Compounding Fragmentation

Security force assistance to fragile states in the Sahel and Horn of Africa

Western countries attempt to remedy instability and insecurity in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa by providing Security Force Assistance (SFA). Since 2010, billions have been spent on training and equipping armed forces and security forces in the six countries studied here: Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Somalia. SFA has been intended to address long-term structural problems related to the low capacity of state security units, including ineffectiveness, corruption, and abusive practices. But it is also used to combat short-term symptoms of instability and debilitated state capacity such as insurgencies, organised crime, illegal immigration and smuggling.

In this comprehensive review of SFA efforts, we highlight how such assistance might contribute to political fragmentation within states, and in particular within their security forces. Arguably, SFA efforts in the countries investigated often appear to be ineffective and, at times, even counter-productive.

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Executive Summary

This paper is a comprehensive review of Security Force Assistance (SFA) in highly fragile environments within the Sahel and the Horn of Africa. By providing SFA, Western countries attempt to remedy instability and insecurity in these regions. Since 2010, billions have been spent on training and equipping armed forces and security forces in the six countries studied. SFA has been intended to address two sets of challenges:

- Long-term structural problems related to the low capacity of state security units, including ineffectiveness, corruption, and abusive practices.
- Short-term symptoms of instability and debilitated state capacity such as insurgencies, organised crime, illegal immigration and smuggling.

SFA efforts in the countries investigated appear often to be ineffective and at times even counter-productive. In the report, the authors highlight how such assistance might contribute to political fragmentation within states, and in particular within their security forces:

- Providers have a piecemeal approach to conceptualising SFA programmes. Multiple programmes, often by the same provider, serve different and sometimes diverging objectives and interests.
- The design of SFA programmes tends to be ill-suited to the particular weak state settings. Implementation and quality assurance are hampered by short-term, low-risk and low-cost approaches, leaving programmes inadequate for fulfilling their objectives.
- When implemented, SFA often involves training by personnel from a variety of foreign armed forces, all with distinctive interests, traditions and approaches. Recipient units may be pulled in different directions, and bonds linking national security forces may be weakened.
- Uncoordinated programmes and SFA providers’ piecemeal approaches are likely to exacerbate fragmentation of security sectors in recipient countries. Increasing fragmentation weaken security forces’ effectiveness – contradicting the programmes’ stated goals.
- Within a fragmented security sector it is more difficult to ensure professional standards and civilian oversight, and thus to avoid human rights violations, coups or other ways in which lawful civilian authority is impaired.

To counter this tendency of SFA programmes to exacerbate fragmentation, providers should consider:

- Designing programmes based on detailed information about the composition and capacity of the security sector in the recipient state and calibrate goals accordingly.
- Developing long-term, adequately funded programmes based upon close partnerships with recipient governments and security forces, so that strengthening cohesion within the security sector is a crucial element of programme design.
- Coordinating with other providers to avoid a plethora of disparate programmes that intensify fragmentation of recipient states’ security forces.
Preamble

This policy report is an outcome of an initiative focusing on security force assistance to fragile states. The impetus for this report, and the broader research agenda behind it, is the growth and proliferation of SFA programmes over the last decade. There is a tendency to use various train and equip schemes as a (relatively) cheap quick fix for a range of problems. It is imperative to gain a better understanding of the rationale, operationalisation and impact of what has become a bewildering jungle of initiatives and programmes. Without such knowledge, decisions and policies will be based on received wisdom and evaluations of individual programmes.

Research for the report has been carried out by a PRIO research group, who since 2017 has combined expansive mapping of SFA programmes with field work in multiple sites in Africa and the Middle East. Through meetings, seminars and conferences, findings have been discussed and vetted by experts, practitioners and critical observers including scholars, policy-makers, military personnel and civil society activists. The research and dissemination activities have been generously supported by the Research Council of Norway’s NORGLOBAL2 programme, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence.

Geographically, the report focuses on the east-west Horn of Africa-Sahel belt of countries, which face similar challenges in terms of insecurity, economic stagnation and unregulated transnational activity. Among these, we have chosen six countries which, considered both separately and as a sample of cases, illustrate many of the challenges motivating the provision of SFA programmes. Two countries are investigated in depth: Mali and Somalia.

