

*These Weimar Triangle Analyses are a joint publication by the **French Institute of International Relations (IFRI)**, the **Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM)** and the **German Council of Foreign Relations (DGAP)**. Their purpose is to give the French, Polish, and German viewpoints on central questions concerning European politics and European integration.*

In the current issue, our Weimar Triangle authors analyse the intervention in Mali.

The intervention in Mali from a French perspective

Alain Antil
March 2013

Operation Serval was launched in answer to the attack from several Salafi jihadists groups (Ansar Dine, MUJWA, and AQIM) advancing toward Southern Mali, thus threatening Sévaré (the most forward outpost of the Malian army) and above all Bamako.

This surprise attack upset the intervention's agenda. It was initially planned that territorial recapture should essentially be the task of the Malian army, who would have been formally trained, reequipped, and logistically supported (airspace support, troop transportation, intelligence, engineering, etc.) by the international community. The attack thus required a more direct and massive intervention from the French and Chadian armies, in addition to what was left of the Malian troops.

This agenda acceleration did in fact reinforce French leadership from both military and political perspectives and underlined once more the fact that EU external policy was not present. In France, this EU reticence was understood in different ways. On the one hand, the opposition (who agreed with François Hollande's decision to launch operation Serval) complained about his administration's policy leading to "Paris' diplomatic isolation." On the other hand, overall French public opinion was concerned by "the lack of solidarity" from the other EU member states. Despite this, the French military stresses off the record that the presence of other European soldiers during the phase of northern Mali's re-conquest would not necessarily have reinforced the operation's efficiency, even though it would have been "politically" most welcome.

Various reasons can be given to roughly summarise the EU members' hesitations:

Alain Antil is head of the Sub-Saharan Africa Program at the French Institute of International Relations (Institut français des relations internationales - IFRI).

Les opinions exprimées dans ces textes n'engagent que leurs auteurs.

ISBN : 978-2-36567-148-4
© Tous droits réservés, Paris, Ifri



- some countries have no interest in an EU intervention in Mali, for they do not share any specific relationship with African countries and do not consider Sahel issues relevant to Europe;
- others approve, but currently suffer from budget shortages;
- some countries believe the EU must have an active policy toward the Sahel, but they do not want that relationship to be militarised;
- some suspect Paris of using the EU in its own interest, to cover a power policy that would be a continuation of “*Françafrique*” in its *pré-carré* with a European and UN coat.

In addition to these diverse perceptions, there exists an obvious lack of leadership at the EU institutional level regarding the Sahel case. What is at stake here is not the denunciation of Catherine Ashton, but an examination of the reasons or calculations which led to the designation of such a poorly prepared personality to such a sensitive and important position.

The EU’s role should nevertheless be reinforced in the process of Mali’s reconstruction. Paris has no reason or interest in remaining the EU’s most implicated member. The role of the EU member states should automatically become increasingly important in the different fields of Mali’s reconstruction. One of its priorities is the reconstruction of the Malian army, a role assigned to EUTM Mali.ⁱ

Beyond the issue of the pacification of northern Malian territories – a function likely to be entrusted to a future UN mission and *ad hoc* French military package – the EU could play an important role in both ending the crisis through support of the electoral process and in implementing longer-scale measures to cure some of the deeper causes of the Malian crisis, especially the return to a Malian state in the North with re-established police forces and justice systems, as well as the creation of a strong development policy for Mali, with attention to the theft of aid resources in Bamako and the North of the country.

ⁱ On 18th February 2013, the Council of the European Union formally approved the European Union Training Mission in Mali, EUTM Mali, for a 15-month mandate. This operation is part of Resolution 2085 (2012) of the UN Security Council.

Poland's military involvement in Mali – for Europe's (and our) sake?

Kacper Rękawek

March 2013

The crisis in Mali has not been a major issue of concern for the Polish decision makers, nor has it featured prominently in the Polish media. Some initial interest was sparked by Captain Sanogo's *coup d'état*, seen as fallout from the war in Libya. Then followed a long period of seeming disinterest, ending with the January 2013 French intervention.

