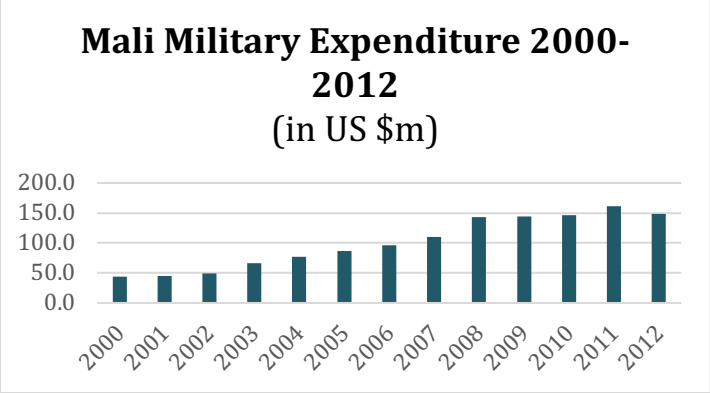
CT T&E can Erode Civilian Oversight over the Security Sector

Military train and equip programs can shift power and resources to the security sector that might otherwise be allocated to civilian institutions, which exist to provide oversight and accountability over these services. Receiving financing from international donors can make security services less dependent on civilian authorities for their resources and, therefore, less accountable and potentially more independent.

CT T&E can Contribute to Government Corruption

Post-9/11, US military assistance contributed to the Malian government's corruption. Malian military expenditures from the mid-1990s to early 2000s rested stably at approximately 1.5 percent of GDP (~$41m in US dollars), increasing at most three percent per year. After the terrorist attacks of 2001, expenditures grew more than 10 percent per year, reaching a high of $160 million in 2011. These figures were enhanced by 50 percent with assistance provided by foreign partners, which is not captured in this SIPRI data.[71]

Figure 8.1 Mali Military Expenditure (2000-2012)



Source: SIPRI Military Expenditure Database

CT T&E can Erode Principles of Civilian Supremacy

To the extent the PN is not reliant on its citizens for revenues but can instead rely on independent aid to "buy" support, it need not be responsive to popular demands. This is

[71] Interview with Colonel (ret) Corban Spraker, former US SDO/DATT to Mali (2010-2012), on August 19, 2019.

what's called a "rentier state" and runs a high risk of demonstrating poor governance indicators.

CT T&E can Encourage Rent-Seeking Behavior

Military assistance is fungible. If a donor provides aid for one function, the assistance provided should free up the original domestic resources that the PN would have earmarked for that function. When Mali received its international military assistance, it did not pivot to use the originally committed funds for other important priorities outside of the security sector, such as health, education, or other important social safety net services. It is believed that this created an opportunity where military commanders kept their original budgets, accepted the new military assistance, and pilfered money into their own pockets.

TSCTP Lacked a Strategy for its First 12 Years of Operation

The TSCTP's core intervention logic is consistent across numerous other countries and regions characterized by instability; that stability can be achieved by providing security sector assistance, promoting economic growth and accountable governance, and fostering societal inclusivity. John Marks, the former president of the nonprofit Search for Common Ground in the late 1990s, stated, "Putting more weapons in the hands of the military in Africa is like putting more gasoline on the fire."[72] GAO reports in 2008 and 2013, which reviewed the TSCTP program, identified several of these challenges, but nothing was done to fix them. In 2008, the GAO pointed out that the USG "lack[ed] a comprehensive, integrated strategy to guide [its] implementation of TSCTP."[73] A June 2013 US government internal review of the TSCTP program, conducted in the aftermath of the 2012 coup in Mali, also identified the critical need for a strategy to guide the program. The first TSCTP Guiding Strategy, which identified key assumptions, core principles, desired end states, and strategic objectives, was approved by the Deputies Committee in January 2014.[74] A 2025 OIG report on TSCTP critiqued the strategy as "incomplete and need[ing]

[72] Dana Priest, "U.S. Deepens African Military Contacts," *Washington Post*, December 13, 1998.
[73] Government Accountability Office, "Combating Terrorism: Actions Needed to Enhance Implementation of Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership," July 31, 2008, 20, https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-08-860.
[74] Government Accountability Office, "Combating Terrorism: U.S. Efforts in Northwest Africa Would Be Strengthened by Enhanced Program Management," June 2014, 20, https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-14-518.pdf.

improvement."[75] The lack of a clear, overarching strategy had an adverse effect on the implementation of the CT partnership.

The Lack of AM&E SC Guidance Impeded the Analysis of Program Impact

The reason the US has spent over $400 billion on CT military assistance since 9/11 is to reduce state fragility. This assistance has been provided on the assumption that by building military capacity, recipient states will be able to better assert control over territories and populations in an accountable manner and that people in those countries will feel safer as a result. However, the key question remains whether military assistance has the intended effect and, if not, how to correct it, so that it does.

DoD's AM&E Policy for Security Cooperation wasn't Issued until 2017

A lack of monitoring and evaluation hampered the TSCTP program from the start. There were no DoD policies or responsibilities issued for the AM&E of DoD security cooperation programs. The goal of AM&E is to ensure that programs are effective, accountable, and aligned with US national security objectives. Despite repeated recommendations from the GAO and the OIG (2008 and 2014) to institute monitoring and evaluation of programming, the State Department first established a monitoring and evaluation framework for TSCTP military programs in 2015.[76] Since 2015, the GAO and the OIG have continued to make concrete recommendations on improving monitoring and evaluation efforts (2020 and 2025).[77]

In the FY 2017 NDAA, Congress significantly reformed US security cooperation programs, consolidating and restructuring DoD security cooperation authorities, establishing a long-awaited framework for AM&E of security cooperation programs to ensure effectiveness and

[75]Office of the Inspector General, "Audit of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership Program," 8.
[76] Government Accountability Office, "Combating Terrorism: Actions Needed to Enhance Implementation of Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership"; Government Accountability Office, "Combating Terrorism: U.S. Efforts in Northwest Africa Would Be Strengthened by Enhanced Program Management."
[77] "Audit of the Department of State Bureau of African Affairs Monitoring and Coordination of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership Program" (Washington, DC: US Department of State, September 2020), https://www.stateoig.gov/uploads/report/report_pdf_file/aud-mero-20-42_1.pdf; Office of the Inspector General, "Audit of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership Program" (Washington, DC: Department of State, March 2025), https://www.stateoig.gov/uploads/report/report_pdf_file/aud-geer-25-11-web-posting_508.pdf.

accountability, and creating new funding and training mechanisms for foreign forces.[78] Shortly thereafter, the DoDI 5132.14, titled "Assessment, Monitoring, and Evaluation Policy for the Security Cooperation Enterprise," in January 2017.[79] The DoDI mandated that all security cooperation programs undergo AM&E to ensure they achieve strategic objectives and required DoD to collect and analyze data to measure program impact, efficiency, and alignment with US foreign policy. It also defined roles and responsibilities throughout the security cooperation enterprise (OSD, Combatant Commands, Military Departments, and Defense Agencies) in conducting AM&E. Even though the DoDI was issued in 2017, it took years for the security cooperation workforce to become educated in AM&E and for the framework to be implemented enterprise-wide. Data only began to be produced through AM&E frameworks as of 2024, which is now beginning to enable data-driven decisions in a more regularized fashion in 2025. However, this doesn't mean that the system isn't still mainly subject to arbitrary, political policy decisions, which, at times, override the data.

Programs were Limited to Output-Oriented Metrics, but no Impact was Determined

What monitoring and evaluation efforts did exist did not examine the right kinds of data to determine program 'success' in countering terrorism. A former OSC in Nigeria pointed out that "Part of program management is to make sure the program is working as you go along."[80] Implementing a capacity building program does not automatically mean capacity is being built. Former ODA Commander Simon Powelson added, "Training is a component of capacity building, not an automatic indicator of it."[81] A 2013 RAND study on T&E programs captured that data collection limitations, lack of assessments, and long timelines for effecting change on partners made determining the effectiveness of T&E efforts challenging.[82]

[78] U.S. Congress, "National Defense Authorization Act of FY2017," Pub. L. No. 114–328, 1 (2016), https://www.congress.gov/114/plaws/publ328/PLAW-114publ328.pdf.
[79] A DoDI (Department of Defense Instruction) is an official policy document issued by DoD to establish procedures, assign responsibilities, and provide guidance on specific DoD programs and operations.
[80] Interview with a Defense Department official from the US Embassy in Nigeria (2016-2019), on December 5, 2024.
[81] Simon J. Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No: Lessons for SOF from Mali" (Thesis, Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School, 2013), 55, https://calhoun.nps.edu/handle/10945/38996.
[82] Christopher Paul et al., "What Works Best When Building Partner Capacity and Under What Circumstances?" (RAND Corporation, January 28, 2013), https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG1253z1.html.

Lieutenant Colonel (ret) Greg Joachim, stated, "We were measuring whether we were winning or not by how many [terrorist group members] we had killed. Security is supposed to ensure that life can function. We should have been measuring how many airplanes were able to land or how many boats came to port each day. Our outcomes shouldn't have been measured by traditional military kills but by whether life had returned to functioning normally instead of in terms of CT outcomes."[83] Before the 2017 DoDI on AM&E, no information was issued to define what measurable goals, objectives, end states, and metrics were, nor to educate the DoD workforce in this domain. Therefore, program management was extremely limited in measuring program outcomes (changes resulting from implemented projects). Instead, in the early years, programs barely focused on measuring outputs (program activities), for example, how many soldiers were trained, how many trainings were implemented, or how much equipment was provided.

Significant Knowledge Management Challenges Existed

A Global-Theater Security Cooperation Management Information System (G-TSCMIS or TSCMIS) was established, a data system that stored data related to security cooperation events and activities. It was supposed to provide a "single integrated operating picture for security cooperation planning and management within each region."[84] However, in practice, a SOCAF J5 Programs Officer noted, "It was a 'garbage in, garbage out' system. TSCMIS relied essentially on tactical people submitting AARs from whatever mission they had gone down range to do, for example, providing an infantry company with CT training. Some people were better than others. Some would document it; some would share their information with you if it was important. Others would just store theirs in the archives of whatever ODA had to do that mission." Knowledge management was a terrible challenge as guidance on naming and storing files was rarely adhered to. COL (ret) Greg Arndt noted that TSCMIS was not a "central database to locate existing information where you could review all the documents/information together and be able to make informed decisions."[85]

[83] Interview with LTC (ret) Greg Joachim, former OSC to Senegal and Nigeria, and SDO/DATT in Uganda, on October 29, 2024.
[84] Marquis et al., "Assessing the Value of U.S. Army International Activities," 15.
[85] Interview with COL (ret) Greg Arndt, former OSC and SDO/DATT in Libya (2012-2013), on November 4, 2024.

Even an Informal Prioritization of Results did not Exist

When asked whether SOCAF and JSOTF ever focused on results monitoring, a former officer noted, "I don't remember a lot of conversations. They [the JSOTF-TS] were right here on base, so they were easy to get in touch with. There wasn't a strong lesson learned AAR process affiliated with these programs in my memory."[86] Despite the fact that for years, GAO and OIG reports were published with recommendations for increasing the effectiveness of building partner capacity, Program Managers did not focus on trying to determine results. A former White House official stated, "I don't think Congress or SOCOM [Special Operations Command] really holds them to account. Nobody's put their boot on people's necks to make sure these [train and equip] programs truly are effective."[87]

The Lack of Attention to M&E also Extended to the Field and Implementer Level

Most ODA personnel interviewed could not recount whether an assessment tool was used during their deployments. Multiple former JSOTF Commanders interviewed alluded to a lack of focus on PN unit capacity change over time. According to a former SOFLE, the guidance that ODA teams received prior to deploying was "Train them in what you think you have the capability to make them better. And then the next guys do whatever they want to do."[88] A former Ambassador concurred, noting, "I don't think we ever discussed whether there were to be lessons learned from our training program."[89] But multiple ODA Commanders pointed out that if you don't have goals, end states, and assessments, you just keep training on the same stuff, over and over and over.

The Military CT T&E Assessment Process

The only component of monitoring and evaluation that was (at times) being conducted was assessments. Two kinds of assessments were implemented prior to the FY 2017 NDAA: program assessments and tactical unit assessments. In program assessments, CT program managers or policy officers from the State Department, OSD, AFRICOM, and its component

[86] Interview with James Demchak, former SOCAF J5 Programs Officer (2011-2017), on December 20, 2024.
[87] Wesley Morgan, "Behind the Secret U.S. War in Africa," *Politico* (blog), July 2, 2018, https://www.politico.com/story/2018/07/02/secret-war-africa-pentagon-664005.
[88] Interview with former SOFLE in Mali (2010-2011), on April 18, 2019.
[89] Interview with former US Ambassador to Mali, on August 2, 2019.

commands would travel to the continent to assess the implementation of TSCTP military assistance programs. The focus of the trips would be to monitor and observe the program's implementation, such as equipment furnished, training, or infrastructure built. They would occur approximately every two to three years (or more frequently if large programs were being implemented).

In 2010, the Office of the Secretary of Defense's Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (SO/LIC) office contracted Science Applications International Corporation, Inc. (SAIC) to conduct unit assessments to measure whether Section 1206-funded programs were "improving the capabilities of military security forces of the recipient nations."[90] However, COL (ret) Greg Arndt argued that the utility of such assessments was "doomed to fail because they weren't framed in an informed understanding of the operating environment."[91] Assessments were only conducted through a CT lens. When a team would walk in and see much broader problems, especially on the institutional side, they would ignore them and default to reporting on what they knew: CT and PKO [Peacekeeping Operations funding].[92] The majority of "assessment teams" had no monitoring, evaluation, or "assessment" expertise. Their expertise was on the capability itself. So, in reality, they were "capability assessments." An example of this, specified COL (ret) Arndt, "was that country X needed Humvees, and the soldiers needed to be trained to drive those Humvees. The assessment team was focused on whether the Humvees were delivered and whether the soldiers could drive the vehicles, rather than why the PN needed the Humvees in the first place and whether the provision of the Humvees enabled the PN to achieve any higher order effects."[93]

Much of the army gravitated to measuring capacity via stoplight charts, a visual tracking tool that uses color-coded indicators (red, yellow, and green) to assess the status of a unit's operational readiness, because that's what SOF was using in its large CT T&E missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, stop-light charts proved limiting and unhelpful for many

[90] Linked In page of a SAIC Assessments Officer on this contract.
[91] Interview with COL (ret) Greg Arndt, former OSC and SDO/DATT in Libya (2012-2013), on November 4, 2024.
[92] Interview, COL (ret) Greg Arndt.
[93] Interview, COL (ret) Greg Arndt.

reasons (e.g., no option for qualitative descriptions, no focus on underlying context on strengths or weaknesses that led to the determination, and a SOF tendency to show unit growth over time for self-promotion purposes). A variety of DoD personnel interviewed (SDO/DATTs, Company Commanders, ODA Commanders, SOFLEs) all noted that it would have been helpful to have a well-thought-through assessment tool, that could have been utilized to assess partner capacity at the beginning of training and then again upon departure to determine what skills learning the different units gained over time.[94] A former SOFLE noted, "If you had attempted this over the course of multiple JCETs over the span of a few years, we would have probably had a good picture of it [PN's change in capacity over time]."[95]

The SOF Assessment Tool was the Special Operations Debrief and Retrieval System

SOFODA teams use Special Operations Debrief and Retrieval System (SODARS) as a reporting mechanism to capture operational information obtained by the SOF team during their deployment. In a JCET context, a SODARS captures the capabilities and competencies of the PN units they work with (operational readiness, training proficiency, leadership and team cohesion, equipment and logistics, and mission planning and execution).[96] Each report is then used by other SOF teams to prepare for future deployments, not to measure PN capacity change over time. One former ODA Commander identified SODARS as "useless. A SODARS represents one person who has been on the ground for 6 weeks and is seeing a very specific slice of the larger picture."[97] A former Company Commander with 1/10th SFG(A) relayed, "They have been a joke for the past 30 years…a real black hole."[98] Each ODA conducting a JCET with a PN must submit a SODARS within six months of their return from deployment. However, there are many challenges (accessibility, functionality, usability, navigability, efficiency, and operability) in using them. Given the submission deadline is six

[94] Interview with Colonel (ret) Marshal Mantiply, former SDO/DATT to Mali (2008-2010) on January 7, 2019; Interview with former SOFLE in Mali (2010-2011), on April 18, 2019.
[95] Interview with former SOFLE in Mali (2010-2011), on April 18, 2019.
[96] Thomas Jr. Newell, "The Use of Special Operations Forces in Combating Terrorist Financing" (Monterey, California, Naval Postgraduate School, 2006), https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADA457538.pdf.
[97] Interview with former SOF ODA Commander in Mali (2010-2011), on April 18, 2019.
[98] Interview with COL (ret) Sean Berg, former Company Commander, 1st Battalion 10th Special Forces Group (A) (2007-2008), on March 25, 2025.

months post-deployment, the returning team often hasn't submitted a SODARS before the next team conducts its pre-deployment prep, resulting in the inbound team relying on out-of-date information.[99] Additional challenges include that the reports are not searchable, there is no reliable or consistent data, there is no central repository of all SODARS reports, they are outdated the moment you put them on a ppt slide, there is no accountability for how the data within the SODARS connects to any longer-term strategic plan or operational order, and despite the fact that the majority of the data is unclassified, the reports are hung on the high side (classified system), making usability and shareability extremely challenging.[100] Finally, Col (ret) Greg Arndt pointed out that no one ever "receives any feedback from SODARS. We never know who's read it. And I can confidently state that in my experience, those who should have read it did not."[101]

Limited International Coordination Impaired Overarching Malian SSR Achievements

After the 2012 coup, the Mali security environment became extremely saturated with international donors. Despite having so many cooks in the kitchen, efforts for international coordination were challenging and greatly lacking. It was considered a nice-to-have, not a need-to-have. A typical factor in donor-recipient relations is that the PN doesn't necessarily want to encourage international actors to coordinate, as they fear that would mean that the donors divide up the responsibilities for providing assistance themselves, resulting in a net loss for the PN. The PN typically attempts to keep international donor information siloed to prevent this from happening, to maximize their receipt of security cooperation engagement and assistance. This siloization normally leads to somewhat overlapping mandates and/or contradictory capacity building mandates.[102]

Mali's complex security landscape included:

[99] Interview with an ODA Commander serving in Chad (2016-2017), on May 3, 2018.
[100] Interview with COL (ret) Sean Berg, former Company Commander, 1st Battalion 10th Special Forces Group (A) (2007-2008), on March 25, 2025.
[101] Interview with Colonel (ret) Greg Arndt, former OSC to Libya (2011-2012) and SDO/DATT to Libya (2013) on November 4, 2024.
[102] Tull, "Mali, the G5 and Security Sector Assistance: Political Obstacles to Effective Cooperation."

- The EU's Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) Missions: From 2013 through 2024, the EUTM provided training, education, and advisory services in support of the operationalization of the FAMa and the G5-Sahel Joint Force. While it trained over 20,000 FAMa soldiers and provided advisory support to the MDAC, General Staff and Military regions, it failed in providing a stable foundation of educated and trained soldiers capable of addressing Mali's security environment. The EUCAP-Mali focuses on strengthening the capacity of internal security forces through training, advisory support, and projects. Since 2015, EUCAP has trained over 16,000 National Police, Gendarmerie, and National Guard in human rights, gender, ethics, civil-military relations, criminal investigation, and border management. EUCAP-Mali began a new two-year mandate in February 2025.[103]
- The UN's Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). For ten years (2013 to 2023), the mission of MINUSMA's 13,000 peacekeepers was peace enforcement; however, there was no peace to keep. Ninety percent of their operational budget ended up going towards force protection.[104] The public became frustrated that the peacekeeping force was not focused on protecting everyday Malians, only itself. The Inspector General of the MDAC recounted a common refrain in Mali: "Instead of saying 'MINUSMA,' we say 'AMUSEMENT' (joke in French)."[105]
- The G5 Sahel Joint Force (G5S-FC): An ad-hoc CT coalition or 'Force Conjointe" (task force) including Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger, established in 2017, was supposed to be a regional contribution to the fight against terrorism. Comprised of up to 5,000 personnel from its PNs, it sought to improve regional border security and facilitate enhanced cooperation and the deployment of joint patrols. Due to significant limits in capacity and operational effectiveness, the G5S-FC was dependent on international support from the start. COL (ret) Marshall Mantiply, recounted, "It was a

[103] EUCAP Sahel Mali - Press and Information Team, "EUCAP Sahel Mali Celebrated Its 10th Anniversary of Commitment and Support to Mali," European Union External Action, January 27, 2025, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eucap-sahel-mali-celebrated-its-10th-anniversary-commitment-and-support-mali_en.
[104] Interview with Colonel (ret) Marshal Mantiply, former SDO/DATT to Mali (2008-2010) on November 14, 2018.
[105] Interview with General Gabriel Poudiougou, Inspector General, Ministry of Defense, on September 16, 2016.