This report is an initial step in a comprehensive mapping of SFA provision and accompanying research into its implementation on the ground. Complementary analysis and recommendations may be found in the PRIO Policy Brief ‘Small States’ Security Force Assistance in the Sahel: Lessons Learned and Future Challenges’. In the next stage, the research group will present results from a continent-wide survey of SFA provision and a comparative collection of articles based on fieldwork from different sites in the Global South.
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1. Introduction: Increased Spending on SFA While Multiple Crises of the Sahel and Horn of Africa Deepen

The Sahel and Horn of Africa are often associated with migration, violent extremism, insurgency and drug trafficking. In recent years conflicts have intensified, coups and attempted coups have occurred, and security forces have committed serious violations of human rights. To address these problems the US, EU and other outside powers have adopted a range of measures, among which Security Force Assistance (SFA) is a key element. It consists of training and equipping military and civilian security forces to enhance professionalism and operational capacity. SFA is provided in stand-alone programmes or integrated into broader military interventions, UN peacekeeping operations, and security sector reform programmes. Since 2010, billions of dollars have been spent on multiple programmes, thousands of personnel have been deployed, and tens of thousands have received training in the Sahel and Horn of Africa. The map in Figure 1 provides an overview of the SFA programmes currently deployed in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa. What exactly is being provided, and how does training impact recipient forces and overall security in host countries? This report answers these questions by providing an overview of the SFA provided to the countries under review, discussing factors affecting its effectiveness, and enumerating potential unintended consequences of such programmes.

The report focuses on the ‘G5 Sahel’ countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger) and Somalia, although practically all states within the Sahel and Horn of Africa regions experience a high degree of fragility and receive SFA. The G5 Sahel countries and Somalia are

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1 There are different conceptualisations of these two regions; here we consider these regions to cover more or less the countries of the Sahel belt from the Atlantic coast to the Indian ocean.


3 Research for the map did not include SFA provided by China, Russia and the United Nations to Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Djibouti.
comparable in that they receive large amounts of assistance, have pro-Western governments, and have involved other Western military interventions (e.g. the French *Opération Barkhane* and US drone strikes). All have relatively small armed or paramilitary forces, officially numbering from 5,300 in Niger to 30,350 in Chad. These countries are sparsely populated and are all extremely fragile, with very low levels of economic development, porous borders, and long-term conflicts. Somalia is by far the weakest of these six states.

The report identifies two overall factors that stand in the way of effectively executing programmes in the Sahel and Horn of Africa. First, the operational environment of extremely weak or collapsed states makes it difficult to implement programmes to goals set by providers. Secondly, providers have delivered short-term and poorly coordinated programmes offering piecemeal solutions that appear to exacerbate fragmentation of the recipient’s security forces. Together, these factors also explain why it has been difficult for providers and recipients to act with accountability and prevent unintended consequences such as violations of human rights, escalation of conflict, defections, and proliferation of donated arms and military equipment.

The report is based on document analysis, interview data and participant observation. Norway is briefly examined as a provider of SFA to exemplify challenges facing small state contributors to SFA. The two main cases of recipient countries are Mali and Somalia. The Mali case study is supported by evidence generated during a visit to Bamako in August 2018, including interviews with foreign providers of SFA, recipient agencies and civil society.

In the sections below we outline multiple security challenges that SFA is supposed to address in the Sahel and Horn of Africa. Then we provide an overview of programmes in several countries, giving evidence to both the proliferation of SFA in the region, and the heterogeneity of the programmes. We then introduce current challenges to implementation of the SFA programmes, and, in the fourth section, discuss the structural factors explaining these challenges. In the concluding section we address implications of our findings and outline two main recommendations.

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5 For more information on the relationship between SFA and fragmentation and cohesion, see: N. Marsh and Ø. H. Rolandsen (under review) ‘Fragmented we fall: The impact of foreign security force assistance on security and governance in Mali’.
2. Motivation: Context and Imperatives for Providing SFA to the Sahel and Horn of Africa