One has to be aware that this has not been a mere coincidence. Poland's understanding of Africa is very much focused on its North, and the country has very thin diplomatic, business and political presence throughout the rest of the continent. Poland regards itself as a potential reference country for any African or Middle Eastern country undergoing a political transition, but again this ambition is mostly related to northern countries like Egypt, Libya, and especially Tunisia. Poland's development aid is making strides in Africa, but its 2013 programmes focus on the eastern (and central) part of the continent, i.e. Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, and South Sudan.

Poland is not a total stranger to Sub-Saharan Africa, though. Its troops featured prominently in the ranks of the MINURCAT (United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad) in 2008-09. At the same time, however, there is no Polish presence in CSDP's EUTM Somalia and EUNAVFOR Somalia missions. One could perhaps conclude that Poland's relatively insignificant involvement in EUTM Mali (20 soldiers, mostly providing logistics training for the Malian armed forces) is an attempt to make up for the lack of involvement in Somalia. A more accurate description, however, would be to see Poland's involvement in Mali through solely European, if not bilateral, i.e. Polish-French, lenses. In short, this is regarded as a mechanism of strengthening Warsaw's relations with Paris, despite the former's reluctance to commit larger forces, e.g. as a part of the EUTM Mali's protection force, and a statement in support of beefing up the still feeble EU defence project, which Poland is more than keen to reform. Thus, in order to strengthen Poland's reformist credentials, participation in the latest CSDP mission was seen as crucial.

Simultaneously, the Polish government is unequivocal about the fact that the involvement in Mali is not modelled on the earlier Iraqi or Afghan deployments, and as such it does not constitute participation in yet another "war." Thus we should not expect a sudden increase of the Polish military

Kacper Rękawek is an analyst in the International Security Programme at the Polish Institute of International Affairs (Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych - PISM).



contingent in the country, nor a changeover of its functions, as its presence in Mali is conditioned by the framework of the EU's training mission on one hand, and the French battlefield successes on the other. In theory, the mandate for the Polish Contingent in Mali (*PKW Mali*) ends on 31st December 2013, but given the realities of Mali and the problems of its military, it would be fair to expect its renewal by the end of this year.

The eventual continuation of the Polish military presence in Mali into 2014 should not necessarily be regarded as a sign of being bogged down in that country. The near state collapse in certain parts of Mali and state dysfunction in others has become common currency around Europe, and one should not be under any illusion as to the potential of a rapid "mission accomplished" message emanating from the effort. Of course, certain issues will be dealt with more easily as French and Chadian troops continue to hunt down (or so they claim) remnants of Al-Qaeda in the Malian parts of the Sahara, as the EUTM Mali begins its training of the Malian troops in April, and as the country stages the long-delayed presidential elections in the summer of 2013. Nonetheless, we would be extremely naïve to expect some miraculous Malian turnaround from an imperfect, corruption plagued, nepotistic, ethnically and tribally divided "democracy" to a beacon of hope for Western Africa. In short, the EU and its member states may not end up militarily stuck in Mali for years, but this does not mean that the problem of a dysfunctional and divided state on Europe's doorstep will vanish. Eventually, and hopefully sooner than later, Europe will need to turn its attention away from military matters and start scrutinising other aspects of Malian political, social, and economic realities which precipitated the 2011-13 crisis. Lack of accountability, pervasiveness of corruption, rampant poverty coupled with unimpressive economic management, a burgeoning drug trade, the outsourcing of social services including security to sectarian actors in parts of the country are by far no less important than the reconstitution of the Malian military. Addressing such issues will, however, take more time and effort and is not within the purview of the EUTM Mali and its modest Polish contingent.

Mali illustrates limits of German and EU security policy

Cornelius Vogt

March 2013

Cornelius Vogt is
researcher in the Future
Forum Berlin (BFZ) in the
German Council of Foreign
Relations (Deutsche
Gesellschaft für Auswärtige
Politik e.V –DGAP).