Frankenstein in the making. There was never a solid understanding of which countries would do what."[106]

- Operation Barkhane. France's 4,000-person regional CT effort (2014-2022) replaced Operation Serval and was dedicated to fighting terrorism and preventing safe havens in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger in partnership with regional actors. COL (ret) Victor Nelson stated, "Barkhane was a wonderful exercise in whack-a-mole."[107] COL (ret) Marshall Mantiply noted that the French had a "paternalistic and demeaning attitude towards the Malians, which made things hard for the US. It impacted our relationship and what we were trying to do."[108]
- The Wagner Group. The Wagner Group is a Russian PMC that has been involved in paramilitary operations, security contracts, and influence campaigns around the world. After two military coups (2020 and 2021), Mali's transitional government, led by Colonel Assimi Goïta, increasingly distanced itself from Western partners and sought alternative, less conditional security assistance. Mali's shift to align with Wagner resulted in the termination of Operation Barkhane, MINSUMA's departure, and a significant increase in human rights abuses and extrajudicial killings.[109]

Exercise Flintlock was not Fully Leveraged

Beginning in 2005, the multi-national force planning exercise held annually by SOCAF grew in size, partners, geographic reach, and overall complexity. While Flintlock did achieve all the common benefits of regional exercises (strengthening regional and international partnerships, deterring potential adversaries, validating tactical capabilities, solidifying interoperability, and enhancing readiness), it was not fully leveraged to achieve the maximum return on investment. First, Flintlock missed the critical opportunity to evaluate PN CT effectiveness. Had monitoring and evaluation been more strategically utilized, SOF could have tracked and had an annual

[106] Interview with Colonel (ret) Marshal Mantiply, former SDO/DATT to Mali (2008-2010) on November 14, 2018.
[107] Interview with Colonel (ret) Victor Nelson, West Africa Desk Officer, Office of the Secretary of Defense for Africa (2003-2006) and Policy Officer for West Africa, State Department Bureau of Counterterrorism (2006-2019), on March 12, 2025.
[108] Interview with Colonel (ret) Marshal Mantiply, former SDO/DATT to Mali (2008-2010) on November 14, 2018.
[109] the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, "Militant Islamist Groups in Africa Sustain High Pace of Lethality," *Africa Center* (blog), February 18, 2025, https://africacenter.org/spotlight/mig2025-militant-islamist-groups-in-africa/.

understanding of country-level capacity and improvements over time.[110] A second missed opportunity was utilizing Flintlock as a mechanism to teach the PNs about exercise execution, a responsibility that they could have even taken over gradually over time. Colonel (ret) Marshall Mantiply reflected on how Flintlock has expanded over the years, the PNs "never could have run it themselves."[111] 2025 marks the twentieth anniversary of Exercise Flintlock in the Sahel. While PN representatives are invited into the planning process (initial-, mid-, and final-planning conferences are held leading up to the significant annual event, it has remained a fully US-driven exercise. Had the exercise been kept to a more modest scale, with one country hosting per year, SOF could have (over time) handed the planning to the PNs, with each TSCTP partner taking turns acting as the exercise host and organizer. This would have worked to instill PN ownership, strategic planning capacity, regional peer competition, and it would have also served to encourage professionalization, driving PN desire to excel and succeed.

US Tactical Level Conclusions

So, in the end, what resulted from nine years of CT military training programs in Mali? "What we needed," according to a former OSC, was an "average army infantry unit; one who could shoot, move, and communicate against armed terrorists."[112] Given that CT money and authorities funded the training, a former SOFLE pointed out that "We always spoke in terms of CT units, but in terms of Africa, the question is whether the units we train perform at the level of a basic infantry company–at its most basic."[113]

SOF CT T&E was Episodic Engagement

In general, Malian forces were "happy to engage with us and cooperated to the best of their ability," according to JSOTF-TS Commander Mark Rosengard.[114] As discussed in Chapter 7, Malian CT Capacity Analysis, the US worked with four ETIAs (1, 2, 4, and 6) beginning in 2009 and the 33rd RCP from 2003 to 2012 (though the US's training relationship with the

[110] While it wasn't guaranteed that the same soldiers/units would represent their countries each year, the regional exercise did offer an annual evaluative opportunity to use the representative country unit as a reflection of each country's general capabilities.
[111] Interview with Colonel (ret) Marshal Mantiply, former SDO/DATT to Mali (2008-2010) on November 14, 2018.
[112] Interview with a former OSC in Mali (2009-2011), on March 28, 2019.
[113] Interview with a former SOFLE in Mali (2010-2011) on April 18, 2019.
[114] Interview with Colonel (ret) Mark Rosengard, former JSOTF-TS Commander (2005-2008), on May 10, 2018.

33rd RCP dated back to 1961). However, up until the creation of the JSOTF-TS in 2006, former JSOTF-TS Commander Colonel (ret) Mark Rosengard referred to the training that the FAMa received as merely "random acts of touching that were never connected to each other."[115] During those years, SOF implemented four JCETs in late 2003 and three in early 2004. Flintlock took place for the first time in the region in January 2005 in Gao. In 2006, three JCETs were held, and in 2007, there were seven. In 2008, there were four, and in 2009, the pace ramped up to heel-to-toe training of approximately nine to 11 training events.[116] In 2010, the JPAT began working on a full-time basis with the 33rd CFS in Bamako, and nine to 11 trainings were ongoing with the ETIAs in the north. Given that there were four ETIAs being trained, from 2010 onwards, each ETIA was receiving two to three 60-day trainings a year. Furthermore, given the six-month deployment schedule of the ETIA's, each time SOF worked with them, at least 50 percent of the unit was starting from the beginning. That means that the only unit that received dedicated and consistent engagement was the 33rd CFS in Bamako.

Tactical Infantry Skill Gain had Mixed Results (ETIAs no, 33rd CFS yes)

Individual marksmanship and small unit tactics skills of the ETIAs would increase during a JCET. Facilitated by the vehicles TSCTP provided, the ETIAs would gain the ability to maneuver single vehicles moving up to the platoon level. They learned how to provide overwatch positions and communicate between different elements. While these were all concrete gains from the training in the immediate term, their skills would immediately atrophy as training was not kept up by the ETIAs after the US SOF departed.[117] Furthermore, the ETIA's were composite 'Task Force' units, which would come together for six months at a time and then rotate out. Colonel (ret) Marshall Mantiply noted that between 2008 and 2010, the ETIAs "could observe, do some patrolling out 200 clicks around their posts–albeit not well–and chase bad guys as long as they were not engaged in a severe firefight. They could deal with onesie-twosie criminal elements, but their range was usually limited to

[115] Interview with Colonel (ret) Mark Rosengard, former JSOTF-TS Commander (2005-2008), on May 10, 2018.
[116] Records conflict each other: the Foreign Military Training Report (FMTR), Simon Powelson former SOFLE's records, and post's cable reporting.
[117] Interview with a former OSC in Mali (2009-2011), on March 28, 2019.

available fuel for their patrol vehicles."[118] However, there was no chance of building capacity over time.

According to a former OSC, the 33rd CFS displayed marked improvements in tactical mobility, communication, and command and control. They were able to employ the equipment TSCTP provided them (radios and vehicles). At both the squad and the platoon levels, they were capable of maneuvering in both open terrain and mounted environments.[119] However, according to Colonel (ret) Marshall Mantiply, the 33rd RCP suffered from leadership issues. They could perform well when they were working alongside or being given direction by US or French forces. But what they lacked was "leaders within the 33rd who could think through 'if we need to go to do an ambush, here's what you need to do and in what order.' However, if someone was telling them, "Go do X," they had no problem going off and doing X. It was the thought process that was lacking."[120]

A former SOFLE ranked the 33rd CFS as "somewhat capable," equivalent to the worst National Guard infantry platoon. This meant that "they did have a baseline ability; they could conduct basic SUTs (Small Unit Tactics) to an acceptable level. They could shoot (mostly safely) in one general direction. They could have a maneuver element that could plank right or left and go across the objective. They could bring their support element forward to clear. But beyond those SUTs, they did not have any of the necessary tools to sustain the training past the departure of the ODA at this capacity level, due to a combined lack of leader motivation and resources."[121]

The real question for both the ETIAs and the 33rd RCP was once they achieved their baseline ability post-JCET, what were they able to do with it? They were only able to go out on close patrols because they didn't have the necessary logistics to sustain themselves. They had no communications staff to communicate, no ISR to direct their movement or actions, and no higher headquarters elements to coordinate any potential movements. With every JCET, SOF

[118] Interview with Colonel (ret) Marshal Mantiply, former SDO/DATT to Mali (2008-2010) on November 14, 2018.
[119] Interview with a former OSC in Mali (2009-2011), on March 28, 2019.
[120] Interview with Colonel (ret) Marshal Mantiply, former SDO/DATT to Mali (2008-2010) on November 14, 2018.
[121] Interview with a former SOFLE in Mali (2010-2011) on April 18, 2019.

would train the companies and improve them, but the Malian government would not empower the capability that was built. The FAMa would store and hoard any ammunition provided and not sustain any training in the absence of SOF trainers. As a result, all of the ETIAs and the one company that the 33rd RCP kept deployed up in Kidal would end up sitting on the bases and "doing random patrols," according to a former SOFLE.[122] Finally, for both the ETIAs and the 33rd RCP, it is hard to determine the extent to which a unit that patrols an area yet does not make contact is successful. Just because they do not come into contact with, engage with, and/or pursue an enemy does not mean that they were not successful in denying the enemy access to that area.

Components of US CT Capacity Building Efforts were Unsuccessful (for the US and PN)
Several things in the US CT training and equipping approach in Mali did not work, in turn, limiting the potential change of the beneficiary nation's capacity to counter terrorism. On the US side, the consistent factor was that the most effective point of entry was not at the appropriate level. While tactical training was something SOF was good at, small amounts of capacity building efforts directed at the operational level could have resulted in much more significant tactical effects achieved:

- **Deciphering the Correct Point of Entry; Challenges with Partner Unit Selection**
  Post-9/11**,** the CT threat in Mali was in the north. As of 2003, SOF developed an enemy-focused approach. Their objectives were to gain access and placement to affect the enemy.[123] While SOF was focused on partnering with the FAMa to counter the threat of GSPC/AQIM in northern Mali, the US Embassy did not want it to appear that ongoing SOF training was attempting to build the FAMa's capacity for use against the Tuareg.[124] An agreement was, thus, reached that SOF would train a combination of ETIAs in the north and the 33rd RCP in Bamako to balance our approach. Neither option was the

[122] The other two possible category rankings according to the SOFLE were: *no training/not capable* – someone in uniform who could only do menial tasks. They can't shoot because there's no ammo, they can't drive because there's no fuel, they can't run around because there's no food, and *capable* – an officer and unit that can go in and employ small unit tactics. Interview with a former SOFLE in Mali (2010-2011) on April 18, 2019.
[123] Interview with Colonel (ret) Kelly Smith, former Company Commander in Mali (2006-2007) on March 18, 2025, and Interview with Colonel (ret) Rosengard, former JSOTF-TS Commander (2006-2008), on May 10, 2018.
[124] Interview with COL (ret) Kelly Smith, former Company Commander in Mali (2006-2007) on March 18, 2025.

optimal one. On the one hand, train ETIAs, composite units that deploy for only six months, and build no overall CT capacity, but contribute to a general basic training of the force in the north. Or, on the other hand, train the 33rd RCP, a very professional Malian SOF unit, which was also responsible for presidential guard duties, an engagement that brought with it the potential to enable a political, praetorian guard, even if they may not have been acting like it in the mid-2000s. This was a difficult choice, and the US straddled the decision. But neither choice was an optimal option.

- **Lack of Focus on Building Training Level Cadre**
  In most components of CT engagement (military intelligence, civil affairs, logistics, basic infantry training, combat medical, and aviation), SOF did not focus on generating a training cadre, which could have continued to train the FAMa in each of the CT capacities in SOF's absence. The one area where a train-the-trainer approach was attempted was in the realm of communications. However, it was extremely poorly implemented. In failing to do so, SOF limited themselves to the training gains made in each individual training iteration. Part of the process of implementing a train-the-trainer model is passing along an awareness of the necessity of 1) starting out with an assessment of the capabilities and capacity of the student body, 2) formulating an understanding of what potential progress looks like, 3) establishing what potential indicators of progress and success are relevant, and 4) inculcating the need for constant self-reflection and assessment. By not doing this, SOF greatly undercut their potential multiplier effect to affect capacity building change.

- **Logistics Focus Traded Short-Term Wins for Longer-Term Failure**
  Countries like the US can provide new vehicles and operator- and unit-level logistics and maintenance training. However, at some point, the spare parts provided are going to get used up, the tools are going to break, and the people trained will be rotated out of their original units. The logistics system needs to be supported and sustained. If the political and institutional will is not in place to keep such a training cycle in motion, everything will fall apart, which is what happened. While supporting the ETIAs and 33rd RCP with logistics training helped in the near-term, the units' long-term most significant limitation was not being logistically sustained during battle.

- **One-Size Fits All Approach Does Not Work in Africa**
  A thorough analysis was never conducted at the beginning of PSI (2002-2003) on the FAMa's existing operational conditions, communication needs, and sustainment capability in northern Mali. The Harris radios were inappropriate for multiple reasons, but they were what SOF knew and were used to providing to other partners.[125] Although multiple different assessment teams (2008 and 2011) reported examples of their inappropriateness, the US did not pivot and provide something more applicable and appropriate. Instead, they doubled down and kept providing them. This was both a wasted investment and an opportunity, given that the FAMa stuck to using a very basic Chinese-provided Morse code radio system. Conducting a comprehensive end-user assessment before equipment is provided to a partner nation would have been extremely important.

- **A Missed Opportunity–Developing Mali's Full Staff Intelligence Process**
  Despite having received daily access to the FAMa's COIA, the US did not take advantage of the opportunity to work on developing the FAMa's full staff intelligence process. Such an initiative could have examined how the FAMa's J2 (intelligence), J3 (operations), and J5 (plans) should have all interacted and worked together.

- **Lack of Basic Good BPC Practices**
  Multiple necessary and sufficient conditions have been identified as critical standard practices in successful BPC efforts. These include ensuring alignment of partner nation and donor objectives, securing partner nation contribution to the effort, ensuring the PN can sustain the investments, and utilizing conditionality as an incentive to engagement. None of these concepts were taken into consideration or implemented as a component of US-Malian SC and BPC efforts.

The weaknesses on the US provision side of its CT T&E effort in Mali had tangible effects on the PN's ability to demonstrate marked impact and progress toward building CT capacity. The following were the key components that did not work:

- **No CT Capacity was Built in the ETIAs, the FAMa's 'Find and Fix' Elements**

[125] Communications and the Harris radio constraint are fleshed out in more detail in Chapter 7.

Absolutely no capacity was built over time in the ETIAs of northern Mali.

- **A Dysfunctional Supply Chain Compromised Successful CT Operations**
  The absence of forward-staged logistics made the ETIAs and the 33rd CFS dependent on Bamako for resupply of gas, rations, and other spare parts, which created significant vulnerability and impacted their offensive capabilities against AQIM. The JPAT was clear in their assessment that "the biggest limiting factor to greater CFS success was the complete failure of the Malian logistical system to meet their sustainment requirements in the harsh and remote desert environment."[126] There were multiple instances (Operation Djigui, June 2009; Menaka, January 2012; and Tessalit, January 2012) where the units' severe logistical limitations impaired their ability to pursue terrorist groups.[127]

- **The FAMa was Not Able to Absorb US Communications Training Efforts**
  The FAMa's existing systems were extremely basic and not able to and needs into consideration, providing over-sophisticated training and equipment. The Malians continued using their existing systems and cell phones for communications purposes.

- **FAMa Informational Leaks were Commonplace during Training and Operations**
  Information leaks were detailed in multiple cables from the Embassy in Bamako, where both the Mauritanians and Algerians accused Mali of being incapable of preventing important intelligence from being shared with enemy forces. The Government of Mauritania launched Operation Benkan in June 2011, an operation that was supposed to be jointly conducted, without telling the Malians, as they feared the operation would have been compromised otherwise. Mauritania had lost soldiers during other operations where intelligence had been shared.

[126] Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 54.

[127] Yvan Guichaoua and Mathieu Pellerin, "Making Peace, Building the State; Relations between Central Government and the Sahelian Peripheries in Niger and Mali," Études (Paris, France: Institut de recherche stratégique de l'école militaire, March 2018), 47; Gillian Milovanovic, "Running on Fumes: Mali's Soldiers Exposed in the Desert," Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy (US Embassy Bamako, June 25, 2009), https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO415_a.html; Powelson, "Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No," 52.

- **CEMOC Coordination and Synchronization was not Successful**
  Despite the fact that there was a regional headquarters in Tamanrasset for information sharing and to assist in the planning of cross-border operations amongst the four partner nations, this effort did not succeed. Historical grievances amongst the partners prevented them from working together. Furthermore, each nation possessed varying levels of command and control over its own forces operating in the field.[128] Each nation possessed varying capabilities to identify, process, analyze, and distribute actionable intelligence. The idea, therefore, that information could have been shared with the CEMOC by the four countries and utilized by a higher regional headquarters sounds like a great idea on paper, but impossible in practice.

Successful effects of US CT Capacity Building efforts in Mali

US CT T&E efforts resulted in a number of successful outcomes:

- **The 33rd CFS Conducted Successful Offensive Operations Against Enemy Elements**
  The CFS displayed an operational record of successfully gaining control of contested terrain, collaborating with partner units, and coordinating air support for ground operations.

- **Focusing on Operational Capacity Succeeded in Intelligence, Logistics, and Communication Domains**
  The JPAT's movement of the 33rd CFS from Bamako to Tombouctou and from Bamako to Kidal: 1) helped develop the unit's expeditionary capability; 2) assisted in the development of the 33rd's CFS's strategic planning capability (developed the headquarters capability to battle track its subordinate unit, created an opportunity for a mini-JOC to be erected to track intelligence and maintain daily communications); 3) strengthened the 33rds CFS's ground mobility capability, and 4) demonstrated the unit's potential weakness in all of these domains to both the 33rd CFS leadership and SOF trainers.

[128] Interview with former US Ambassador to Mali, on July 3, 2019.

- **The Centre Operational Inter-Armée (COIA) was Operationalized and Contributed to the Streamlining of the Military Intelligence System**
  While gains were achieved initial gains in establishing and professionalizing the center and setting up the framework for a dedicated staff, the effort did not result in the intended effect of the staff being actively utilized to effectively collect, analyze, process, and action intelligence across the defense sector.

- **CA Increased Access, Relationships, and Information for US and Malian Forces**
  The FAMa CA officers learned how to conduct CA activities, and the positive influence CA had in building the FAMa's legitimacy in the eyes of local communities.