The Sahel and Horn of Africa regions are profoundly affected by armed conflict, other forms of organised violence, and criminal activity. A broad spectrum of armed groups includes neighbourhood protection groups armed with machetes, rebels fighting for political concessions, and transnational Islamist groups with financing from abroad, which, seen as a whole, represent a fundamental threat to conventional conceptions of statehood to many of the countries in the Sahel and Horn of Africa. Transnational networks of organised violence compound these challenges. Conflict in Burkina Faso, Chad and Nigeria was transformed during 2011–12 by events in neighbouring countries. Following the civil war in Libya in 2011, armed fighters, many of Malian origin, returned to Mali and contributed to the start of the 2012 Tuareg rebellion (see below). In turn, continuing conflict and partial collapse of the state had repercussions in Niger and Burkina Faso. Another transnational threat, Boko Haram, launched attacks in Chad in 2015. Conflicts in the six countries examined in this report reveal the complexity of the challenges SFA programmes are intended to address. We will discuss security challenges in the two main cases, Mali and Somalia, then provide an overview of the four other countries.

2.1. Mali

Mali, a former French colony, has been independent since 1960. Malian security forces were seen by observers as dysfunctional, incoherent, and poorly equipped and trained, and internal conflict intensified in 2012 when a rebellion began in the North. Army officers carried out a coup, but the junta was soon ousted by French military intervention (Opération Serval), which also pushed the rebels back to the northern peripheries. Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta won the subsequent elections in 2013 and 2018. A peace agreement was signed in 2015 between the government and two rebel groups. Opération Barkhane, which in 2014 replaced Opération Serval, has a regional mandate where French military contingents engage in direct combat and provide SFA. Organised violence continues, however, involving government forces, French troops, jihadists, and traffickers who move commodities and people; in recent years more localised conflicts in the mid-region of the country have intensified.

Figure 2: Conflict incidents in Mali, 2010–2019. Source: Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) project

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Rebel groups have mushroomed since the peace agreement, and groups aligned with Al-Qaeda and ISIS, labelled “terrorists” and excluded from the peace process, continue fighting. While the distinction between “rebel” and “terrorist” might be clear in the Western countries’ strategic planning rooms, categories are blurred on the ground. Interviewees suggested that people move between categories according to political and financial expediency.\(^7\) The peace process itself appeared to spawn new rebel organisations.\(^8\) The result is a fluid security situation in the north, where the government presence is limited to garrison towns and occasional patrols. Increased violence in recent years shows that insecurity has also engulfed the middle of the country and expands further southwards towards Bamako.

The goals of military intervention were summarised in 2013 by a UN report – to restore territorial integrity, ensure the physical security of Malian communities, and mitigate other threats to governance and development, including terror attacks, weapons proliferation, and criminal activity such as drug smuggling.\(^9\)

### 2.2. Somalia

Somalia, at the tip of the Horn of Africa, has about 14.3 million people. The authority of the central government is largely restricted to the capital, Mogadishu. The regions of Puntland and Somaliland are self-declared autonomous states. Since the collapse of the Siad Barre regime in 1991, the country has experienced constant civil conflict and recurrent humanitarian crises. The country’s ungoverned spaces harbour jihadist organisations; in particular the emergence of Al Shabaab, a militant group aligned with Al-Qaeda, has further consolidated Somalia as a global terrorist threat. These conditions have prompted repeated interventions, including two UN missions (1992–1995), an African Union peace operation (AMISOM, 2007–), and invasions by Ethiopia (2006–2009, 2011–2014) and Kenya (2011–2012). The Transitional Federal Government, established in 2004, and its international partners have prioritised rebuilding the armed forces and restoring security. SFA efforts in 2010–2019, discussed further below, have focused on counter-insurgency.

![Figure 3: Conflict incidents in Somalia, 2010–2019. Source: Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) project](image)

\(^7\) Based on interviews with Mali officials, military officers, journalists and academics, as well as foreign diplomats and persons engaged in providing SFA conducted in Bamako in August 2018 by members of the project team.

\(^8\) Interview 08, Bamako August 2018.

Despite international assistance, the Somali National Security Forces (SNSF) are under-equipped, fragmented, and incapable of operating independently, as shown below. Government forces, AMISOM, and foreign allies, have conducted extensive operations against Al Shabaab, but the group still carries out high-impact vehicle bombings in Mogadishu. Al Shabaab has overrun AMISOM bases, seizing arms and ammunition, and has conducted terrorist attacks in neighbouring Kenya.