The French Mali campaign that started on 11th January 2013, has ousted the rebels from the big cities. The Mali case demonstrates clearly that the military instrument can prove invaluable in buying time for political negotiations. Until an agreement is reached, however, the situation in Mali remains fragile. Despite French military superiority, total defeat of the rebel groups is rather unrealistic. Whether the Malian forces can be trained and equipped sufficiently to maintain the achievements of the French and the ECOWAS troops remains to be seen. Even more questionable is the stability of Mali's political system and whether the entire Malian armed forces will stay loyal to the political leadership. In short, it will take political stamina and an enormous diplomatic effort to negotiate a power sharing agreement that works for all parties involved in the conflict. The military and political risks are huge.

The Limits of German Involvement in Mali

Mali represents just the latest in a series of cases highlighting Germany's security policy dilemmas. In fact, the case of Mali is quite helpful in identifying some of the limits of German security policy.

Germany's foreign policy options are severely constrained by its enduring unease over the use of military power as a security policy instrument. While that does not mean that the *Bundeswehr* has never been utilised in out-of-area operations, whenever an operation looks to turn into actual combat, Berlin's policymakers feel somewhat paralysed. The German Foreign Office declared early that Germany will not commit combat troops or deliver weaponry to Mali. Yet by the German government's own rendering, the situation in Mali was both unacceptable and dangerous for Europe. No further explanation for Germany's solely non-combat contribution was given. Was it because there was no operational need? Was it because German interests were too little affected? Was it because the government believed that a decision to send German combat troops would be unpopular? The answer remains speculation.

German public officials resort to legalistic arguments to defend the government's position. With reference to the national level, they argue that German constitutional law prohibits military engagement beyond cases of collective defence. With reference to the international level, it is argued that



the UN Security Council has asked ECOWAS to run the support mission in Mali. Both arguments seem to forget that politicians are the ones who pass laws and resolutions. Besides, it is fanciful to suggest that the German government would send combat troops to Mali if only these legal constraints did not exist.

What many Germans refer to as the country's "culture of restraint" is increasingly perceived as a policy of reluctance or even a "dictate of restraint" – particularly by Germany's big allies like France, the UK, and the US. Meanwhile, Germany enjoys a reputation of being the "brakeman" of CSDP and NATO. Such credibility problematically affects Germany's ability to convince its allies in other situations.

Thus, is Germany repeatedly finding itself in a situation where it is isolated on questions of war and peace? The opposite is true. There is no doubt that other (smaller) European countries are quite satisfied with Germany's reluctance to go to war. Their risk of being called out and shamed for not sharing the burden is unlikely as long as a heavyweight like Germany remains unwilling to live up to the expectations of others.

German security policy has come a long way since the end of the Cold War. Today, German troops are deployed far beyond the country's borders and even far outside Europe. In particular the experience gained in Afghanistan has taught the country to what degree a comprehensive approach is needed for a successful out-of-area mission. The fostering of economic development and acceptance of the limits of military campaigns are supported by many Germans (including policymakers). Some have turned this fact around to mean that the military cannot be used for anything. The truth is: There is no uniquely military solution for bringing peace and stability to Mali and the Sahel. Nevertheless, peace and stability in Mali are not feasible without a military component.

The Limits of CSDP

The French military endeavour in Mali has received support throughout Europe. European capitals agreed that Northern Mali must not turn into a sanctuary for terrorists and criminals. This is where most of the concord ended. Despite a general consensus on the threat emanating from a destabilised Mali, EU member states were unwilling to combat the rebels together. Once again, Europeans wonder how the so-called EU Battle Groups got their name.

Undoubtedly, French interests in Mali and the region are much stronger than, say, German or Czech interests. Military engagement in the CSDP framework requires consensus. A proposal for a European combat mission in Mali was never on the table, even though an overall European security interest was at stake. As long as there is no European executive authority, CSDP represents the competing interests of sovereign European member states.

EU member states have agreed, however, on a training mission for the Malian army,

under the condition that there would be no direct involvement in actual fighting. Whether 200 European instructors are sufficient to enable the Malian military to fight the rebels remains to be seen.

French military intervention in Mali prevented Bamako's occupation by Islamist rebels and bought policymakers time to set up a plan for stability and security in Mali and the Sahel. The necessity of this intervention notwithstanding, the prospects for success of this stabilisation effort are anything but certain.