- **The Malian Air Force and the 33rd CFS Displayed Effective Air-to-Ground Integration on Multiple Occasions**
  In January and February 2012, over a variety of different occasions, the Malian Air Force demonstrated its ability to perform pre-strike reconnaissance, advanced air guidance (on-scene command) directing its Mi-35 assault helicopters, post-strike reconnaissance, tactical-level aerial resupply in combat, and MEDEVAC operations.

Recommendations for Improved CT Military Training and Equipping Programs

A number of recommendations are put forth in an effort to try to improve the effectiveness of CT military T&E programs.

DoD Workforce Needs an Understanding of "Very Low" and "Low" Capacity Defense Sectors

It is not helpful to grade African partners against US standards when it is currently unlikely that African partners will be able to conduct tasks to US standards in the next twenty years. Such indicators are, therefore, not realistic targets for the PN, and it is not an effective comparison. If we examine the rating scale from Chapter 5 – Mali Defense Sector Assessment, a spectrum exists of country capabilities for a range of capabilities from 1 (Very Low: Entirely Lacking), 2 (Low: Beginning to Develop), 3 (Neither Low nor High: Minimal but Functioning), 4 (High: Functional but Room for Improvement), to 5 (Very High: Strong and no Major Improvement Needed). For each capability that the US is trying to build, there should be indicators identified that characterize short-, medium-, and long-term change. For

the African continent, Program Managers at every point in the security cooperation enterprise need to become educated in what their PN's current status is. Indicators for achievement need to be appropriately scoped according to African growth curves, not US ones.

Incorporate Accountability and Incentivize PN Interest in Change

Security cooperation is about US interests. The entire purpose is to influence a PN's behavior. To have the best chance of getting what we want, the US needs something from its PNs. Thus far, the US has not had a clear awareness and process for identifying PN security interests as a part of the security cooperation design phase. Security Cooperation practitioners must identify what US interests are and what the PN's interests are to identify the overlap between the two. If an international donor is merely giving a PN what they want (CT T&E), the donor is losing any leverage they may have had at getting the PN to conduct necessary reforms. A balanced, carrot-and-stick approach is essential and necessary to be able to expect any real change and reform to possibly occur. The MCC has used an incentivized aid structure from which the defense sector should draw. The MCC delivers economic growth programs in countries that meet a range of governance and development benchmarks. The MCC funds two kinds of programs. The first are large, five-year investment "contracts" that typically cost several hundred million dollars and focus on key "constraints to growth" (infrastructure projects). The second are shorter-term "threshold programs" that assist countries with precursor reforms to make them eligible for the larger MCC "contracts." MCC programs are tied to critical policy and institutional reform, prioritizing country ownership, transparency, and measured results. Prospective countries are selected based on specific eligibility criteria, including the country's commitment to ruling justly, investing in its people, and economic freedom as measured by independent policy indicators.[129] These indicators are compiled into a public country scorecard that can be observed and compared year over year. Countries are ranked across a variety of categories and must show growth and improved indicators as precursors to receiving–and continuing to receive–funding. The

[129] Ruling Justly incorporates political rights, civil liberties, control of corruption, government effectiveness, rule of law, and freedom of information. Investing in People includes immunization rates, health expenditures, education expenditures, girls' education completion rate, child health, and natural resource protection. Encouraging Economic Freedom includes regulatory quality, land rights and access, access to credit, employment opportunity, trade policy, inflation, fiscal policy, and women in the economy.

defense sector should also be incentivizing growth. Agreed upon security governance criteria should be established that the PNs need to meet each year to qualify to receive ongoing funding.

Focus on the Operational Level so that Capacity can be Enabled

A new suite of US SC engagement tools needs to be created for the US to engage at the operational level. With training and equipping programs, someone needs to be working and integrated at the CHOD level to help integrate the efforts into the larger system. One former JSOTF-TS officer noted, "Any T&E approach needs to be tailored to how the PN operates. If you don't and [the concept] is not part of their idea, it just won't happen."[130] Whether the US is using BPC efforts for CT or great power competition purposes, examples of the most significant tactical gains in Mali were where operational-level engagement was solidified (CFS movement to Timbuktu, setting up and utilizing the COIA, the military intelligence system, logistics resupply, and COIA staffing).

Focus on Train the Trainer (TtT) Programs

Building the PN's indigenous training capacity should be a critical component of every tactical training program. An internal training cadre inculcates a critical understanding of and focus on the growth, education, and progress of effort within the partner nation. The creation of a training cadre also enables the training effort to continue if/when US teams are not in the country, increasing the return on investment. One area where this was successful in Mali was the US training of a Gendarmerie Nationale Crisis Response Platoon (Peleton d'Intervention de la Gendarmerie Nationale or PIGN). After the Radisson Blu terrorist attack in 2015, the US wanted to create a law enforcement unit capable of responding to a potential future terrorist incident in the capital.[131] Over three years, from 2016 to 2019, the State Department's Anti-Terrorism Assistance Program, in conjunction with the Bureau of Counterterrorism, trained 100 GN to an advanced level of crisis response team training.[132]

[130] Interview with former JSOTF-TS Officer (2007-2014), on November 7, 2024.

[131] U.S. Mission Mali, "U.S. Embassy Supports Mali's Crisis Response Team Program and National Security Fellowship," U.S. Embassy in Mali, June 27, 2016, https://ml.usembassy.gov/u-s-embassy-supports-malis-crisis-response-team-program-national-security-fellowship/.

[132] Interview with Mark Greneaux, PIGN Mali Program Manager (2016-2019) on October 16, 2018.

The unit demonstrated multiple clear, successful outcomes. First, the PIGN immediately showcased its capacity in responding to the terrorist attack at Hotel Kangaba in Bamako in June 2017, where the unit conducted a successful counterassault. The PIGN responded, assaulted the target, rendered medical aid to personnel, and cleared the target.[133] Second, the GN then utilized PIGN instructors to conduct pre-deployment training for over 1,000 regular GN officers deploying outside of Bamako in support of the larger GN mission over the next one to two years. Third, following the unit's Hotel response in 2017, the Ministry of Defense requested that the PIGN be allowed to deploy outside of Bamako. As a result, the Government of Mali approved a plan to expand the PIGN to the size of a battalion and renamed it the Groupement Special d'Intervention de la Gendarmerie Nationale.

The most critical enabler that contributed to the effort's success was the prioritizing of a TtT model from the start. Upon completion of the initial training course of 32 officers (Crisis Response Team training), the US training team identified the top 12 performers and groomed those soldiers with additional specialized training to become the program's first cadre of Malian instructors. US trainers then shifted into an advising role for these Malian instructors and monitored and oversaw the Malian training team's efforts, ensuring the training remained in line with program standards. The initial 12 instructors quickly turned around and generated 300 new Malian trainees over the course of three months. The construction of a US-funded PIGN training center in Bamako also contributed to the unit's rapid ability to train and generate new forces. This case study demonstrates the force multiplier effect that prioritizing a Train-the-Trainer program matched with a smart investment in training infrastructure can deliver.

Seek to Generate Regional Pride and Competitiveness

In Mauritania, US military CT BPC efforts supported the projection of the Mauritanian Armed Forces (MAF) airpower into potential terrorist operations areas. The US developed the MAF's ISR capability on its US-furnished airframes (Basler BT-67 and Cessna-208s),

[133] "ATA-Trained and -Mentored Malian Gendarmerie Neutralizes Hotel Terrorist Attack," *United States Department of State* (blog), accessed March 27, 2025, https://2021-2025.state.gov/antiterrorism-assistance-program-2017-text-version/.

and supported the creation of a national command center to manage real-time data collection on terrorist threats within Mauritania's geographic boundaries.[134] US CT programs enabled the Mauritanians to construct a forward operating base from which they were able to launch and conduct ISR missions and then transmit this data for real-time monitoring to their National Command Center in the capital of Nouakchott. These efforts increased the MAF's ability to conduct troop transport and ISR and extended the tactical and operational reach of air operations in support of CT operations in the sparse eastern desert. As a result, the Air Force was able to operate with few limitations, supporting the MAF and its CT forces against AQIM elements. The CT T&E program enabled the MAF to "secure their borders, locate border intrusions, and conduct operations against terrorist groups more effectively."[135] The success of this initiative was that it was an agreed-upon objective for both the US and the partner nation of Mauritania. This could have been used as an example to demonstrate to other PNs within the TSCTP region how a PN could extend the tactical and operational reach of air operations in support of CT operations. The TSCTP program should have capitalized on the success by inviting other TSCTP PN Air Force, intelligence officers, and other appropriate senior leadership to learn from Mauritania's success as a way of inspiring them and guiding them towards their own individual efforts in the same realm. Furthermore, this would have afforded the MAF and Air Force the opportunity to brief and present their capabilities to other regional PNs, which could have been a moment of real pride and accomplishment.

Standards and Expectations Need to be Adjusted to be Effective

Going hand-in-hand with establishing an effective monitoring and evaluation framework for CT T&E programming, pre-deployment briefings need to more definitively prepare SOF for the operating environment they are stepping into. When training, most ODAs evaluate the PN and compare it to the US. While on the one hand, this is understandable, as Simon Powelson adeptly points out, "the intent is not to radically supplant the existing system, but

[134] PM Bureau, "Mauritania Security Cooperation Assistance Report" (Washington, DC: Department of State, 2014).

[135] Office of the Secretary of Defense for Policy - African Affairs, "Summary Report: Mauritania" (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, January 2013). (Internal Government Document).

to enable the [existing] system to function more efficiently and effectively."[136] Security cooperation shouldn't focus on instituting the US way; it should be focused on how to improve and incentivize the PN to change where it can, and its internal system will allow. As Colonel (ret) Andrew Anderson stated, "If you think of the saying 'crawl, walk, run,' most African countries are in the rudimentary part of crawl."[137] One former JSOTF-TS Commander, MG (ret) Kurt Crytzer captured this beautifully, stating, "I liked to stress to my guys that this is Africa, if you go in too hard and too heavy, you're going to overwhelm the partner. You have to be content with small gains and slow progress. This is going to be something that is built over time. It is not going to be accomplished tomorrow."[138]

Generalizability and Predictive Value

The implications of this research extend well beyond Africa. It will contribute to policy debates on the effectiveness of foreign security assistance and provide insights into the unintended effects of military training programs. My findings generalize to fragile states that experience longstanding political, economic, and humanitarian upheaval. This includes hotspots such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Tunisia, Libya, Somalia, and Yemen, countries that suffer from poor governance, weak democratic institutions, and a blurred division of civil-military control. Temporally, this research is timely, falling just before the twenty-fifth anniversary of the 9/11 terror attacks and providing concrete analysis of US strategy, programs, and outcomes. As accurate data and analysis regarding US policies and programs are difficult to find outside of government, it will contribute to the historical record of the strategies, policies, and interventions of US counterterror assistance on the continent and globally. With this research, I aspire to set a precedent for collective learning and public transparency. I endeavor that my research contributes to the prediction of future outcomes of US military assistance in other counterterror and counterinsurgency contexts.

[136] Powelson, pg.57
[137] Interview with the former J3 of the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (2003-2005), on April 18, 2019.
[138] Interview with MG (Ret) Kurt Crytzer, former JSOTF-TS Commander (2009-2010) on December 3, 2024.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research has attempted to fill a critical gap, offering a qualitative study on US military CT T&E efforts working with a key CT partner in Africa. Whether the top US national security priority is Great Power Competition or the Global War on Terrorism, security cooperation and military T&E programs are valuable tools to engage PNs globally to try to affect their capacity in support of US national security objectives. Having access to definitive case studies enables critical reflection and learning. What has worked, what has not worked, and why are imperative questions researchers must always be asking to improve the effectiveness of US military T&E programs in the future.[139]

There are severe data limitations in access to funding levels. There is no single up-to-date USG repository maintained for all of the security sector funding data on a given country. Given that there are different 'pots' of money within each of the multiple federal agencies often involved, it is a challenging process to access this data. Such data would only be assembled by the USG at the country level if there was a request or official investigation (NSC, Congressional, GAO, or OIG). Each funding account has different obligations and expenditure constraints. Certain pots of money must be spent in one year or they go back to the treasury, and others have a longer timeline (333 has one year, PKO has nine years). Given these varying timelines for expenditure, accurate expenditure data is extremely difficult to obtain as it changes daily and becomes quickly obsolete. A further complication is that multiple pots of money are regionally allocated, and therefore it is almost impossible to identify how the funding breaks down on a national level. An example of this would be if TSCTP is implementing a regional logistics program, identifying either via contract or via AFRICOM how much was spent on Mali in particular, is extremely difficult. Another example is Exercise Flintlock, a regional exercise. DoD funding for this event covers both US and PN expenses. AFRICOM planners do not break down the cost by country. My approach in assessing rates of US CT program expenditures in Mali was to use publicly available data from the Security Assistance Monitor database and then to verify the different accounts and amounts with information I received in documents and interviews from current

[139] The author was working for the Africa Bureau Office of Regional Security Affairs when these re-programmings were conducted and is speaking from firsthand experience. There are no internal State Department documents to track the re-programming of these funds.

government officials. Based on my personal experience working on these accounts, I know that already by the time of this dissertation's publication, those figures will be out of date, but they represent the best attempt to capture US expenditures as of April 2025.

Two areas for potential future research include the connection between US T&E efforts in the Sahel and the prevalence of military coup d'états throughout the region. In the post-9/11 environment, the increase of US military cooperation and training programs with the PSI PNs signified a return to some Cold War security dynamics. Shortly after the PSI training began in March 2003, a military coup took place in Mauritania in August 2005. Motives for the coup included the deposed President Taya's security relationship with the US. As the country was placed on coup sanctions, the US decided to reprogram the majority of its CT T&E programs to Mali. In March 2012, Mali experienced a coup. The US re-programmed the majority of Mali's CT T&E to Niger. In July 2023, after a significant $110 million US investment into the construction of an air base in Agadez, Niger (Air Base 201), a strategic military installation operated by the US to enhance CT operations in the Sahel, particularly for ISR missions using MQ-9 Reaper drones, the majority of its CT T&E was reprogrammed to Cote d'Ivoire.[140] This history is concerning and warrants further analysis.

Conclusion

Mali is a Sahelian country characterized by lower levels of development and higher fragility than the global average. In the decade after 9/11, it became the epicenter of terrorism in North and West Africa and a regionally important CT partner for the US in Africa. US CT engagement did not lead to enhanced Malian military capacity and decreased incidents of terrorism. Instead, the influx of security assistance imbalanced local security dynamics and destabilized civil-military relations. If the US wants to build partner capacity in a PN ranking 'very low' on most security governance indicators, tactical military CT T&E will be a wasted BPC investment and could threaten to destabilize the PN government. The government will not be able to mobilize the

[140] Office of the Inspector General, "Evaluation of Niger Air Base 201 Military Construction" (Arlington, VA: Department of Defense, March 31, 2020), https://www.DoDig.mil/reports.html/Article/2134187/evaluation-of-niger-air-base-201-military-construction-DoDig-2020-077/https%3A%2F%2Fwww.DoDig.mil%2Freports.html%2FArticle%2F2134187%2Fevaluation-of-niger-air-base-201-military-construction-DoDig-2020-077%2F.

necessary operational support for its tactical units in the field, given greater defense sector weaknesses. Working with these PNs, the focus should be at the operational level to create the most valuable systems change. Lack of operational capacity is what stands in the way of the tactical level being effective in the first place. The US's decision in Mali to focus on longer-term defense sector institution building and developing accountability mechanisms for its post-2012 re-engagement was the right one. However, it demonstrated precisely the challenge of effecting positive change in the near term in these domains. However, as violence in Mali began to skyrocket in 2016, the US agreed to re-engage in Mali tactically. Against a backdrop of continued deep domestic dissatisfaction with government and frustration with the dire security situation, this return to a US CT T&E approach again contributed to the empowerment of the Malian military, who believed that they were the only ones who could stabilize the country. This directly contributed to Mali's coups in 2020 and 2021. One former JSOTF-TS Commander captured it beautifully, "If we're going to continue to prioritize security cooperation and building partner capacity, whether for counterterrorism, peacekeeping operations, or great power competition, let's not recreate the wheel and make the same mistakes. Let's use the lessons we have learned in the Sahel to improve on what's working and what's not."[141]

[141] Interview with former JSOTF-TS Commander (2009-2010) on December 3, 2024.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

10 U.S. Code - ch.1041, §1, 70A Stat.1 - Armed Forces, ch.1041, §1, 70A Stat.1 § (1956). https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title10&edition=prelim.

"10 USC 127e: Support of Special Operations to Combat Terrorism." Accessed April 8, 2025. https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=granuleid:USC-prelim-title10-section127e&num=0&edition=prelim.

818th MSAS. "Mali #18-21 Basler BT-67 Maintenance & Supply MTT AAR." US Air Force, March 27, 2018.

Abbas, Tehmina, Eva Anderson, Katherine Dixon, Hilary Hurd, and Gavin Raymond. "Regional Results Africa. Government Defence Anti-Corruption Index." Transparency International, January 2016. https://government.defenceindex.org/downloads/docs/GI-Africa-results-web.pdf.

Abramovici, Pierre. "Activisme Militaire de Washington En Afrique." *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Juillet 2004.

———. "Le cas du Mali." *Le Monde diplomatique*, Juillet 2004.

AFP. "Nord Du Mali: L'armée s'en va, Les Rebelles Touareg Entrent Dans Ménaka." JeuneAfrique.com. Accessed November 21, 2024. https://www.jeuneafrique.com/depeches/59463/politique/nord-du-mali-larmee-sen-va-les-rebelles-touareg-entrent-dans-menaka/.

"Africa and the War on Global Terrorism." House of Representatives: 107th Congress, November 15, 2001. http://commdocs.house.gov/committees/intlrel/hfa76191.000/hfa76191_0f.htm.

African Center for Strategic Studies. "The Complex and Growing Threat of Militant Islamist Groups in the Sahel." *Africa Center for Strategic Studies* (blog), February 15, 2019. https://africacenter.org/spotlight/the-complex-and-growing-threat-of-militant-islamist-groups-in-the-sahel/.

AFRICOM J5. "Mali Retrospective - Implications for Security Cooperation Paradigms and Strategy in Africa." Stuttgart, Germany: US Africa Command (AFRICOM), June 1, 2012.

Airborne & Special Operations Museum Foundation. "Task Force Ranger and the Battle of Mogadishu Exhibit," September 8, 2015. https://web.archive.org/web/20150908082526/http://www.asomf.org/2014/11/06/task-force-ranger-and-the-battle-of-mogadishu/.

Akanji, Olajide O. "Sub-Regional Security Challenge: ECOWAS and the War on Terrorism in West Africa." *Insight on Africa* 11, no. 1 (January 1, 2019): 94–112. https://doi.org/10.1177/0975087818805842.

Alakhbar. "Le Chef d'Etat Major Malien Parle de l'opération de Wagadou," juillet 2011. https://fr.alakhbar.info/269-0-Le-chef-dEtat-Major-malien-parle-de-loperation-de-Wagadou.html.

Alhousseini, Mohamed Ag. "Du conflit aux conflits, Kidal dans l'espoir d'une paix jamais retrouvée." Berlin, Germany: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Décembre 2016. https://sahelresearch.africa.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/170/AgAlhousseini_PolicyPaperKidal_janv2017-2.pdf.