2.3. Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania and Niger

Burkina Faso, Chad, and Niger have experienced increased violence since 2014. By March 2019 escalating conflict had displaced 2.7 million people in the Lake Chad Basin, and over 100 000 in Burkina Faso.11

Niger faces three crises: infiltration and attacks by Boko Haram and other extremist groups near Lake Chad; in the north, trafficking and displaced persons from Libya; and in the west, conflict between farmers and pastoralists, exacerbated by Islamist armed groups, some from Mali. Of particular concern since 2015 have been attacks in northern Burkina Faso by Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the locally founded Ansarul Islam (which has ties to groups in Mali). By the end of 2019 (see Figure 4), violence had affected the east and southwest. Few incidents have occurred in Mauritania, but because of organised crime and fear of infiltration by terrorist groups, the authorities have declared a military zone in the east.

2.4. Motivation for SFA programmes

A crude indicator of state strength is the number of soldiers a country mobilises in relation to its total population.12 A basic premise of SFA programmes, however, is that capacity is also related to training and equipment. In insurgencies and domestic security operations in the Sahel and Horn of Africa, security forces may not necessarily be much stronger than their opponents in terms of the quality of training and equipment. There is also a long history of insurgencies recruiting among veterans from state security forces or through mutinies or individual desertion. Armed groups also obtain equipment from state stocks, via corrupt sales (e.g. Somalia, below), pilfering,
capture or cross-border flows. Security forces are sometimes themselves sources of instability, violent abuses, and criminal activity, constituting long-term structural challenges for fragile states.

SFA has broad objectives reflecting the multiple challenges recipient counties face. Improving citizens’ security justifies most SFA programmes in fragile states, as do enhancing collective security and mitigating direct and indirect threats to provider states. Some of the security challenges outlined above have in particular motivated foreign intervention. Western governments especially are concerned with “terrorism”, or insurgency in which government forces or civilians are attacked; smuggling of migrants towards the southern Mediterranean coast; and trafficking narcotics and other illicit commodities. Programmes may also aim to improve relations with the recipient country’s political and military leadership. SFA missions provide opportunities for both trainers and trainees to gain career boosting experience (though mandates may rule out direct participation in combat). Small states may see contributions to larger SFA programmes as a way to demonstrate willingness to share the burden of multilateral operations carried out by organisations such as the EU and improve relations with larger states, foremost the US. Although small states’ contributions to SFA efforts might be modest, major players consider them symbolically important.

The main providers of SFA in the Sahel and Horn of Africa – the EU, France and the US – have various motives. A pressing concern of the EU is the effect in migration and trafficking of security threats. Its dramatic increase in spending on SFA (see below) represents growing confidence and capacity as a security actor, exemplified in the new EU command centre for military training and advisory missions. The SFA missions described here are among the EU’s most important attempts to secure its borders and create stability in regions close to Europe. France itself has significant security and economic stakes in the Sahel, where it has assumed responsibilities to maintain order and beat down insurgencies in its former colonies.

The SFA programmes of the US are overshadowed by initiatives elsewhere – for example in Afghanistan, Colombia and Iraq. Still, extensive infrastructure was built up around Africa during the Cold War and adapted for the War on Terror. Currently considerable amounts are allocated to many states on the continent and SFA is one of the US’s most important tools for supporting allies and gaining influence on the continent. Media discussion after US personnel were killed in Niger suggests however that except for such incidents, SFA in the region has low political salience domestically.

Foreign security engagements sometimes have a regional scope and they involve both the use of troops from the region in operations, and various efforts to increase their capacity and compatibility with foreign deployments. Since 2014, France has deployed 3 500 troops in Opération Barkhane, which covers Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. The operation has been gradually enforced and was about 4500 strong by early 2020. Within the G5 Sahel Joint Force, the armies of Chad and Niger fought rebels in Northern Mali in 2013 and 2015. Contributing to the multi-national force dealing with insecurity around Lake Chad, the Chadian

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army was deployed against Boko Haram in Nigeria and neighbouring countries. Large-scale UN-mandated missions in Mali (United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, MINUSMA) and Somalia (African Union Mission in Somalia AMISOM), involve coalitions of experienced combat troops, and various training programmes for the state security sector.