"Alioune Blondin Beye Peacekeeping School." Accessed September 17, 2024. https://www.empbamako.org/en/school-mission/.

allafrica.com. “U.S. State Department Daily Press Briefing: Mali.” *allAfrica.Com*, January 31, 2013, Gale Academic OneFile.
Allemandou, Ségolène. “Is Qatar Fuelling the Crisis in North Mali?” France 24, January 23, 2013. https://www.france24.com/en/20130121-qatar-mali-france-ansar-dine-mnla-al-qaeda-sunni-islam-doha.
America’s Codebook: Africa. “Exercise Flintlock,” November 6, 2013. https://codebookafrica.wordpress.com/exercises/exercise-flintlock/.
Anders, Holger, Francesco Strazzari, Rafaâ Tabib, and Moncef Kartas. “Expanding Arsenals Insurgent Arms in Northern Mali.” In *Small Arms Survey 2015*, 156–85. Geneva: Small Arms Survey, 2015. https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/Small-Arms-Survey-2015-Chapter-06-EN.pdf.
Anderson, Jon R. “EUCOM-Based Troops Training Mali, Mauritania Militaries for Border Patrols.” Stars and Stripes, March 17, 2004. https://www.stripes.com/news/eucom-based-troops-training-mali-mauritania-militaries-for-border-patrols-1.17748.
Anderson, Lisa. “Democracy, Islam Share Home in Mali.” *Knight Ridder Tribune Business News*, December 15, 2004.
AP. “Turkey Announces $5m for Sahel Anti-Terrorist Force.” Gulf News, March 1, 2018. https://gulfnews.com/world/mena/turkey-announces-5m-for-sahel-anti-terrorist-force-1.2181246.
Arabia, Christina, and Colby Goodman. “Major Trends in U.S. Counterterrorism Aid FY 2015-19; Increased Focus on DoD, Africa, Border Security, and Countering Violent Extremism.” Security Assistance Monitor, n.d. https://securityassistance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Major-Trends-in-U.S.-Counterterrorism-Aid-FY-2015-19-1.pdf.
Arieff, Alexis. “Algeria and the Crisis in Mali,” July 19, 2012, 5.
———. “Algeria: Current Issues,” November 18, 2013. https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/RS21532.pdf.
Armstrong, Hannah. “Turkey in the Sahel.” International Crisis Group, July 27, 2021. https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/turkey-sahel.
Aron, Raymond. *Peace & War. A Theory of International Relations*. 1st ed. New Brunswick and London: Transaction Books, 2003.
“Assessing Developments in Mali: Restoring Democracy and Reclaiming the North.” Washington, DC, December 5, 2012. https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/120512_Transcript_Assessing%20Developments%20in%20Mali.pdf.
“Assessing Developments in Mali: Restoring Democracy and Reclaiming the North.” Committee on Foreign Relations, December 5, 2012. https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-112shrg79799/html/CHRG-112shrg79799.htm.
Atong, Kennedy, Emmanuel Mayah, and Akhator Odigie. “African Labour Migration to the GCC States: The Case of Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda.” African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-AFRICA), 2018.
“Audit of the Department of State Bureau of African Affairs Monitoring and Coordination of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership Program.” Washington, DC: US Department of State, September 2020. https://www.stateoig.gov/uploads/report/report_pdf_file/aud-mero-20-42_1.pdf.
Ayissi, Anatole, and Nouhoum Sangaré, eds. “Mali.” In *Budgeting for the Military Sector in Africa: The Processes and Mechanisms of Control*, 122–36. Oxford: Oxford University

Press, 2006. https://sipri.org/sites/default/files/files/books/SIPRI06OmHu/SIPRI06OmHu.pdf.
Badiane, Ousmane, and Tsitsi Makombe. “Agriculture, Growth, and Development in Africa: Theory and Practice,” November 3, 2014, 307–24.
Bagayoko, Niagale. “Le Processus de réforme du secteur de la sécurité au Mali.” Québec, Canada: Centre FrancoPaix en résolution des conflits et missions de paix, fevrier 2018. https://dandurand.uqam.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/2018_02_Rapport-Bagayoko_CFP.pdf.
Barea, Juan Carlos Castilla. “The Malian Armed Forces and the Future of EUTM.” Institute Espagnol de Estudios Estrategicos, October 7, 2013. https://www.academia.edu/6881400/THE_MALIAN_ARMED_FORCES_REFORM_AND_THE_FUTURE_OF_EUTM.
Barlerin, Peter. “Licking Its Wounds: Mali Regroups, Hostage Released.” Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy. Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, July 14, 2009. https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO460_a.html.
Barrios, Cristina. “Security Provision and Counterterrorism in the Sahel.” In *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel*, by Cristina Barrios, 438–58. edited by Leonardo A. Villalón. Oxford University Press, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198816959.013.28.
Bartell, Rich. “Intelligence Course in Bamako, Mali, Fosters Cooperation Among West African Neighbors.” www.army.mil, April 20, 2011. https://www.army.mil/article/55219/intelligence_course_in_bamako_mali_fosters_cooperation_among_west_african_neighbors.
Barth, Mustafa. “Sand Castles in the Sahara: US Military Basing in Algeria.” *Review of African Political Economy* 30, no. 98 (2003): 679–85.
Bates, Robert H. *When Things Fell Apart; State Failure in Late-Century Africa*. Harvard University, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 2012. https://www-cambridge-org.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/core/books/when-things-fell-apart/AFC9C7AE3AF742A5C5ECEF95EC72E77C.
BBC News. “UN’s MINUSMA Troops ‘Sexually Assaulted Mali Woman.’” September 26, 2013, sec. Africa. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-24272839.
Belida, Alex. “Pentagon/Pan-Sahel.” *Voice of America*, November 14, 2003. https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2003/11/mil-031114-2fe6bfc0.htm.
Ben Khalid, Kal. “Evolving Approaches in Algerian Security Cooperation.” *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*, June 29, 2015, 15–20.
Benjaminsen, Tor A. “Climate Change and Human Conflict in the Sahel.” In *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel*, 269–85. Oxford Handbooks. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2021. https://academic.oup.com/edited-volume/37091/chapter/323203902.
Bergamaschi, Isaline. “Analyzing the Politics of Aid and Poverty Reduction in Africa: A Conceptual Proposal and the Case of Mali.” Global Cooperation Research Papers. Kiel, Germany: Centre for Global Cooperation Research, 2016. http://www.gcr21.org/publications/research-papers/2198-0411-gcrp-16/.
———. “Mali: How to Avoid Making the Same Mistakes.” *Africa In Fact*, April 1, 2015, sec. News. https://allafrica.com/stories/201304051114.html.

———. “The Fall of a Donor Darling: The Role of Aid in Mali’s Crisis.” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 52, no. 3 (September 2014): 347–78. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X14000251.
———. “The Political Economy of Aid in the Sahel.” In *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel*, by Isaline Bergamaschi, 346–62. edited by Leonardo A. Villalón. Oxford University Press, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198816959.013.20.
Berghezan, Georges. “La Corruption, au coeur de l’effondrement de l’état malien.” In *Sahel : éclairer le passé pour mieux dessiner l’avenir*, edited by Rouppert Bérangère, 40–60, 2013.
“Berlin West Africa Conference | Colonialism, Imperialism, Decolonization | Britannica.” Accessed January 10, 2024. https://www.britannica.com/event/Berlin-West-Africa-Conference.
Bilgin, Pinar, and Adam David Morton. “Historicising Representations of ‘Failed States’: Beyond the Cold-War Annexation of the Social Sciences?” *Third World Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (February 1, 2002): 55–80. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590220108172.
Bing. “Général de Division Gabriel Poudiougou.” Accessed March 20, 2025. https://www.bing.com/images/search?view=detailV2&ccid=wm%2BM0GFA&id=137C726B5BB99C4A42AEC8044C988D9D7D0B0C6B&thid=OIP.wm-M0GFAqes-8IsMrHsv6gHaHa&mediaurl=https%3A%2F%2Fi1.sndcdn.com%2Fartworks-000350797917-xhn9ip-t500x500.jpg&cdnurl=https%3A%2F%2Fth.bing.com%2Fth%2Fid%2FR.c26f8cd06140a9eb3ef08b0cac7b2fea%3Frik%3DawwLfZ2NmEwEyA%26pid%3DImgRaw%26r%3D0&exph=500&expw=500&q=général+de+division+gabriel+poudiougou&simid=608052144659042881&form=IRPRST&ck=49C323811731E3C8CF494F7C03C8692E&selectedindex=0&itb=0&ajaxhist=0&ajaxserp=0&vt=2&sim=15,0&ajaxhist=0&ajaxserp=0.
Blumenfeld, Max R. “Training in Trans-Sahara Africa,” December 13, 2010. https://www.africom.mil/Story/7896/training-in-trans-sahara-africa.
Blundo, Giorgio. “Corruption and The State in the Sahel.” In *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel*, by Giorgio Blundo, 362–80. edited by Leonardo A. Villalón. Oxford University Press, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198816959.013.21.
Bøås, Morten. “Rival Priorities in the Sahel - Finding the Balance between Security and Development.” Nordic Africa Institute, April 2018. https://reliefweb.int/report/mali/rival-priorities-sahel-finding-balance-between-security-and-development-policy-note-no.
Bøås, Morten, and Liv Elin Torheim. “The Trouble in Mali—Corruption, Collusion, Resistance.” *Third World Quarterly* 34, no. 7 (August 1, 2013): 1279–92. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2013.824647.
Bodian, Mamadou, and Leonardo A. Villalón. “The Democratic Struggle in the Sahel.” In *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel*, by Mamadou Bodian and Leonardo A. Villalón, 386–404. edited by Leonardo A. Villalón. Oxford University Press, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198816959.013.24.
Boeke, Sergei. “Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb: Terrorism, Insurgency, or Organized Crime?” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 27, no. 5 (September 2, 2016): 914–36. https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2016.1208280.
Boeke, Sergei, and Bart Schuurman. “Operation ‘Serval’: A Strategic Analysis of the French Intervention in Mali, 2013–2014.” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 38, no. 6 (September 19, 2015): 801–25. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2015.1045494.

———. “Operation Serval: The French Intervention in Mali.” Leiden Security and Global Affairs Blog, July 28, 2015. https://www.leidensecurityandglobalaffairs.nl/articles/operation-serval-the-french-intervention-in-mali.
Bogaards, Matthijs. “How to Classify Hybrid Regimes? Defective Democracy and Electoral Authoritarianism.” *Democratization* 16, no. 2 (April 2009): 399–423. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510340902777800.
Boisvert, Marc-André. “Forces Armées Maliennes, Une Lente Reconstruction.” *Afrique Contemporaine* 4, no. 260 (2016): 87–90.
———. “The Malian Armed Forces and Its Discontents: Civil-Military Relations, Cohesion and the Resilience of a Postcolonial Military Institution in the Aftermath of the 2012 Crisis.” University of East Anglia, 2019. https://core.ac.uk/download/346617610.pdf.
Botha, Anneli. “Terrorism in Algeria.” In *Terrorism in the Maghreb; the Transnationalisation of Domestic Terrorism*. ISS Monograph Series 144, 2008.
Boubekeur, Amel. “Salafism and Radical Politics in Postconflict Algeria,” n.d.
Boukhars, Anouar. “Reassessing the Power of Regional Security Providers: The Case of Algeria and Morocco.” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Accessed March 4, 2024. https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/02/27/reassessing-power-of-regional-security-providers-case-of-algeria-and-morocco-pub-78482.
———. “The Paradox of Modern Jihadi Insurgencies: The Case of the Sahel and Maghreb.” Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, July 15, 2018. https://www.academia.edu/37087068/The_Paradox_of_Modern_Jihadi_Insurgencies_The_Case_of_the_Sahel_and_Maghreb_July_2018_.
———. “The Paranoid Neighbor; Algeria and the Conflict in Mali.” Washington, DC: The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 2012. https://carnegieendowment.org/2012/10/22/paranoid-neighbor-algeria-and-conflict-in-mali-pub-49756.
Boukhars, Anouar, and Frederic Wehrey. “Conclusion - Perilous Desert; Insecurity in the Sahara.” In *Perilous Desert*, edited by Frederic Wehrey and Anouar Boukhars, 185–96. Insecurity in the Sahara. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2013. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt6wpjcm.12.
Boyer, Florence, and David Lessault. “Urbanization and The Dynamics of Change in the Sahel.” In *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel*, by Florence Boyer and David Lessault, 708–28. edited by Leonardo A. Villalón. Oxford University Press, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198816959.013.41.
Bratton, Michael, and Nicholas Van De Walle. “Africa’s Divergent Transitions, 1990-94.” In *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective*, 1st ed., 97–127. Cambridge University Press, 1997. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139174657.
———. “Neopatrimonial Rule in Africa.” In *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective*, 1st ed., 61–96. Cambridge University Press, 1997. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139174657.
Brenner, Louis. *Controlling Knowledge: Religion, Power, and Schooling in a West African Muslim Society*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2001. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb02567.0001.001.

Briscoe, Ivan. “Crime after Jihad: Armed Groups, the State and Illicit Business in Post-Conflict Mali.” Clingendael, May 2014. https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.1951.3206.

Brooks, Drew. “3rd Special Forces Group ‘All In’ on Africa Mission.” The Fayetteville Observer, July 8, 2017. https://www.fayobserver.com/story/news/military/2017/07/08/3rd-special-forces-group-all-in-on-africa-mission/20298830007/.

Brzoska, Michael. “Chapter 3 World Military Expenditures.” In *Handbook of Defense Economics*, 1:45–67. Elsevier, 1995. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1574-0013(05)80005-5.

Bureau du vérificateur général. “Bureau Du Vérificateur Général.” Accessed November 8, 2024. https://koulouba.ml/autorites-independantes/le-verificateur-general/#:~:text=LE%20V%C3%89RIFICATEUR%20G%C3%89N%C3%89RAL%20EST%20INSTITU%C3%89,programmes%20et%20projets%20de%20d%C3%A9veloppement.

Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. “International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 2013.” Washington, DC: US Department of State, June 2013. https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/211396.pdf.

Bureau of Counterterrorism. “Mali Country Report on Terrorism 2012.” Washington, DC: US Department of State, May 30, 2013. https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2012/209979.htm.

———. “Mali Country Report on Terrorism 2013.” Washington, DC: US Department of State, April 2014. https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/225886.pdf.

Bush, George W. “Executive Order 13224: Blocking Property and Prohibiting Transactions With Persons Who Commit, Threaten To Commit, or Support Terrorism.” *United States Department of State* 66, no. 186 (September 25, 2001): 49079–83.

Bush, George W. “President Bush Delivers Graduation Speech at West Point.” Speech, West Point, NY, June 1, 2002. https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020601-3.html.

Bush, George W. “President: Today We Mourned, Tomorrow We Work.” The White House, September 16, 2001. https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010916-2.html.

Bush, George W. “Transcript of President Bush’s Address.” CNN, September 21, 2001. https://edition.cnn.com/2001/US/09/20/gen.bush.transcript/.

Byman, Daniel. “Counterterrorism Strategies.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Terrorism*, edited by Erica Chenoweth, Richard English, Andreas Gofas, and Stathis N. Kalyvas, 0. Oxford University Press, 2019. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198732914.013.35.

Byrne. “Mali Input for FY 1980 Security Assistance Program.” Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy. US Embassy Bamako, December 12, 1978. https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1978BAMAKO05977_d.html.

Cabestan, Jean-Pierre. “China’s Evolving Role as a U.N. Peacekeeper in Mali.” United States Institute of Peace, September 26, 2018. https://www.usip.org/publications/2018/09/chinas-evolving-role-un-peacekeeper-mali.

Callaghan, Jean, and Franz Kernic. *Armed Forces and International Security*. Münster: Lit Verlag, 2003.

Caparini, Marina. “DDR and SSR Challenges in Mali.” NUPI Working Paper. Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2015. http://www.ssrn.com/abstract=2670212.

———. “The Mali Crisis and Responses by Regional Actors.” Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, September 28, 2015. https://nupi.brage.unit.no/nupi-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/302501/NUPI_WP_849%2bMarina%2bCaparini.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y.
Carayol, Rémi. “Au Sahel, les massacres s’amplifient malgré le Covid-19.” Orient XXI, April 28, 2020. https://orientxxi.info/magazine/au-sahel-les-massacres-s-amplifient-malgre-le-covid-19,3830.
———. “Guerre au Mali : la Misma, faible force.” *JeuneAfrique.com*, avril 2013. https://www.jeuneafrique.com/137695/politique/guerre-au-mali-la-misma-faible-force/.
Carter, Gwendolen Margaret, ed. *African Independence: The First 25 Years*. A Midland Book 348. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Pr, 1986.
“Cellule Nationale De Traitement Des Informations Financieres (CENTIF).” Accessed November 6, 2024. https://centif.ml/.
Center for Army Lessons Learned. “Military Decisionmaking Process (MDMP) Lessons and Best Practices.” Center for Army Lessons Learned, March 2015. https://usacac.army.mil/sites/default/files/publications/15-06_0.pdf.
Center for International Policy. “Security Assistance Database.” Security Assistance Monitor, November 2, 2021. https://internationalpolicy.org/programs/sam/.
“Centre de Doctrine et d’emploi Des Forces, Doctrine d’emploi Des Forces Terrestres En Zones Désertique et Semi-Désertique.” Édition provisoire. Paris, France: Armée de Terre, 2013. https://bibliotheques-numeriques.defense.gouv.fr/document/7af4bee4-5d52-4797-a848-99bc08856cef.
“Cessna Aircraft.” Accessed November 15, 2024. https://cessna.txtav.com/.
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. “National Military Strategy 2004,” 2004. https://www.bits.de/NRANEU/others/strategy/NMS04.pdf.
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS). “Special Operations.” JP 3-05. Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), July 16, 2014. https://irp.fas.org/doddir/dod/jp3_05.pdf.
Chaney, Andrus W. “Understanding French Defense Cooperation in Africa.” Substack newsletter. *FAO Journal of International Affairs* (blog), February 19, 2021. https://faoajournal.substack.com/p/understanding-french-defense-cooperation.
Charbonneau, Bruno, and Jonathan M. Sears. “Fighting for Liberal Peace in Mali? The Limits of International Military Intervention.” *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 8, no. 2–3 (July 3, 2014): 192–213. https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2014.930221.
Châtelot, Christophe. “Les trois plaies du Mali.” *Le Monde*, février 2013. https://www.pressegauche.org/Les-trois-plaies-du-Mali.
———. “Opération « Serval » et les trois plaies du Mali.” *Le Monde*, février 2013. https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2013/02/01/les-trois-plaies-du-mali_1826060_3210.html.
Cheeseman, Nic. *Democracy in Africa: Successes, Failures, and the Struggle for Political Reform*. New Approaches to African History. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139030892.
———, ed. *Institutions and Democracy in Africa: How the Rules of the Game Shape Political Developments*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316562888.

Cherbib, Hamza. “Jihadism in the Sahel: Exploiting Local Disorders.” European Institute of the Mediterranean. Accessed February 9, 2024. https://www.iemed.org/publication/jihadism-in-the-sahel-exploiting-local-disorders/.
Chivvis, Christopher S., and Andrew Liepman. “North Africa’s Menace: AQIM’s Evolution and the U.S. Policy Response.” Washington, DC: RAND Corporation, September 9, 2013. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR415.html.
Clark, John F. “The Decline of the African Military Coup.” *Journal of Democracy* 18, no. 3 (July 2007): 141-145,147-155. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2007.0044.
Clarke, Colin P., Raphael Parens, Christopher Faulkner, and Kendal Wolf. “Is Wagner Pivoting Back to Africa?” *Foreign Affairs*, November 5, 2023. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/africa/ukraine-wagner-pivoting-back-africa.
“Concept d’emploi des forces.” Bamako, Mali: État-Major General Des Armées, July 18, 2014.
“Congressional Budget Justification Foreign Operations Appendix FY2015.” Washington, DC: Department of State, FY 2015. https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/224069.pdf.
“Congressional Budget Justification FY2007,” n.d.
Congressional Research Service. “Foreign Assistance Act of 1961: Authorizations and Corresponding Appropriations,” April 18, 2012. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20120418_R40089_3d9b02e6f261c2556d164c1e424964ece793ea7a.pdf.
Constitute. “Mali 1992 Constitution.” Accessed September 13, 2024. https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Mali_1992.
“Convention Portant Creation du G5 Sahel,” June 2, 2017. https://web.archive.org/web/20170602170931/http://www.g5sahel.org/images/convention.pdf.
Cooper, Barbara M. *Evangelical Christians in the Muslim Sahel*. Indiana University Press, 2006. https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/stable/j.ctvswx7xc.
Corruption Perceptions Index 2003. Accessed December 19, 2024. http://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2003.
Coulibaly, Chéibane, J Tyler Dickovick, and James T Thomson. “Comparative Assessment for Decentralization in Africa: Mali In-Country Assessment Report.” Washington, DC: US Agency for International Development, September 2010. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADX218.pdf.
“Council Decision 2014/219/CFSP of 15 April 2014 on the European Union CSDP Mission in Mali (EUCAP Sahel Mali).” Brussels, Belgium, April 15, 2014. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:02014D0219-20150115.
“Counterterrorism: DOD Should Fully Address Security Assistance Planning Elements in Global Train and Equip Project Proposals,” May 2018. https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-18-449.pdf.
“Country Reports on Terrorism 2009.” Washington, DC: US Department of State, August 5, 2010. //2009-2017.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2009/140883.htm.
Cristiani, Dario. “Ten Years of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb: Evolution and Prospects.” *Jamestown* 15, no. 9 (May 5, 2016): 8–11.
Cronin, Audrey Kurth. “How Al-Qaida Ends: The Decline and Demise of Terrorist Groups.” *International Security* 31, no. 1 (2006): 7–48.

———. “How and Why Do Terrorist Campaigns End?” In *Illusions of Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism*, edited by Richard English, 0. British Academy, 2015. https://doi.org/10.5871/bacad/9780197265901.003.0007.
———. *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.
Cronin, Audrey Kurth, James M. Ludes, and Georgetown University. Center for Peace and Security Studies. *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2004. http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/toc/ecip048/2003019462.html.
Crowder, Michael. “History of French West Africa until Independence.” In *Africa South of the Sahara*, 77–80. Europa Publications, 1991. https://illiad.library.tufts.edu/illiad/TFF/illiad.dll?Action=10&Form=75&Value=939204.
Cunningham, Anna. “Death of Kirk Woodman Highlights Growing Instability in Sahel Region of West Africa.” *CBC News*, January 17, 2019. https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/burkina-faso-kirk-woodman-jihad-west-africa-1.4982262.
DAI. “Trans-Sahara Security Symposium (TSS),” 2012. https://www.dai.com/our-work/projects/africa-trans-sahara-security-symposium-tss.
DAI Publications. “Linking Soldiers, Civilians Across West-Central Africa to Increase Stability, Security,” 2012. https://dai-global-developments.com/articles/linking-soldiers-civilians-across-west-central-africa-to-increase-stability-security/.
Daly, Sarah. “Russia’s Influence in Africa, a Security Perspective.” Washington, DC: The Atlantic Council, February 23, 2023. https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/russias-influence-in-africa-a-security-perspective/.
Decree no. 98-285/P/PRM (1998).
Decret N99365/P-RM: Fixant l’organisation et les attributeions de l’armee de terre et de l’air, Pub. L. No. Exec. Order No. 365-366/P-RM (1999), 1309 (1999). https://sgg-mali.ml/JO/1999/mali-jo-1999-33.pdf.
defenceWeb. “Burkina Faso,” February 8, 2013. https://www.defenceweb.co.za/security/african-militaries/burkina-faso/.
“Defense Security Assistance Agency (DSAA).” Department of Defense Directive. Arlington, VA: Department of Defense, August 11, 1971.
Delville, Philippe Lavigne. “La Réforme Foncière Rurale Au Bénin: Émergence Et Mise En Question D’une Politique Instituante Dans Un Pays Sous Régime D’aide.” *Revue Française de Science Politique* 60, no. 3 (2010): 467–91.
Denoeux, Guilain. “The Forgotten Swamp: Navigating Political Islam.” *Middle East Policy* 9, no. 2 (June 2002): 56–81. https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-4967.00057.
Department of Defense. “2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Report.” Department of Defense, February 6, 2006. https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/quadrennial/QDR2006.pdf?ver=2014-06-25-111017-150.
Department of State, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs. “Report to Congress: Section 1206(f) of the 2006 National Defense Authorization Act.” Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, July 3, 2007. https://2001-2009.state.gov/t/pm/rls/rpt/spec/90867.htm.
Department Of State. The Office of Electronic Information, Bureau of Public Affairs. “Pan Sahel Initiative.” Department Of State. The Office of Electronic Information, Bureau of Public Affairs., November 7, 2002. https://2001-2009.state.gov/s/ct/rls/other/14987.htm.

Diakité, Oumar. “Nord-Mali : Iyad Ag Ghaly Rencontre Sa Base à Gao.” Maliweb.net, May 11, 2012. http://www.maliweb.net/news/armee/2012/05/11/article,65846.html.
Diallo, Tiemoko. “Tuareg Rebels in Mali Besiege Northern Garrison.” *Reuters*, September 14, 2007, sec. D. https://www.reuters.com/article/economy/tuareg-rebels-in-mali-besiege-northern-garrison-idUSL14849848/.
———. “U.S. Cargo Plane Hit by Rebel Gunfire in Mali, Officials Say.” *Washington Post*, September 14, 2007. https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/national/2007/09/14/us-cargo-plane-hit-by-rebel-gunfire-in-mali-officials-say/5bfafbfe-057e-432e-8691-fbbbf280c380/.
Diarra, Adama. “Lutte Contre Le Terrorisme : Le CEMOC Explore Les Possibilités de Coopération.” Maliweb, May 6, 2016. https://site.maliweb.net/lutte-contre-terrorisme-cemoc-explore-possibilites-de-cooperation-1569122.html.
Diarrah, Séga. “Raid anti-Aqmi dimanche de l’aviation mauritanienne au Mali.” Mali Actu, March 12, 2012. https://maliactu.net/raid-anti-aqmi-dimanche-de-laviation-mauritanienne-au-mali/.
Directorate of History, National Defense Headquarters. “Fieldcraft and Battle Drill.” *Instructors’ Handbook on Fieldcraft and Battle Drill)* (Ottawa, Canada) (n.d.): 16.
“DODI Section 2822 Global Train-and-Equip Authority.” DOD Instruction. Department of Defense, May 8, 2017. https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodi/511119p.pdf?ver=2019-02-13-092715-593.
Donelli, Federico. “Turkey’s Way for Development.” In *Turkey in Africa: Turkey’s Strategic Involvement in Sub-Saharan Africa*, First., 99–129. London, 2021. http://www.bloomsburycollections.com/collections/monograph-detail.
Doukhan, David. “The End of Operation Barkhane.” International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, November 27, 2022. https://ict.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Doukhan_End-of-Operation-Barkhane_2022_11_27.pdf.
Dowd, Caitriona. “Cultural and Religious Demography and Violent Islamist Groups in Africa.” *Political Geography* 45 (March 1, 2015): 11–21. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2014.09.006.
———. “Grievances, Governance and Islamist Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa.” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 53, no. 4 (December 2015): 505–31. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X15000737.
Dubruelh, Camille. “Nord-Mali : Des Rebelles Touaregs Attaquent Ménaka.” JeuneAfrique.com, January 17, 2012. https://www.jeuneafrique.com/177703/politique/nord-mali-des-rebelles-touaregs-attaquent-m-naka/.
Duchâtel, Mathieu, Richard Gowan, and Manuel Lafont Rapnouil. “Into Africa: China’s Global Security Shift.” Policy Brief. Brussels, Belgium: European Council on Foreign Relations, 2016.
Dufka, Corinne. “‘How Much More Blood Must Be Spilled?’” *Human Rights Watch*, February 10, 2020. https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/mali0220_web.pdf.
Duzor, Megan, and Brian Williamson. “By The Numbers: Coups in Africa.” *Voice of America*, October 3, 2023. https://projects.voanews.com/african-coups/.
Ebo, Adedeji, and Boubacar N’Diaye. “Mali.” In *Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Sector in West Africa*, 159–76. Geneva, Switzerland: Democratic Control of the Armed Forces (DCAF), 2008.

"Ecological Threat Register 2020: Understanding Ecological Threats, Resilience and Peace." Sydney, Australia: Institute for Economics & Peace, September 2020. https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/ETR_2020_web-1.pdf.

Economist. "The West's New Front against Jihadism Is in the Sahel." *The Economist*, May 2, 2019. https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2019/05/02/the-wests-new-front-against-jihadism-is-in-the-sahel.

Editor. "Pan Sahel Initiative (PSI)." Globalsecurity.org. Accessed November 4, 2021. https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/pan-sahel.htm.

Eizenga, Daniel. "Long Term Trends Across Security and Development in the Sahel." West African Papers. Vol. 25. West African Papers, September 2019. https://doi.org/10.1787/630477ee-en.

Elischer, Sebastian. "Militaries in Sahelian Politics." In *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel*, by Sebastian Elischer, 422–38. edited by Leonardo A. Villalón. Oxford University Press, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198816959.013.27.

Ellis, Stephen. "Briefing: The Pan-Sahel Initiative." *African Affairs* 103, no. 412 (July 1, 2004): 459–64. https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adh067.

Epstein, Susan B. "Foreign Relations Authorization, FY2006 and FY2007: An Overview." Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, September 15, 2005. https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RL/RL33000.

Epstein, Susan B, and Liana W Rosen. "U.S. Security Assistance and Security Cooperation Programs: Overview of Funding Trends." *R45091*, February 1, 2018, 31.

———. "U.S. Security Assistance and Security Cooperation Programs: Overview of Funding Trends." Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, February 1, 2018. https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R45091.

Esposito, John L., and Mariam Popal. "The Oxford Dictionary of Islam." *Islam* 85, no. 2 (2008): 433–34.

EUCAP Sahel Mali - Press and Information Team. "EUCAP Sahel Mali Celebrated Its 10th Anniversary of Commitment and Support to Mali." European Union External Action, January 27, 2025. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eucap-sahel-mali-celebrated-its-10th-anniversary-commitment-and-support-mali_en.

"Examining U.S. Counterterrorism Priorities and Strategies Across Africa's Sahel Region." Washington, DC, November 17, 2009. https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/GuteliusTestimony091117a1.pdf.

Faint, Charles, and Michael Harris. "F3EAD: Ops/Intel Fusion 'Feeds' the SOF Targeting Process." *Small Wars Journal*, January 31, 2012. https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/f3ead-opsintel-fusion-%E2%80%9Cfeeds%E2%80%9D-the-sof-targeting-process.

Farrell, William B, and Carla M Komich. "USAID/DCHA/CMM Assessment: Northern Mali." Washington, DC: US Agency for International Development, June 17, 2004. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADC966.pdf.

Federal Bureau of Investigation. "East African Embassy Bombings." Page. Federal Bureau of Investigation. Accessed November 4, 2021. https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/east-african-embassy-bombings.

Fisher-Thompson, Jim. "U.S.-African Partnership Helps Counter Terrorists in Sahel Region." *Washington File*, March 23, 2004.

https://web.archive.org/web/20101128162453/http://www.america.gov/st/washfile-english/2004/March/20040323170343r1EJrehsiF0.1366693.html.
"Fragile States Index 2023." Washington, DC: Thr Fund for Peace, n.d. https://fragilestatesindex.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/FSI-2023-Report_final.pdf.
France 24. "S. Arabia Pledges $100 Million and UAE $30 Million for Sahel Anti-Terror Force," December 13, 2017. https://www.france24.com/en/20171213-africa-counter-terrorism-sahel-saudi-arabia-pledges-100-million-uae-g5-macron.
Friend, Alice Hunt. "DoD's Report on the Investigation into the 2017 Ambush in Niger." *Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)*, May 15, 2018. https://www.csis.org/analysis/dods-report-investigation-2017-ambush-niger.
Frintz, Anne. "Drugs: The New Alternative Economy of West Africa." *Le Monde Diplomatique*, fevrier 2013. https://mondediplo-com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/2013/02/03drugs.
Furst, Henrik, and Gerhard Kummel. *Core Values and the Expeditionary Mindset: Armed Forces in Metamorphosis*. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2011.
Galy, Michel. *La guerre au Mali*. La Decouverte, 2013.
Garamone, Jim. "Flintlock Trains Africans to Handle Defense." *Tip of the Spear*, September 2005, 8–9.
Gast, Earl. "Mali: Current Threats to Development Gains and the Way Forward." *Hampton Roads International Security Quarterly*, January 1, 2013, 118.
Gates, Robert M. "Helping Others Defend Themselves." *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 3 (June 2010): 4.
Gellar, Sheldon. "Varieties of Religious Doctrines and Institutions in Africa and Their Impact on Democratization Processes." Presented at the International Conference on Religious Ideas and Institutions and Transitions to Demcoracy in Africa, Los Angeles, CA, May 18, 2007. https://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/dlc/bitstream/handle/10535/4171/W07-9_Gellar_DLC.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.
Gentile, Gian P. *Wrong Turn: America's Deadly Embrace of Counterinsurgency*. New York: The New Press, 2013.
"Global Terrorism Index 2022; Measuring the Impact of Terrorism." Institute for Economics & Peace, March 2022. https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/GTI-2022-web-04112022.pdf.
Goita, Youssouf. "Establishment of the Joint Task Force on Intelligence." Forces armées Maliennes, July 19, 2011.
Goldfein, David L. *Joint Publication 3-09.3 Close Air Support*. Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2014. https://irp.fas.org/doddir/dod/jp3_09_3.pdf.
Government Accountability Office. "Combating Terrorism: Actions Needed to Enhance Implementation of Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership," July 31, 2008. https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-08-860.
———. "Combating Terrorism: U.S. Efforts in Northwest Africa Would Be Strengthened by Enhanced Program Management," June 2014. https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-14-518.pdf.
———. "Defense Management: Improved Planning, Training, and Interagency Collaboration Could Strengthen DOD's Efforts in Africa," July 28, 2010. https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-10-794.pdf.

———. “SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES; Better Data Necessary to Improve Oversight and Address Command and Control Challenges.” Government Accountability Office, October 2022. gao.gov/assets/730/723204.pdf.
Grez, Christopher R. “Modernizing Army Special Operations Civil Affairs for Strategic Competition.” Civil Affairs Association, December 4, 2022. https://www.civilaffairsassoc.org/post/modernizing-army-special-operations-civil-affairs-for-strategic-competition.
Groga-Bada, Malika, and Baba Ahmed. “Rébellion Touarègue : Gao, QG de l’armée et Dernier Rempart Avant Les Combats Au Nord-Mali.” JeuneAfrique.com, March 27, 2012. https://www.jeuneafrique.com/142365/politique/r-bellion-touar-gue-gao-qg-de-l-arm-e-et-dernier-rempart-avant-les-combats-au-nord-mali/.
Guichaoua, Yvan, and Mathieu Pellerin. “Making Peace, Building the State; Relations between Central Government and the Sahelian Peripheries in Niger and Mali.” Études. Paris, France: Institut de recherche stratégique de l’école militaire, March 2018.
Gutelius, David. “Islam in Northern Mali and the War on Terror.” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 25, no. 1 (October 25, 2007): 59–76.
Hamre, John J. “Redesignation of the Defense Security Assistance Agency as the Defense Security Cooperation Agency,” October 11, 2014. https://web.archive.org/web/20141011063938/http://www.defense.gov/dodreform/drids/drid40.html.
Headquarters, Department of the Army. “Mission Training Plan for the Infantry Rifle Platoon and Squad.” Training Manual, September 29, 1994. https://mcoecbamcoepwprd01.blob.core.usgovcloudapi.net/library/ArmyPubs/ARTEPs/ARTEP%207-8-MTP%20Sept%201994.pdf.
Heiran-Nia, Javad, and Somayeh Khomarbaghi. “Saudi Arabia and Iran Compete in the Sahel,” February 8, 2018. https://lobelog.com/saudi-arabia-and-iran-compete-in-the-sahel/.
Herbst, Jeffrey. “Chiefs, States, and the Land.” In *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*, 2nd ed., 173–97. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000.
———. “The Challenge of State-Building in Africa.” In *States and Power in Africa*, REV-Revised, 2., 149:11–32. Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control - Second Edition. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000. https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qh05m.5.
———. “The Europeans and the African Problem.” In *States and Power in Africa*, REV-Revised, 2., 149:58–96. Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control - Second Edition. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000. https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qh05m.7.
Hesco. “Hesco Barriers.” Accessed December 30, 2024. https://www.hesco.com/about/.
Hill, Allison D. “Malian Defense Soldiers Learn Logistics with U.S. Army Special Forces.” www.army.mil, December 8, 2011. https://www.army.mil/article/70474/malian_defense_soldiers_learn_logistics_with_u_s_army_special_forces.
Hill, Margari. “The Spread of Islam in West Africa: Containment, Mixing, and Reform from the Eighth to the Twentieth Century.” *Spice Digest*, January 2009. https://fsi9-prod.s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/Islam.pdf.

Hirsch, Afua. “Cocaine Flows through Sahara as Al-Qaida Cashes in on Lawlessness.” *The Guardian*, May 2, 2013, sec. World news. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/02/cocaine-flows-through-sahara-al-qaida.

“Historic Timeline | National Counterterrorism Center.” Accessed October 27, 2021. https://www.dni.gov/nctc/timeline.html#2000.

“History of U.S. Africa Command.” Accessed October 27, 2021. https://www.africom.mil/about-the-command/history-of-us-africa-command.

Hodge, Nathan. “Special Forces Fly Secondhand Skies in Africa.” *Wired*, May 22, 2009. https://www.wired.com/2009/05/special-forces-fly-secondhand-skies-in-africa/.

Hollande, François, France, and France, eds. *Défense et sécurité nationale 2013: livre blanc*. Paris: Documentation française, 2013. https://ccdcoe.org/uploads/2018/10/Livre-blanc-sur-la-Defense-et-la-Securite-nationale-2013-2.pdf.

Holshek, Christopher. “Mali and the Primacy of Civil Authority.” *The Worldpost*, May 28, 2013.

Horn, Jessica. Crisis in Mali: Fundamentalist, Women’s Rights, and Cultural Resistance, April 19, 2012. https://www.mewc.org/index.php/gender-issues/human-rights-of-women/3357-mali-crisis-in-mali-fundamentalist-womens-rights-and-cultural-resistance.

Ibrahim, Ibrahim Yahaya. “The Wave of Jihadist Insurgency in West Africa: Global Ideology, Local Context, Individual Motivations.” West African Papers. Vol. 7. West African Papers. OECD Publishing, July 28, 2017. https://doi.org/10.1787/eb95c0a9-en.

“Improving Compliance with International AML/CFT Standards: Report on the Strategic Review of the First Round of Mutual Evaluations of GIABA Member States (2007 - 2012).” Dakar, Senegal: Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa, January 2014. https://www.giaba.org/Frame/pdfviewer%7C%7Ced7e54a9463f405f2c8caff31a6c5da7ee81eb322ea4764b4599d4f8688afba9%7C%7C769_ENG%20-Strategic%20Review%20of%20GIABA%20First%20Round%20of%20Mutual%20Evaluations%202007-2012%20-trackled%20changes.pdf.

“Inspection of Embassy Bamako, Mali.” Embassy Bamako, Mali: US Department of State, Office of the Inspector General (OIG), February 2006.

Institute for Economics and Peace. “Global Terrorism Index 2020: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism.” Sydney, November 2020. https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GTI-2020-web-2.pdf.

International Crisis Group. “Central Mali: An Uprising in the Making?” Brussels, Belgium: International Crisis Group, July 6, 2016. https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/mali/central-mali-uprising-making.

———. “Mali, a Coup within a Coup.” International Crisis Group, May 27, 2021. https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/mali/mali-un-coup-dans-le-coup.

“International Military Education and Training Program.” Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, October 28, 2004. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20041028_RS20506_447988c3327cd740fdbb7e3551e315c12ce78806.pdf.

“Islamist Terrorism in the Sahel: Fact or Fiction?,” March 31, 2005. https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/chad/islamist-terrorism-sahel-fact-or-fiction.