3. Means: Conceptualisation and Size of SFA Programmes

SFA in the Sahel and Horn of Africa targets a diverse range of threats: border control, counter-insurgency, counter-narcotics, migration control, and support for peacekeeping forces. SFA is assumed to be a way for providers to address these issues at low cost and minimal risk (see previous section). Within the six recipient states, security assistance is provided to the armed forces (mainly the army, but where applicable to naval and air force units), the national guard, gendarmerie, police, and other personnel including border guards. In the overview below we have included assistance to law enforcement if it involves training for combat (such as counter-insurgency or counter-terror roles). SFA is provided to various security forces because they have different functions and objectives; the army may be best positioned in counter-insurgency, while the police force may better placed to combat drug trafficking. The existence of multiple, possibly competing, security forces increases the complexity faced by personnel from providing states.

These programmes represent one of the most important means by which the US, EU and other governments conduct relations with recipient governments. Some smaller projects are sometimes run by one country, but larger efforts are commonly designed as multinational coalitions (which can also involve a recipient country’s own forces) or as co-ordinated bilateral initiatives. Although EU, the US and France take lead, formally or informally, in larger programmes, small countries together carry a significant share of the financial and personnel cost, may provide needed skills and lend legitimacy (especially if they have no history of colonialism or regional intervention). Somalia and Mali (see below) illustrate that even without formal coalitions, there are several instances where multiple providers target their contributions towards a shared goal.

Boundaries between SFA and other security programmes, which involve other kinds of collaboration, donation of weapons, and joint operations, are blurred. Opération Barkhane, for example, provides training to the armed personnel of several Sahelian states, but it is difficult to classify this as a SFA programme at all. Some SFA initiatives are designed to train small numbers of elite troops, notably in Somalia and Mali, which risks further fragmenting a recipient state’s security forces and creating expectations that cannot be met after the programme ends.

Also, large SFA programmes which train tens of thousands of personnel, have a number of inherent challenges in terms of effectiveness. EU training missions in Mali and Somalia feature deployments of personnel from tens of European armed forces; coalitions may accord greater legitimacy to an SFA programme, reducing political opposition in provider and recipient states. Nimble bureaucracies and efficient decision-making allow small states to respond quickly. A smaller pool of personnel can facilitate knowledge transfer; repeated deployments to one area can ease continuity.

Whether SFA is conceptualised as a coalition, as informal collaboration or is provided by disparate programmes, it can be very difficult to coordinate multiple providers. The US has multiple SFA programmes administered by the departments of State and Defense (see below for types of support in the six states studied). Similarly, the EU, and its member states, have initiated multiple SFA programmes in each of those states (see the appendix). Each provider attempts to direct

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19 Biddle et al. ‘Small footprint, small payoff: The military effectiveness of security force assistance’.
others towards its national priorities. SFA providers with multiple, overlapping or diverging objectives can thereby push security forces in recipient states in different directions.22

SFA programmes tend to be conceptualised to minimise risk to their personnel, which can restrict their operations. In Mali and elsewhere, trainers often have to remain in areas under government control at a safe distance from frontlines and destabilised areas. They are then unable to accompany trainees during patrol and operations and cannot provide direct feedback to trainees, prevent war crimes or human rights violations in the field, and adjust training courses in light of practical experience. These kinds of precautions may inhibit the effectiveness of SFA programmes. When designing such programmes, the need for language skills and high levels of cultural awareness among personnel inhibits the effectiveness of the trainers and is not sufficiently emphasised during planning.23

Indeed, that it has proven difficult to recruit and retain competent personnel is an inherent challenge in the conceptualisation of SFA efforts. Although some smaller states easily find trainers willing to deploy, eligible personnel may avoid SFA assignments which might be uncomfortable, dangerous and a career side-track compared to combat missions. Another design weakness is the reliance on short deployments which results in high turnover and lack of continuity. This in turn has profoundly limited the ability of both individuals and institutions to learn from their environment and provide SFA meeting recipients’ needs. Short-term mandates and budget cycles prevented the EU missions in Mali from planning a long-term commitment. Below we will provide a quick overview of the main SFA programmes and their official budget figures. More detailed information is available in the appendix. Figures presented here are verifiable, but the total cost of the SFA programmes is higher; costs are spread over several budgets; some programmes are transnational and target several countries.

3.1. EU and US

The EU and US are the most significant providers of SFA in the six states, between them reportedly training more than 57 600 personnel in 2010–18 (probably more since the EU has not published the total numbers trained in its missions in Niger or Somalia). The US trained over 12 000 in Burkina Faso and the EU about 15 000 in Mali, significant proportions of each state’s security forces.