Jackson, Robert H., and Carl G. Rosberg. “The Marginality of African States.” In *African Independence: The First Twenty-Five Years*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1985.
Jadot, Christian. “Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa.” Government. CJTF-HOA, November 29, 2016. https://www.hoa.africom.mil/image/20380/combined-joint-task-force-horn-of-africa-image.
JeuneAfrique.com. “Le Mali et la Mauritanie délogent Aqmi de la forêt du Wagadou - Jeune Afrique.com.” Accessed December 16, 2024. https://www.jeuneafrique.com/180258/politique/le-mali-et-la-mauritanie-d-logent-aqmi-de-la-for-t-du-wagadou/.
Johnson, Stuart M. “Swamp of Terror in the Sahara.” *Air & Space Forces Magazine*, November 1, 2004. https://www.airandspaceforces.com/article/1104sahara/.
Johnson, Thomas H., Robert O. Slater, and Pat McGowan. “Explaining African Military Coups d’Etat, 1960-1982.” *The American Political Science Review* 78, no. 3 (September 1984): 622–40. https://doi.org/10.2307/1961833.
Joint Chiefs of Staff. “Joint Pub. 3-20, Security Cooperation,” May 23, 2017. https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_20_20172305.pdf.
Joscelyn, Thomas, and Caleb Weiss. “Analysis: Islamic State Claims Al Qaeda Started a War in West Africa.” *FDD’s Long War Journal* (blog), May 8, 2020. https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2020/05/analysis-islamic-state-claims-al-qaeda-started-a-war-in-west-africa.php.
Kaag, Mayke. “Islamic Charities from the Arab World in Africa.” edited by Volker Heins, Kai Koddenbrock, and Christine Unrau. New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, n.d.
Kaba, Issa. “L’opération militaire «BADEN KO» : Discrète, mais très efficace.” *maliweb.net* (blog), février 2013. https://www.maliweb.net/armee/loperation-militaire-baden-ko-discrete-mais-tres-efficace-127502.html.
Kelley, Michael. “Civil Affairs: Key Mission in GWOT.” *Tip of the Spear*, n.d., 6–7.
King, Isabelle. “How France Failed Mali: The End of Operation Barkhane.” *Harvard International Review* 43, no. 4 (Fall 2022): 6–10.
Kohlmann, Evan F. “Two Decades of Jihad in Algeria: The GIA, the GSPC, and Al-Qaida,” May 2007, 28.
Kone, Sory I. “Doctrine for a Smaller Air Force: Mali and the Question of Unique Air Doctrine:” Fort Belvoir, VA: Air Command and Staff College, March 1, 1997. https://doi.org/10.21236/ADA397875.
Koné, Yacouba. “Lessons from Mali’s Arab Spring: Why Democracy Must Work for the Poor,” September 2012, 1–18.
Krasner, Stephen D., and Thomas Risse. “External Actors, State-Building, and Service Provision in Areas of Limited Statehood: Introduction.” *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions* 27, no. 4 (October 2014): 545–67.
Kreps, Sarah E. *Coalitions of Convenience: United States Military Interventions after the Cold War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
Kurtz, Paula. “Air Forces Africa Officials Conduct Senior Leader Engagement in Mali, Senegal,” November 5, 2009.
“Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development.” Accessed May 15, 2024. https://www.kuwait-fund.org/en/web/kfund/maps.

La nouvelle voie du Mali. “Securité d’Etat: L’ANSE Remplace La DGSE,” October 20, 2021. https://lanouvellevoiedumali.com/securite-detat-lanse-remplace-la-dgse/.
Lacher, Wolfram, ed. “Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region,” 32. Brookings Institution Press, 2012. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt6wpjcm.
———. “The Malian Crisis and the Challenge of Regional Cooperation.” *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 2, no. 2 (June 12, 2013): 1–5. https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.bg.
ladepeche.fr. “Attentat suicide contre les militaires de Barkhane au Mali : trois blessés dont un grave.” Accessed May 27, 2024. https://www.ladepeche.fr/article/2018/01/13/2720927-attentat-suicide-contre-militaires-barkhane-mali-trois-blesses-dont-grave.html.
Ladisch, Virginie. “Possibilities and Challenges for Transitional Justice in Mali.” New York, NY: International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), September 2014. https://primarysources.brillonline.com/browse/human-rights-documents-online/possibilities-and-challenges-for-transitional-justice-in-mali;hrdhrd98082014005.
Le Cam, Morgane. “In Mali, Democracy Has Been Indefinitely Postponed.” *Le Monde*, May 19, 2024. https://www.lemonde.fr/en/opinion/article/2024/05/19/in-mali-democracy-has-been-indefinitely-postponed_6671934_23.html.
Le Sage, Andre. “The Evolving Threat of al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.” Strategic Forum. National Defense University: Institute for National Strategic Studies, July 2011. https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratforum/SF-268.pdf.
Le Vine, Victor T. “Redemocratization.” In *Politics in Francophone Africa*, 241–69. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004.
Lebovich, Andrew. “Mapping Armed Groups in Mali and the Sahel.” Brussels, Belgium: European Council on Foreign Relations, May 2019. https://ecfr.eu/special/sahel_mapping/european_union.
Lebovich, Andrew, and Nienke van Heukelingen. “Unravelling Turkish Involvement in the Sahel; Geopolitics and Local Impact.” Policy Brief. Clingendael, July 2023. https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/Policy_brief_Unravelling_Turkish_involvement_in_the_Sahel.pdf.
“L’Ecole de Maintien de La Paix - The Alioune Blondin Beye Peacekeeping School.” Accessed December 10, 2024. https://www.empbamako.org/en/.
Lee, Darrick. “Medical Team Aids SOF Role in Mali.” *Tip of the Spear*, January 2007, 12–13.
Lee, Mike. “Mali; Thoughts on the Post Coup Way Ahead for Military Cooperation.” Bamako, Mali: US Department of State, May 21, 2012.
Lefèvre, Raphaël. “Is the Islamic State on the Rise in North Africa?” *The Journal of North African Studies* 19, no. 5 (October 20, 2014): 852–56. https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2014.977617.
Leigh, Asia Jane. “The Dragon’s Game in the Sahel.” *ACCORD*. Accessed March 6, 2024. https://www.accord.org.za/analysis/the-dragons-game-in-the-sahel/.
Leonard, Mary B. “Mali: Request for 1206 Equipment.” Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy. Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, September 29, 2008. https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08BAMAKO817_a.html.
———. “Mali Uses Helicopters to Attack Bahanga Near Kidal.” Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy. Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, April 3, 2008. T. https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08BAMAKO325_a.html.

Leonard, Mary Beth. “Fall 2008 Sepq Response-Bamako.” Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy. Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, Seotember 2008. https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08BAMAKO787_a.html.

Lewis, Oliver. “Conceptualizing Counterterrorism and Explaining the Terrorism Phenomenon.” In *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Modern War*, 1st ed. Hoboken, NJ: CRC Press, 2015.

Lewis, Olivier. “Conceptualizing State Counterterrorism.” In *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Counterterrorism Policy*, edited by Scott Nicholas Romaniuk, Francis Grice, Daniela Irrera, and Stewart Webb, 3–37. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2017. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-55769-8_1.

LII / Legal Information Institute. “10 U.S. Code § 321 - Training with Friendly Foreign Countries: Payment of Training and Exercise Expenses.” Accessed May 6, 2025. https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/10/321.

LII / Legal Information Institute. “U.S. Code, Title 22, Chapter 38, 2656f - Annual Country Reports on Terrorism.” Accessed October 13, 2021. https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/22/2656f.

Lijn, Jaïr van der. “Assessing the Effectiveness of the United Nations Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).” Oslo, Norway: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2019. https://effectivepeaceops.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/EPON-MINUSMA-Report.pdf.

Lin, Justin Yifu. “Youth Bulge: A Demographic Dividend or a Demographic Bomb in Developing Countries?,” January 5, 2012. https://blogs.worldbank.org/developmenttalk/youth-bulge-a-demographic-dividend-or-a-demographic-bomb-in-developing-countries.

Loimeier, Roman. “Dynamics of Jihād in the Bilād Al-Sūdān.” In *Muslim Societies in Africa*, 108–34. A Historical Anthropology. Indiana University Press, 2013. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt16gz74b.10.

Lotze, Walter. “United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).” In *The Oxford Handbook of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*, edited by Joachim A. Koops, Thierry Tardy, Norrie MacQueen, and Paul D. Williams, 854–64. Oxford University Press, 2015. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199686049.013.72.

Lounnas, Djallil. “Jihadist Groups in North Africa and the Sahel: Between Disintegration, Reconfiguration and Resilience.” MENARA Working Paper. Middle East and North Africa Regional Architecture (MENARA), October 2018. https://www.academia.edu/37686285/Jihadist_Groups_in_North_Africa_and_the_Sahel_Between_Disintegration_Reconfiguration_and_Resilience.

Lounnas, Djallil, and Virginie Collombier. “The Libyan Security Continuum: The Impact of the Libyan Crisis on the North African/Sahelian Regional System.” Middle East and North Africa Regional Architecture, October 2018. https://www.cidob.org/publicaciones/serie_de_publicacion/project_papers/menara_papers/working_papers/the_libyan_security_continuum_the_impact_of_the_libyan_crisis_on_the_north_african_sahelian_regional_system.

Lounnas, Djallil, and Nizar Messari. “Algeria–Morocco Relations and Their Impact on the Maghrebi Regional System.” Working Papers. Rome, Italy: Middle East and North

Africa Regional Architecture, October 2018. https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/menara_wp_20.pdf.
Lovejoy, Paul. *Jihad in West Africa during the Age of the Revolutions*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2016.
Luckham, Robin. "The Military, Militarization and Democratization in Africa: A Survey of Literature and Issues." *African Studies Review* 37, no. 2 (1994): 13–75. https://doi.org/10.2307/524766.
Macalou, Marietou. "The Politicization of the Malian Civil Service in the Context of Democratization." University of Pittsburgh, 2010. https://core.ac.uk/reader/12207750.
MacLachlan, Karolina. *Security Assistance, Corruption and Fragile Environments; Exploring the Case of Mali 2001-2012*. London, UK: Transparency International, 2015. https://ti-defence.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/150818-150817-Security-assistance-corruption-and-fragile-environments-Exploring-the-case-of-Mali-2001-2012.pdf.
Magnuson, Stew. "Mali Crisis Offers Lessons for Special Operations Command." National Defense, May 1, 2013. https://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/articles/2013/5/1/2013may-mali-crisis-offers-lessons-for-special-operations-command-updated.
———. "U.S. Military Seeks to Quash Terrorism Before It Takes Root." National Defense, March 1, 2007. https://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/articles/2007/2/28/2007march-us-military-seeks-to-quash-terrorism-before-it-takes-root.
Mahadevan, Prem. *The Politics of Counterterrorism in India: Strategic Intelligence and National Security in South Asia*. London, England: I.B. Tauris, 2012.
Maiga, Adama Mahamane. "Challenges to Reforming Intelligence Agencies in Re-Democratizing Countries: The Case of Mali." Naval Postgraduate School, 2018.
———. "Empowering Democracy Through Civil-Military Relations: The Case of Mali 2012-2017." Naval Postgraduate School, 2017.
Makadji, Mamadou. "BrèvesMali : Tout Sur La Loi d'orientation et de Programmation Militaire : Son Budget, Sa Justification et Ses Éléments." *Mali Actu*, août 2016. https://maliactu.net/mali-tout-sur-la-loi-dorientation-et-de-programmation-militaire-son-budget-sa-justification-et-ses-elements/.
———. "Mali: Les Commandos Parachutistes Communement Appeles Berets Rouges." *Malijet*, November 27, 2016. https://maliactu.net/mali-les-commandos-parachutistes-communement-appeles-berets-rouges/.
"Mali - Air Force." *Jane's Intelligence Review*, March 11, 2019, 9.
"Mali - Armed Forces." *Jane's Intelligence Review*, August 2020.
"Mali - Army." *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 2019.
"Mali: Avoiding Escalation." Africa Report. International Crisis Group, July 18, 2012. https://kar.kent.ac.uk/84801/1/189-mali-avoiding-escalation-english.pdf.
"Mali Country Assessment." Transparency International, 2015. https://government.defenceindex.org/countries/mali/.
"Mali SSR Background Note." Background Note. Geneva, Switzerland: Democratic Control of the Armed Forces (DCAF), 2019.
maliweb. "Reforme de l'armée : Le parlement adopte la loi de programmation militaire," février 2015. https://www.maliweb.net/politique/assemblee-nationale/reforme-de-larmee-le-parlement-adopte-la-loi-de-programmation-militaire-817732.html.

Mangan, Fiona, and Matthias Nowak. “The West Africa-Sahel Connection; Mapping Cross-Border Arms Trafficking.” Briefing Paper. Small Arms Survey, December 2019. https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/SAS-BP-West-Africa-Sahel-Connection.pdf.

Mann, Gregory. “French Colonialism and The Making of the Modern Sahel.” In *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel*, by Gregory Mann, 34–50. edited by Leonardo A. Villalón. Oxford University Press, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198816959.013.9.

Marchal, Roland. “French Interventions in the Sahel.” In *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel*, by Roland Marchal, 458–74. edited by Leonardo A. Villalón. Oxford University Press, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198816959.013.29.

Marshall, Dr Monty G. “Conflict Trends in Africa, 1946-2004.” Arlington, Virginia: Africa Conflict Prevention Pool (ACPP), September 2006. https://www.systemicpeace.org/vlibrary/ConflictTrendsAfrica2006MGMarshall.pdf.

Matei, Florina Christina. “The Case of Mali.” In *Security Forces in African States*, edited by Paul Shemella and Nicholas Tomb, 103–22. Amherst, New York: Cambria Press, 2017.

McCulley, Terrence K. “Working with the Malians on Sahel Security.” Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy. Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, May 30, 2008. https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08BAMAKO485_a.html.

McGowan, Patrick J. “Coups and Conflict in West Africa, 1955-2004: Part II, Empirical Findings.” *Armed Forces & Society* 32, no. 2 (January 1, 2006): 234–53. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X05277886.

McInnis, Kathleen J, and Nathan J Lucas. “What Is ‘Building Partner Capacity?’ Issues for Congress,” December 18, 2015. https://sgp.fas.org/crs/natsec/R44313.pdf.

McKaughan, Jeff. “International SOF Warrior.” Special Operations Technology, May 17, 2006. https://web.archive.org/web/20060517101148/http://www.special-operations-technology.com/print_article.cfm?DocID=1172.

McKune, Sarah, ed. “Section III: The Environment and the Challenge of Climate Change.” In *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel*, 1st ed., 205–8. Oxford University Press, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198816959.001.0001.

McLauchlin, Theodore, Marc-André Boisvert, and Aboubacar Maïga. “Les formations militaires internationales et l’instabilité politique en Afrique subsaharienne.” Cahier du CÉRIUM Working Paper. Université de Montréal.: Centre d’études et de recherches internationales, December 2019. https://cerium.umontreal.ca/public/FAS/cerium/Images/4_nouvelles_evenements/legacy/ilovepdf_merged.pdf.

“MEDFLAG.” Accessed September 23, 2024. https://www.defense.gov/Multimedia/Photos/igphoto/2001188942/.

Melender, Erik, Therése Pettersson, and Lotta Themnér. “Organized Violence, 1989–2015.” *Journal of Peace Research* 53, no. 5 (September 2016): 727–42. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343316663032.

Meservey, Joshua. “Sahelian Islam’s Shift Towards Salafism and Its Implications for Regional Terrorism.” The Heritage Foundation, September 24, 2021. https://www.heritage.org/africa/commentary/sahelian-islams-shift-towards-salafism-and-its-implications-regional-terrorism.

"Mid-Term Evaluation of USAID's Counter-Extremism Programming in Africa." Washington, DC: US Agency for International Development, February 1, 2011. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pdacr583.pdf.
"Military Information Support Team-Mali." Bamako, Mali, 2008.
Millennium Challenge Corporation. "Mali MCA Compact." Accessed October 7, 2024. https://www.mcc.gov/where-we-work/program/mali-compact/.
Milovanovic, Gillian. "A Trip to Gao Highlights Mission Objectives." Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy. Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, October 22, 2009. https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO686_a.html.
———. "AFRICOM Deputy Commander Mueller Meets with Ambassador." Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy. Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, October 19, 2009. https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO669_a.html.
———. "Ambassador Attends Closing Ceremony of JCET Training of Malian Army ETIA 6." Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy. Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, December 16, 2009. https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO813_a.html.
———. "Ambassador's Meeting with Malian President Amadou Toumani Toure." Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy. Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, November 23, 2009. https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO754_a.html.
———. "Ambush: AQIM Inflicts Heavy Losses in Battle with Malian Forces." Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy. US Embassy Bamako, July 6, 2009. https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO445_a.html.
———. "Closing Ceremony of JCET Training of Malian Army ETIA 4 in Gao." Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy. US Embassy Bamako, December 17, 2009. https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO815_a.html.
———. "Codel Marshall Meets with Malian President." Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy. Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, September 17, 2009. https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO608_a.html.
———. "DASD Huddleston Meets ATT: The Way Forward Against AQIM." Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy. Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, July 1, 2009. https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO435_a.html.
———. "Mali Using Specialized Units in Fight Against AQIM." Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy. Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, August 12, 2009. https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO538_a.html.
———. "Malian Military Could Make Good Use of Cessna Caravans." Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy. Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, December 21, 2009. https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO820_a.html.
———. "New Algerian Ambassador to Meets with Ambassador." Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy. Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, February 19, 2010. https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/10BAMAKO99_a.html.
———. "President Toure Ready to Target AQIM, with Help." Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy. Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, June 12, 2009. https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO387_a.html.
———. "President Toure Ready to Target AQIM, with Help." Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy. Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, September 24, 2009. https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO619_a.html.

———. “Running on Fumes: Mali’s Soldiers Exposed in the Desert.” Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy. US Embassy Bamako, June 25, 2009. https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO415_a.html.
———. “Scenesetter for Codel Marshall Visit to Mali.” Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy. Bamako, Mali: US Embassy Bamako, August 26, 2009. https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO566_a.html.
Ministère des Forces Armées et des Anciens Combattants. “Code de conduite des Forces Armées et de Sécurité du Mali [Code of conduct of the armed and security forces of Mali].” Bamako, Mali, 1997.
Moaz, Z., and E. Henderson. “World Religion Project - Global Religion Dataset.” The Association of Religion Data Archives, August 13, 2019. https://www.thearda.com/world-religion/np-sort?var=ADH_495.
Morba, Ousmane. “Statut Général Des Militaires: Une Autre Raison de Mourir Pour Sa Patrie.” Malijet, September 4, 2017. https://malijet.com/la_societe_malienne_aujourdhui/actualite_de_la_nation_malienne/193806-statut-general-des-militaires-une-autre-raison-de-mourir-pour-sa.html.
Motlagh, Jason. “The Trans Sahara Counter-Terrorism Initiative: U.S. Takes Terror Fight to Africa’s Wild West.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 30, 2005.
Moulaye, Zeïni. “Missed Opportunities for Comprehensive Security Sector Reform in Mali.” In *Learning from West African Experiences in Security Sector Governance*, edited by Alan Bryden and Fairlie Chappuis, 79–96. Ubiquity Press, 2015. https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv3t5qk2.11.
Moulaye, Zeïni, and Mahamadou Niakaté. “Gouvernance partagée de la sécurité et de la paix : l’expérience Malienne.” Abuja, Nigeria: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, December 2011. https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/nigeria/08907.pdf.
Moyar, Mark. “Countering Violent Extremism in Mali.” Manuscript. Joint Special Operations University, November 2015. https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GOVPUB-D-PURL-gpo81723/pdf/GOVPUB-D-PURL-gpo81723.pdf.
Munion. “Map of the Sahel.” The Sahel region of Africa, August 31, 2015. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_the_Sahel.png.
Musah, Abdel-Fatau. “West Africa: Governance and Security in a Changing Region,” February 2009, 32.
Mwai, Peter. “Gabon Coup: The Latest in a Series of Military Takeovers on the Continent.” *BBC News*, August 30, 2023, sec. Africa. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-46783600.
Nagl, John A. *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*. Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2002.
Nalbandov, Robert. “Evaluating the ‘Success’ and ‘Failure’ of Counterterrorism Policy and Practice.” In *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Counterterrorism Policy*, edited by Scott Nicholas Romaniuk, Francis Grice, Daniela Irrera, and Stewart Webb, 91–115. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2017. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-55769-8_4.
Nantulya, Paul. “Chinese Security Contractors in Africa.” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, October 8, 2020. https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/10/08/chinese-security-contractors-in-africa-pub-82916.
National Defense Authorization Act FY2006, Pub. L. No. Public Law 109-163 (2006). https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-109publ163/pdf/PLAW-109publ163.pdf.

"National Defense Strategy 2005," March 2005. https://www.bits.de/NRANEU/others/strategy/nds2005.pdf.
Nations, United. "Human Development Index." *Human Development Reports*. United Nations. Accessed January 11, 2024. https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/documentation-and-downloads#:~:text=Table%201%3A%20Human%20Development%20Index%20and%20components.
Naudé, Pierre-François. "Nord-Mali : « plusieurs Morts » Dans Des Affrontements Avec Des Rebelles Touaregs." JeuneAfrique.com, January 18, 2012. https://www.jeuneafrique.com/177681/politique/nord-mali-plusieurs-morts-dans-des-affrontements-avec-des-rebelles-touaregs/.
Nimaga, Mahamadou. "Mali." In *Security Sector Governance in Francophone West Africa: Realities and Opportunities*, edited by Alan Bryden and Boubacar N'Diaye, 125–49. Geneva, Switzerland: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), 2011. https://www.academia.edu/65976666/Security_sector_governance_in_Francophone_West_Africa_realities_and_opportunities.
Noggle, Michael R. "Senegalese and Malian Soldiers Train with U.S. Special Forces in Mali." www.army.mil, May 17, 2010. https://www.army.mil/article/39221/senegalese_and_malian_soldiers_train_with_u_s_special_forces_in_mali.
North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The Atlantic Charter: Declaration of Principles issued by the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (1941). https://www.nato.int/docu/basictxt/b410814a.htm.
Nossiter, Adam. "Qaddafi's Weapons, Taken by Old Allies, Reinvigorate an Insurgent Army in Mali." *The New York Times*, February 5, 2012, sec. World. https://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/06/world/africa/tuaregs-use-qaddafis-arms-for-rebellion-in-mali.html.
———. "The Whiff of Conflict Grows in Mali." *The New York Times*, October 24, 2012, sec. World. https://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/24/world/africa/an-aura-of-conflict-grows-in-a-divided-mali.html.
Nossiter, Adam, Eric Schmitt, and Mark Mazzetti. "French Strikes in Mali Supplant Caution of U.S." *The New York Times*, January 14, 2013, sec. World. https://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/14/world/africa/french-jets-strike-deep-inside-islamist-held-mali.html.
Notin, Jean-Christophe. *La guerre de la France au Mali*. Paris, France: Tallandier, 2014.
Nsaibia, Heni. "State Atrocities in the Sahel: The Impetus for Counterinsurgency Results Is Fueling Government Attacks on Civilians." ACLED, May 20, 2020. https://acleddata.com/2020/05/20/state-atrocities-in-the-sahel-the-impetus-for-counter-insurgency-results-is-fueling-government-attacks-on-civilians/.
Nsaibia, Héni, and Caleb Weiss. "The End of the Sahelian Anomaly: How the Global Conflict between the Islamic State and al-Qa`ida Finally Came to West Africa." *CTC Sentinel* 13, no. 7 (July 31, 2020): 1–14.
"OEF-TS Culture of Maintenance and Logistics Course Brief." Stuttgart, Germany, July 11, 2011. https://www.slideserve.com/file-download/1598924.
Office of Inspector General. "Management Assistance Report: The Bureau of African Affairs Should Improve Performance Work Statements and Increase Subject Matter Expertise for

Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership Projects." Washington, DC: US Department of State, April 2020. https://www.stateoig.gov/uploads/report/report_pdf_file/aud-mero-20-29_1.pdf.
Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism. "Patterns of Global Terrorism 2000." U.S. Department of State, April 30, 2001. https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2000/index.htm.
Office of the Inspector General. "Audit of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership Program." Washington, DC: Department of State, March 2025. https://www.stateoig.gov/uploads/report/report_pdf_file/aud-geer-25-11-web-posting_508.pdf.
Office of the Secretary of Defense. "FY2020 President's Budget Justification for Security Cooperation Program and Activity Funding." Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, March 2019. https://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2020/FY2020_Security_Cooperation_Book_FINAL.pdf.
Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller)/Chief Financial Officer. "US Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Request." Arlington, VA: Department of Defense, March 2024. https://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/FY2025/FY2025_Budget_Request_Overview_Book.pdf.
Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. "DOD Policy and Responsibilities Relating to Security Cooperation." DOD Directive. Washington, DC: Department of Defense, October 24, 2008. https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodd/513203_dodd_2016.pdf.
———. "DOD Policy and Responsibilities Relating to Security Cooperation." U.S. Department of Defense, December 29, 2016. https://open.defense.gov/portals/23/Documents/foreignasst/DoDD_513203_on_Security_Cooperation.pdf.
———. "DODI Assessment, Monitoring, and Evaluation Policy for the Security Cooperation Enterprise." DODI. Washington, DC: Department of Defense, January 13, 2017. https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodi/513214_dodi_2017.pdf.
Office of the Under Secretary of Defense/Chief Financial Officer. "FY2021 Defense Budget Overview." Department of Defense, May 13, 2020. https://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2021/fy2021_Budget_Request_Overview_Book.pdf.
Okumu, Wafula, and Augustine Ikelegbe. *Militias, Rebels and Islamist Militants: Human Insecurity and State Crises in Africa*. Institute for Security Studies, 2010. https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/137173/MilitiasRebelsIslamistMilitants%20(Nov2010).pdf.
Olivier de Sardan, Jean-Pierre. "Gouvernance Despotique, Gouvernance Chefferiale et Gouvernance Postcoloniale." Bamako, Mali, 2007. http://www2.institut-gouvernance.org/es/analyse/fiche-analyse-263.html.
———. "The Construction of States and Societies in the Sahel." In *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel*, by Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, 50–68. edited by Leonardo A. Villalón. Oxford University Press, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198816959.013.10.

Omelicheva, Mariya Y. "Counterterrorism: The State of Scholarship, Directions for Future Data Collection and Analysis." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 1, no. 2 (2007). https://www.jstor.org/stable/26298292.
"Operation Barkhane," December 19, 2014. https://web.archive.org/web/20141219063245/http://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/sahel/dossier-de-presentation-de-l-operation-barkhane/operation-barkhane.
"Operation Enduring Freedom-Trans Sahara Introductory Brief." Stuttgart, Germany, November 10, 2010.
"Operation Enduring Freedom-Trans-Sahara Train & Equip Information Brief." Stuttgart, Germany, April 2011.
Orefo, Diane Chinoso. "The Obama Administration and U.S. Security Cooperation with African Countries." In *The United States' Foreign Policy in Africa in the 21st Century; Issues and Perspectives*, 99–112. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2014.
Oussi, Ali. "Combats Sanglants Entre Le Gspc et l'armée Tchadienne." L'Expression, March 10, 2004. https://www.lexpressiondz.com/nationale/combats-sanglants-entre-le-gspc-et-larmee-tchadienne-17280.
Parens, Raphael. "The Wagner Group's Playbook in Africa: Mali." Philadelphia: Foreign Policy Research Institute, March 18, 2022. https://www.fpri.org/article/2022/03/the-wagner-groups-playbook-in-africa-mali/.
Paul, Christopher. "What Works Best When Conducting Security Cooperation?" RAND Corporation, October 21, 2015. https://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CT441.html.
Paul, Christopher, Colin P. Clarke, Beth Grill, Stephanie Young, Jennifer D. P. Moroney, Joe Hogler, and Christine Leah. "What Works Best When Building Partner Capacity and Under What Circumstances?" RAND Corporation, January 28, 2013. https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG1253z1.html.
Paul, Christopher, Jennifer D. P. Moroney, Beth Grill, Colin P. Clarke, Lisa Saum-Manning, Heather Peterson, and Brian J. Gordon. "What Works Best When Building Partner Capacity in Challenging Contexts?" RAND Corporation, August 21, 2015. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR937.html.
Peterson, Brian J. "The Malian Political Crisis: Taking Grievances Seriously." *African Arguments* (blog), March 27, 2012. https://africanarguments.org/2012/03/the-malian-political-crisis-taking-grievances-seriously-by-brian-j-peterson/.
Pew Research Center. "Tolerance and Tension: Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa." *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project* (blog), April 15, 2010. https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2010/04/15/executive-summary-islam-and-christianity-in-sub-saharan-africa/.
Piazza, James A. "Incubators of Terror: Do Failed and Failing States Promote Transnational Terrorism?" *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 3 (September 1, 2008): 469–88. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2008.00511.x.
Piombo, Jessica. "Terrorism and U.S. Counter-Terrorism Programs in Africa: An Overview." *Strategic Insights* VI, no. 1 (January 2007): 11.
Ploch, Lauren. "Africa Command: U.S. Strategic Interests and the Role of the U.S. Military in Africa," July 22, 2011. http://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL34003.pdf.
Political-Military Bureau. "Foreign Military Training: Joint Report to Congress, Fiscal Years 2003 and 2004." Washington, DC: Department of State, June 2024. https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/34329.pdf.

Powelson, Simon J. “Enduring Engagement Yes, Episodic Engagement No: Lessons for SOF from Mali.” Thesis, Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School, 2013. https://calhoun.nps.edu/handle/10945/38996.
“Presidential Decision Directive/NSC-25 U.S. Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations.” Presidential Decision Directive. Washington, DC: The White House, May 3, 1994. https://irp.fas.org/offdocs/pdd/pdd-25.pdf.
Priest, Dana. “Free of Oversight, U.S. Military Trains Foreign Troops: 1991 Law Waives Many Restrictions on Aid.” *The Washington Post (1974-)*, July 12, 1998.
Primoratz, Igor. “Terrorism.” In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, Spring 2015. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2015. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entrieserrorism/.
Pringle, Robert. “Democratization in Mali: Putting History to Work.” Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, October 2006. https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/resources/PWOct2006.pdf.
Quintero, David, Matt Willer, Matt McNealy, Sean Setter, and John Hill. “Operation Enduring Freedom-Trans Sahara (OEF-TS) Train and Equip Information Brief.” Stuttgart, Germany, April 2011.
Radelet, Steven. “Emerging Africa.” In *Emerging Africa: How 17 Countries Are Leading the Way: Emerging Africa*, 9–26. Routledge, 2010.
Raleigh, Clionadh, rew Linke, Håvard Hegew, and Joakim Karlsen. “Introducing ACLED: An Armed Conflict Location and Event Dataset - Clionadh Raleigh, Rew Linke, Håvard Hegre, Joakim Karlsen, 2010.” *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 5 (September 2010): 651–60.
Ramani, Samuel. “Russia Has Big Plans for Africa.” *Foreign Affairs*, February 17, 2022. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/africa/2022-02-17/russia-has-big-plans-africa.
“Rapport D’Information sur L’Opération Serval au Mali,” juillet 2013. https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/14/pdf/rap-info/i1288.pdf.
“Rebels and Putschists.” *Africa Confidential* 53, no. 7 (March 30, 2012): 5.
Rep. McCaul, Michael T. [R-TX-10. Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership Program Act of 2021, Pub. L. No. HR 567, HR 567 (2021). https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/567/text.
“Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Mali,” June 6, 2018. https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n18/163/95/pdf/n1816395.pdf?token=M9AlLmPyzNBFuveWdU&fe=true.
“Resolution N 00-01/2017 Relative a La Creation d’une Force Conjointe Du G5 Sahel.” Bamako, Mali: G5 Sahel Secretariat Permanent, février 2017. https://www.g5sahel.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/images_Docs_Resolutions_force_conjointe__05_02_20171.pdf.
RFI. “EU to End Military Training Mission in Mali.” News. RFI, April 12, 2022. https://www.rfi.fr/en/africa/20220412-eu-to-end-military-training-mission-in-mali.
———. “Mali: La Force Barkhane Annonce Avoir Neutralisé 60 Jihadistes En Un Mois.” *RFI*, March 15, 2018, sec. afrique. https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20180315-mali-barkhane-annonce-avoir-neutralise-60-jihadistes-mois.
Roberts, David. “Behind Qatar’s Intervention In Libya.” *Foreign Affairs*, September 28, 2011. https://www-foreignaffairs-com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/articles/libya/2011-09-28/behind-qatars-intervention-libya?page=show.

Rosengard, Marc. “COMSOCEUR’s Strategic Vision.” Stuttgart, Germany, 2008.
“Sahel Major Trade Routes.” Accessed April 1, 2025. https://www.sutori.com/en/item/untitled-db3c-3d4b.
“SAHEL: Operation Barkhane.” *Africa Research Bulletin: Political, Social and Cultural Series* 51, no. 7 (2014): 20223A-20224B. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-825X.2014.05817.x.
Saint Victor, Florent de. “The Malian Air Force: A Mirage?” *Mars Attacks* (blog), May 21, 2012. https://mars-attaque.blogspot.com/2012/05/larmee-de-lair-malienne-un-mirage-22.html.
Sakthivel, Vish. “Morocco’s Move in Mali; What Rabat Gained in the Battle against Islamic Extremism,” January 14, 2014. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/africa/2014-01-14/moroccos-move-mali.
Samaan, Jean-Loup. “Gulf Countries and the Stabilization Efforts in the Sahel.” AGDA Insight. Research and Analysis, November 2021. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.agda.ac.ae/docs/default-source/Publications/dr-jean-loup-samaan-english-01.pdf?sfvrsn=4.
Sanankoua, Bintou. “Gouvernance, Légitimité et Légalité Au Mali.” Presented at the IRG/ARGA colloquium, Bamako, Mali, January 2007. http://www2.institut-gouvernance.org/fr/analyse/fiche-analyse-257.html.
Sandnes, Marie, and Ilaria Carrozza. “Russia, China and New Power Dynamics in the Sahel Region.” Oslo, Norway: Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), January 16, 2023. https://blogs.prio.org/2023/01/russia-china-and-new-power-dynamics-in-the-sahel-region/.
Schmidt, Elizabeth. *Foreign Intervention in Africa after the Cold War: Sovereignty, Responsibility, and the War on Terror*. Ohio University Research in International Studies. Global and Comparative Studies Series, n° 19. Athens (Ohio): Ohio university press, 2018.
———, ed. “France’s Private African Domain, 1947–1991.” In *Foreign Intervention in Africa: From the Cold War to the War on Terror*, 164–92. New Approaches to African History. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139021371.009.
Schmitt, Eric. “As Africans Join Iraqi Insurgency, U.S. Counters With Military Training in Their Lands.” *The New York Times*, June 10, 2005, sec. World. https://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/10/politics/as-africans-join-iraqi-insurgency-us-counters-with-military.html.
———. “Threats and Responses: Expanding U.S. Presence Pentagon Seeking New Access Pacts For Africa Bases.” *The New York Times*, July 5, 2003, sec. World. https://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/05/world/threats-responses-expanding-us-presence-pentagon-seeking-new-access-pacts-for.html.
Schroeder, Mark. “FOR COMMENT - U.S. COUNTERTERRORISM IN THE SAHEL,” February 21, 2013. https://wikileaks.org/gifiles/docs/18/1854962_re-for-comment-u-s-counterterrorism-in-the-sahel-.html.
Schulz, Dorothea E. “Decentralization and Political Legitimacy in Mali.” In *Political Legitimacy in Postcolonial Mali*, 1st ed., 103–30. Boydell and Brewer Limited, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781800101654.
Scorpio. “Exclusive: Advance into Africa — an Audit of Russia’s Growing Economic and Military Footprint on the Continent.” Daily Maverick, November 15, 2019.

https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2019-11-15-exclusive-advance-into-africa-an-audit-of-russias-growing-economic-and-military-footprint-on-the-continent/.
Secretary-General, Un. “Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Mali,” September 22, 2014. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/780163.
“Section 1206 Security Assistance Program--Findings on Criteria, Coordination, and Implementation.” Washington, DC: Government Accountability Office, February 28, 2007. https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-07-416r.pdf.
Serafino, Nina M. “Security Assistance and Cooperation: Shared Responsibility of the Departments of State and Defense.” Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, May 26, 2016. https://sgp.fas.org/crs/natsec/R44444.pdf.
———. “Security Assistance Reform: ‘Section 1206’ Background and Issues for Congress.” Background and Issues for Congress. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, February 11, 2011. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20110211_RS22855_5c6c42aee3ad93cfe51517e930f6847558bd3bbe.pdf.
Serra, Renata, ed. “Section IV The Challenges of Development.” In *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel*, 1st ed., 305–10. Oxford University Press, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198816959.001.0001.
“SGI Monitoring and Evaluation Stocktaking Report.” Washington, DC: Department of State, September 30, 2019.
Shaw, Scott. “Fallout in the Sahel: The Geographic Spread of Conflict from Libya to Mali.” *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 19, no. 2 (June 1, 2013): 199–210. https://doi.org/10.1080/11926422.2013.805153.
Shurkin, Michael. “France’s War in Mali: Lessons for an Expeditionary Army.” RAND Corporation, October 17, 2014. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR770.html.
Shurkin, Michael, John IV Gordon, Bryan Frederick, and Christopher G. Pernin. “The Malian Army.” In *Building Armies, Building Nations: Toward a New Approach to Security Force Assistance*, 153–80. RAND Corporation, 2017. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1832.html.
Shurkin, Michael, Stephanie Pezard, and Rebecca Zimmerman. *Mali’s Next Battle Improving Counterterrorism Capabilities*. Washington, DC: RAND Corporation, 2017. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1241.html.
SIPRI. “Coalition National de La Société Civile Pour La Paix et La Lutte Contre La Prolifération Des Armes Légères (CONASCIPAL).” Accessed November 8, 2024. https://www.sipri.org/research/conflicts-and-peace/mali-civil-society-and-peacebuilding/partner.
Skorupski, Bolko J, and Nina M Serafino. “DOD Security Cooperation: An Overview of Authorities and Issues.” Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, August 23, 2016. https://sgp.fas.org/crs/natsec/R44602.pdf.
Smith, C.D. Jr. “EUCOM Pan-Sahel Initiative Brief 2003.” Presented at the EUCOM Briefing, Stuttgart, Germany, 2003. https://www.almendron.com/tribuna/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Col-CD-Smith-Jr.ppt.
Smith, Craig S. “U.S. Training African Forces to Uproot Terrorists,” n.d.
Smith, Keith D, Mark H Lauber, and Matthew B Robbins. “Joint Publication 3-20, Security Cooperation; Adapting Enduring Lessons.” *Joint Forces Quarterly* 85, no. Q2 2017 (2017): 94–99.

Soares, Benjamin. “Islam and Muslim Societies in the Contemporary Sahel.” In *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel*, by Benjamin Soares, 550–68. edited by Leonardo A. Villalón. Oxford University Press, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198816959.013.32.

Solomon, Hussein. “Mali: West Africa’s Afghanistan.” *The RUSI Journal* 158, no. 1 (February 1, 2013): 12–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2013.774635.

Somebody500, davidjl123 /. *Map of Scramble for Africa 1880 to 1913*. December 3, 2014. Own work. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Scramble-for-Africa-1880-1913.png.

Sparks, Donald. *AFRICOM: Flintlock 10 Hundreds of Malians Receive Medical Care*. December 13, 2007. Photo. https://www.flickr.com/photos/africom/4615199388/.

Straus, Scott. “Wars Do End! Changing Patterns of Political Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa.” *African Affairs* 111, no. 443 (April 2012): 179–201.

Studies, the Africa Center for Strategic. “Militant Islamist Groups in Africa Sustain High Pace of Lethality.” *Africa Center* (blog), February 18, 2025. https://africacenter.org/spotlight/mig2025-militant-islamist-groups-in-africa/.

Sun Wyler, Liana, and Nicolas Cook. “Illegal Drug Trade in Africa: Trends and U.S. Policy.” Congressional Research Service, September 30, 2009. https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc689297/m1/1/high_res_d/R40838_2009Sep30.pdf.

Taha, Rawad. “Saudi Arabia’s PIF Launches an Initiative of 200 Mln Euros to Develop Africa’s Sahel.” Al Arabiya English, May 18, 2021. https://english.alarabiya.net/business/economy/2021/05/18/Saudi-Arabia-s-PIF-launches-an-initiative-of-200-mln-Euros-to-develop-Africa-s-Sahel-.

Takuba: In Mali with the European Special Forces. Paris, France: Ministère des Armées, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wjN91f0Vq28.

Tankel, Stephen. “Mali: The Weakest Link.” In *With Us and Against Us: How America’s Partners Help and Hinder the War on Terror*, 238–66. Columbia University Press, 2018.

———. “Mali: The Weakest Link.” In *With Us and Against Us*, 238–66. How America’s Partners Help and Hinder the War on Terror. Columbia University Press, 2018. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/tank16810.11.

“Terrorist Financing in West and Central Africa.” Dakar, Senegal: Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa, October 2016. https://www.giaba.org/Frame/pdfviewer%7C%7Cc129358cee441d8d957d394342a35d6b935014783e9ac2c72f7ff3e383ab9df5%7C%7C1023_Terrorist-Financing-West-Central-Africa.pdf.

“The Central Sahel: A Perfect Sandstorm.” Africa Report N°227. Brussels, Belgium: International Crisis Group, June 25, 2015. https://icg-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/227-the-central-sahel-a-perfect-sandstorm.pdf.

“The Defense Institute for International Legal Studies Charter.” Accessed September 20, 2024. https://dscu.edu/diils/charter.

The Economist. “States in the Sahel Have Unleashed Ethnic Gangs with Guns.” *The Economist*, May 2, 2019. https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2019/05/02/states-in-the-sahel-have-unleashed-ethnic-gangs-with-guns.

“The G5 Sahel,” April 28, 2020. https://www.g5sahel.org/le-g5-sahel-2/.

“The History of the 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne),” 2002. https://web.archive.org/web/20071009025542/http://www.soc.mil/SF/history.pdf.

The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States. “The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States,” July 22, 2004. https://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/report/911Report.pdf.

“The Sahel: Regional Politics and Dynamics.” In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, 1–24. Oxford University Press, 2019. https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.765.

The Unreached Peoples Prayer Profiles. “The Tuareg.” Accessed July 17, 2024. http://kcm.co.kr/bethany_eng/clusters/tuareg.html.

The White House. “Fact Sheet: U.S. Security Sector Assistance Policy.” whitehouse.gov, April 5, 2013. https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/04/05/fact-sheet-us-security-sector-assistance-policy.

The White House, Office of the Press Secretary. “The African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI),” April 1, 1998. https://clintonwhitehouse4.archives.gov/Africa/19980401-20179.html.

Thiénot, Dorothée. “Le Blues de l’armée Malienne.” Le Monde diplomatique. Accessed September 23, 2024. https://institutions-mondediplo-com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/2013/05/THIENOT/49061.

Thorup, Mikkel. *An Intellectual History of Terror: War, Violence and the State*. London, England: Routledge, 2010.

Thurston, Alexander. “Wahhabi Compromises and ‘Soft Salafization’ in the Sahel.” In *Wahhabism and the World*, edited by Peter Mandaville, 238–54. Oxford University Press, 2022. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197532560.003.0012.

Thurston, Alexander, and Andrew Lebovich. “A Handbook on Mali’s 2012-2013 Crisis.” *Working Paper No. 13-001*, n.d., 61.

Tilly, Charles. “War and the Power of Warmakers in Western Europe and Elsewhere, 1600-1980.” In *Global Militarization*, by Peter Wallensteen, 75–91. edited by Peter Wallensteen, Johan Galtung, and Carlos Portales, 1st ed. Routledge, 2019. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429044694-3.

Tinti, Peter. “Illicit Trafficking and Instability in Mali: Past, Present, and Future.” Geneva, Switzerland: The Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, January 2014. https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Illicit-Trafficking-and-Instability-in-Mali-Past-present-and-future.pdf.

———. “Long History, Uncertain Results for U.S. Counterterror Efforts in Mali, Sahel.” *World Politics Review* (blog), November 30, 2012. https://www-worldpoliticsreview-com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/long-history-uncertain-results-for-u-s-counterterror-efforts-in-mali-sahel/.

Touchard, Laurent. “Armée Malienne : Le Difficile Inventaire.” JeuneAfrique.com. Accessed July 19, 2024. https://www.jeuneafrique.com/170176/politique/arm-e-malienne-le-difficile-inventaire/.

———. “Défense : Où En Sont Les Forces Armées Maliennes ?” JeuneAfrique.com, juin 2014. https://www.jeuneafrique.com/52526/politique/d-fense-o-en-sont-les-forces-arm-es-maliennes/.

———. “Guerre Au Mali : Retour Sur Le Drame d’Aguelhok.” JeuneAfrique.com, October 21, 2013. https://www.jeuneafrique.com/167687/politique/guerre-au-mali-retour-sur-le-drame-d-aguelhok/.

———. “Mali : Des Services de Renseignement à Reconstruire.” JeuneAfrique.com. Accessed July 19, 2024. https://www.jeuneafrique.com/171419/politique/mali-des-services-de-renseignement-reconstruire/.
———. “Mali : Retour Sur La Bataille Décisive de Konna.” JeuneAfrique.com, January 30, 2014. https://www.jeuneafrique.com/165872/politique/mali-retour-sur-la-bataille-d-cisive-de-konna/.
Tramond, Maj Gen Olivier, and Philippe Seigneur. “Early Lessons From France’s Operation Serval In Mali.” *Army*, June 2013, 40–43.
Transparency International. “Corruption Perceptions Index 2011.” Accessed December 19, 2024. http://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2011.
Tull, Denis M. “Rebuilding Mali’s Army: The Dissonant Relationship Between Mali and Its International Partners.” *International Affairs* 95, no. 2 (March 2019): 405–22. https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiz003.
Turse, Nick, and Alice Speri. “How the Pentagon Uses a Secretive Program to Wage Proxy Wars.” *The Intercept*, July 1, 2022. https://theintercept.com/2022/07/01/pentagon-127e-proxy-wars/.
Ucko, David H. *The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the U.S. Military for Modern Wars*. Georgetown University Press, 2009. https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt2tt63s.
Ulmer, Phillip. “1/10 Special Forces Group Supports Pan Sahel Initiative.” EUCOM, March 4, 2004. https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2004/03/mil-040304-eucom01.htm.
———. “Airmen Support Pan Sahel Initiative.” EUCOM, March 17, 2004. https://www.globalsecurity.org/military///library/news/2004/03/mil-040317-eucom01.htm.
UN General Assembly. “Follow-Up to Paragraph 143 on Human Security of the 2005 World Summit Outcome.” UN General Assembly Resolution. New York, NY: United Nations, October 25, 2012. https://www.un.org/humansecurity/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/N1147622.pdf.
UN News. “Building Climate Resilience and Peace, Go Hand in Hand for Africa’s Sahel.” Africa Renewal, November 14, 2018. https://www.un.org/africarenewal/news/building-climate-resilience-and-peace-go-hand-hand-africa%E2%80%99s-sahel-%E2%80%93-un-forum.
UN News. “Trafficking in the Sahel: Guns, Gas, and Gold,” May 20, 2023. https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/05/1136847.
UN News. “‘Unprecedented’ Insecurity in West Africa and the Sahel,” January 10, 2023. https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/01/1132332.
UN Security Council (68th. “Resolution 2100 (2013) /: Adopted by the Security Council at Its 6952nd Meeting, on 25 April 2013,” April 25, 2013, 11.
Under Secretary of Defense. “Building Partnership Capacity; QDR Execution Roadmap.” Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, May 22, 2006. file:///Users/andreamwalther/Downloads/756385.pdf.
United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). “Sahel Crisis: Overview of Humanitarian Needs and Requirements (May 2020) | OCHA,” May 13, 2020. https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/nigeria/sahel-crisis-overview-humanitarian-needs-and-requirements-may-2020.

United Nations Peacekeeping. “Mandates and the Legal Basis for Peacekeeping.” Accessed March 1, 2024. https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mandates-and-legal-basis-peacekeeping.
United Nations Peacekeeping. “Security Council Ends MINUSMA Mandate, Adopts Withdrawal Resolution,” June 30, 2023. https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/security-council-ends-minusma-mandate-adopts-withdrawal-resolution.
United States Department of State. “Foreign Military Training and DoD Engagement Activities of Interest, 2019-2020.” Accessed August 29, 2023. https://www.state.gov/reports/foreign-military-training-and-dod-engagement-activities-of-interest-2019-2020/.
UNOWAS. “Pastoralism and Security in West Africa and the Sahel; Towards Peaceful Coexistence.” UNOWAS, August 2018. https://unowas.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/rapport_pastoralisme_eng-april_2019_-_online.pdf.
US Africa Command. *AFRICOM TSS Senior Leader Symposium*. March 3, 2011. Photo. https://www.flickr.com/photos/africom/5525622646/.
———. *Jumpmaster Training for 33rd Para*. December 7, 2007. Photo. https://www.flickr.com/photos/africom/4622109221/.
———. “U.S. Africa Command Hosts Military Intelligence Course in Nigeria.” www.army.mil, July 27, 2009. https://www.army.mil/article/25010/u_s_africa_command_hosts_military_intelligence_course_in_nigeria.
US AFRICOM Public Affairs. “U.S. Government Provides Equipment to Malian Army.” U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), October 20, 2009. https://www.africom.mil/article/6953/us-government-provides-equipment-to-malian-army.
US Agency for International Development. “Millennium Challenge Corporation.” Millennium Challenge Corporation. Accessed August 13, 2024. https://www.mcc.gov/about/.
US Congress. Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (as ammended), Pub. L. No. (P.L. 87–195), § 656, 253 (n.d.). https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/COMPS-1071/pdf/COMPS-1071.pdf.
U.S. Congress. National Defense Authorization Act of FY2017, Pub. L. No. 114–328, 1 (2016). https://www.congress.gov/114/plaws/publ328/PLAW-114publ328.pdf.
U.S. Department of Defense. “Draft AFRICOM Area of Responsibility.” February 2007. https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/1d/USAFRICOM_United_States_Africa_Command_Map_Draft.jpg.
US Department of Defense and US Department of State. “Foreign Military Training Report 2008-2009.” Volume I. Washington, DC: US Department of State, 2008. https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/152778.pdfM.
———. “Foreign Military Training Report 2009-2010.” Washington, DC, 2009. https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/155982.pdf.
“U.S. Department of Defense FY2009 Budget Request.” Department of Defense, February. https://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2009/FY2009_Budget_Request_Justification.pdf.
U.S. Department of Defense, and U.S. Department of State. “Foreign Military Training Report.” Volume 1, n.d. https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Volume-I-508-Compliant.pdf.

U.S. Department of State. “INL’s Mali Programs.” Accessed October 11, 2024. //2009-2017.state.gov/j/inl/rls/fs/187466.htm.
US Department of State. “Integrated Country Strategy Mali.” Bamako, Mali: US Department of State, August 3, 2018. https://2017-2021.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/ICS-Mali_UNCLASS_508.pdf.
———. “The United States President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief.” United States Department of State. Accessed August 13, 2024. https://www.state.gov/pepfar/.
———. “Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) Review.” Washington, DC: Department of State, June 2013.
US Department of the Army. “Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies.” *FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5, C1*, May 2014, 1–202.
U.S. Embassy in Mali. “The United States and Mali Celebrate 60 Years of Friendship and Partnership.” US Embasy Bamako, September 25, 2020. https://ml.usembassy.gov/the-united-states-and-mali-celebrate-60-years-of-friendship-and-partnership/.
U.S. Embassy in Mali. “U.S. Relations With Mali,” December 4, 2020. https://ml.usembassy.gov/our-relationship/policy-history/.
U.S.C. Title 22 - FOREIGN RELATIONS AND INTERCOURSE. Accessed May 4, 2025. https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2023-title22/html/USCODE-2023-title22-chap39-subchapII-sec2761.htm.
Vandiver, John. “Small Team of U.S. Troops Still in Mali, on ‘Stand-By.’” *Stars and Stripes*. Accessed September 30, 2024. https://www.stripes.com/migration/small-team-of-u-s-troops-still-in-mali-on-stand-by-1.173547.
Vayavananda, Tatum. “U.S., African Intelligence Professionals of MINOC-A Lead Way for Sustainable Multilateral Engagements.” Marine Corps Forces Europe & Africa. Accessed December 10, 2024. https://www.marforeur.marines.mil/In-the-News/Stories/Article/Article/521027/us-african-intelligence-professionals-of-minoc-a-lead-way-for-sustainable-multi/https%3A%2F%2Fwww.marforeur.marines.mil%2FIn-the-News%2FStories%2FArticle%2FArticle%2F521027%2Fus-african-intelligence-professionals-of-minoc-a-lead-way-for-sustainable-multi%2F.
Verheyde, Nicolas Gros. Behind the Scenes of the Takuba Task Force, July 14, 2021. https://www.bruxelles2.eu/en/2021/07/the-takuba-at-work-ltt-col-francois/.
Vikør, Knut S. “Sufi Brotherhoods in Africa.” In *The History of Islam in Africa*, 441–76. Ohio University Press, 2000. https://illiad.library.tufts.edu/illiad/TFF/illiad.dll?Action=10&Form=75&Value=940694.
Villalón, Leonardo A., and Abdourahmane Idrissa. “The Tribulations of a Successful Transition: Institutional Dynamics and Elite Rivalry in Mali.” In *The Fate of Africa’s Democratic Experiments: Elites and Institutions in Comparative Perspective*, edited by Leonardo A. Villalón and Peter vonDoepp, 49–74. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005.
Wald, Charles F. “U.S. National Security Interests in Africa.” American Enterprise Institute, April 13, 2004. https://www.c-span.org/video/?181352-5/us-national-security-interests-africa&event=181352&playEvent.
Walle, Nicolas van de. “Africa’s Range of Regimes Elections without Democracy.” *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 2 (April 2002): 66–80.
Walle, Nicolas Van De, Jeremy M. Weinstein, John Edward Porter, and Stuart E. Eizenstat. “Rising U.S. Stakes in Africa: Seven Proposals to Strengthen U.S.-Africa Policy.” *Foreign Affairs* 83, no. 6 (May 2004): 162. https://doi.org/10.2307/20034193.

Walther, Andrea. “Civil-Military Operations in Support of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Program.” Bethesda, MD: DAI, December 2010.
Wapmuk, Sharkdam. “ECOWAS: Emerging Architecture for Regional Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency in West Africa.” In *The Routledge Handbook of Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency in Africa*, edited by Usman A. Tar, 315–29. Oxford, United Kingdom: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2021.
Warner, Lesley Anne. “Catch-22 in the Sahel.” Text. The National Interest. The Center for the National Interest, April 3, 2014. https://nationalinterest.org/commentary/catch-22-the-sahel-10176.
———. “The Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership.” Center for Naval Analysis, March 2014. https://www.cna.org/reports/2014/crm-2014-u-007203-final%20%281%29.pdf.
Washington Headquarters Services. “What Are the DoD Issuances?” Accessed December 20, 2022. https://biotech.law.lsu.edu/blaw/dodd/general.html.
Watts, Stephen, Trevor Johnston, Matthew Lane, Sean Mann, Michael McNerney, and Andrew Brooks. *Building Security in Africa: An Evaluation of U.S. Security Sector Assistance in Africa from the Cold War to the Present*. RAND Corporation, 2018. https://doi.org/10.7249/RR2447.
Weber, Max. “Politics as a Vocation.” Munich University, Munich, Germany, January 1919.
Weinbaum, Cortney. “China’s Security Contractors Have Avoided the Fate of Russia’s Military Contractors, So Far.” The RAND Corporation, March 11, 2022. https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2022/03/chinas-security-contractors-have-avoided-the-fate-of.html.
Weir, Erin. “Northern Mali Risks Becoming Forgotten Protection Crisis.” Non-Governmental Organization. *Norwegian Refugee Council* (blog), June 20, 2014. https://www.nrc.no/news/2014/june/northern-mali-risks-becoming-forgotten-protection-crisis-/.
Westad, Odd Arne. *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
White House. “National Security Strategy 2002,” September 2002. https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/nss/nss2002.pdf?ver=oyVN99aEnrAWijAc_O5eiQ%3d%3d.
Whitehouse, Bruce. “The Malian Government’s Challenge to Restore Order in the North.” *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point* 7, no. 2 (February 24, 2014): 12–14.
Whitlock, Craig. “U.S. Expands Secret Intelligence Operations in Africa.” *Washington Post*, May 20, 2023. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-expands-secret-intelligence-operations-in-africa/2012/06/13/gJQAHyvAbV_story.html.
Whittle, Jennifer. “10th Special Forces Group Soldiers Work SOCEUR Mission,” April 2004, 15.
Wing, Susanna D. “Briefing: Mali: Politics of a Crisis.” *African Affairs* 112, no. 448 (July 2013): 476–85.
Wing, Susanna D. “Mali’s Precarious Democracy and the Causes of Conflict.” Special Report. Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace, May 2013. https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/164172/SR331_Malis_Precarious_Democracy_and_the_Causes_of_Conflict.pdf.
Wood, Jaime L. “Civil Affairs Malian Aid Mission.” *Tip of the Spear*, September 2006, 12.

Woods, Lauren, and Elias Yousif. “The Expanding Scope of U.S. Security Assistance Since 9/11.” Security Assistance Monitor: Center for International Policy, September 2021. https://securityassistance.org/publications/the-expanding-scope-of-u-s-security-assistance-since-9-11/.
World Bank. “Western & Central Africa: Development News, Research, Data.” Accessed May 8, 2024. https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/afr/western-and-central-africa.
World Bank Open Data. “Global Fertility Rates,” 2021. https://data.worldbank.org.
World Bank Open Data. “Global GDP,” 2022. https://data.worldbank.org.
World Bank Open Data. “Mali Population Data,” 2018. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?end=2022&locations=ML&name_desc=true&start=1982.
“World Development Report 2011; Conflict, Security, and Development.” The World Bank, 2011. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/806531468161369474/pdf/622550PUB0WDR0000public00BOX361476B.pdf.
World Food Programme. “Scaling up for Resilient Individuals, Communities and Systems in the Sahel,” 2018. https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000110294/download/?_ga=2.114928321.776274370.1705764561-1872091143.1705764561.
World Peace Foundation. “Mali Mission Brief.” Medford, Massachusetts: World Peace Foundation, 2016. https://sites.tufts.edu/wpf/files/2017/07/Mali-brief.pdf.
“World Population Prospects 2022: Demographic Indicators by Region, Subregion and Country, Annually for 1950-2100.” United Nations, 2021. https://population.un.org/dataportal/home?df=8835c9b4-8fdb-4b9b-8713-64c5088b6ecd.
Wurster, Donald C. “AFSOC Irregular Warfare/Medical Stability Operations CONOPS.” Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC), November 15, 2010.
Yuan, Jingdong. “China’s Private Security Companies and the Protection of Chinese Economic Interests Abroad.” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 33, no. 1–2 (2022): 173–95. https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2021.1940646.
Zobel, Clemens. “Le Mali Postcolonial: Perspectives Politiques.” In *La Tragédie Malienne*, edited by Patrick Gonin, Natalie Kotlok, and Marc-Antoine Peerouse de Montclos, 57–81. Paris, France: Vendémediaire, 2013.