Total spending by the EU and US on country-specific SFA programmes, related regional programmes covering the six countries, and identified military assistance to the UN in Somalia and Mali amounted to some USD 5.2 billion during the 2010–18 period. This figure includes USD 1.2 billion spent on programmes specific to the states studied. The remaining USD 4.4 billion was allocated to regional programmes including these six states. For instance, in 2018 the EU announced EUR 100 million supporting the G5 Sahel Joint Force; and EU CAP NESTOR, an EU anti-piracy programme covering Somalia and other Indian Ocean states, was allocated EUR 61 million. Total spending on relevant identified US regional programmes between 2010 and 2018 was USD 4.2 billion. Assistance provided to the Lake Chad region amounted to USD 726 million, to North and West Africa 944 million, and to the MENA region 1.2 billion. The United States also spent USD 2 billion on the AMISOM mission in Somalia, funds allocated both to parties in

22 Reno, ‘The politics of security assistance in the horn of Africa’.

Somalia and to African states contributing troops. The US spent some USD 128 million in 2012 on troops deployed to the MINUSMA peacekeeping mission in Mali (and previous missions).

Another US SFA related programme is the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) which was established by the US in 2005 to supersede the Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI). Directed by the State Department in cooperation with the Defence Department and USAID, the TSCTP includes Chad, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal and aims to strengthen counter-insurgency capabilities, enhance regional cooperation and border security, strengthen the rule of law, reduce support for violent extremism and reinforce military ties with the US.24

3.2. Other providers
The total figures for the EU and US omit security assistance by other states, for which statistics have been unavailable. Ethiopia, France, Italy, Kenya, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and the United Kingdom have provided SFA programmes. Their dollar value is very unlikely to compare with that provided by the US and EU, and the proliferation of providers exacerbate problems of coordination. Some SFA has been provided by former imperial powers to their ex-colonies. France gives SFA to francophone countries in North Africa (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, and Mauritania). Its SFA efforts are part of a wider military engagement in the region. The United Kingdom and Turkey provide SFA in Somalia, parts of which were under the British and Ottoman empires. Ethiopian and Kenyan interventions aim to stabilise regions close to their borders with Somalia.

3.3. The increasing role of the EU
The EU dramatically increased its involvement in the Sahel and Somalia between 2010 and 2019. In 2010 there were no EU programmes in the six countries studied. By 2019 there were five with a combined annual budget estimated at EUR 142.7 million.

As shown in Figure 5,25 the five EU programmes grew after given their initial mandates.

![Figure 5: Annual spending on six EU SFA programmes, 2010–2019.](https://www.prio.org/Projects/Project/?x=1788)
In January 2019 the EU Training Missions in Mali and Somalia included contingents from 22 EU member states and five other states.

The EU has increased its role because of the perception, particularly after the ‘Arab Spring’ of 2011 and the 2014–5 migration crisis, that instability in North Africa and Somalia poses a threat to EU interests. Engagement also coincides with growing EU confidence and capability as a security actor seeking to influence affairs beyond its borders.

### 3.4. SFA provided to Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania and Niger

Through its ministries of defence, foreign affairs, and interior, France is a significant provider of SFA to the Sahel states included in this study. Comprehensive statistics on the amounts spent or numbers trained are not available. The following overview therefore focuses upon EU and US SFA provision.

Between 2010 and 2018 the US spent some USD 5 million and trained 12,035 in SFA programmes that included border security, building military capacity, counter-insurgency and support for peacekeeping (Table 1). In February 2019 the District of Columbia National Guard signed an agreement with the Armed Forces of Burkina Faso to provide training on counter-insurgency and peacekeeping. There is no EU security assistance mission in Burkina Faso. Individual EU countries give some assistance though. For instance, France has provided support for the G5 Joint Force including financing a technical military academy there.

The most significant SFA providers in Chad have been France and the United States. Between 2010 and 2018 US assistance was worth USD 199 million and included training 2,087 Chadian personnel, mainly in reconnaissance, intelligence gathering, and cross-border cooperation. US aid is channelled through the Global Security Contingency Fund (GSCF) directed at countering Boko Haram, and via the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership. US aid has focused upon building the capacity of the Chadian armed forces in counter-insurgency and support for peacekeeping (see appendix). Twelve French officers and NCOs are deployed to train Chadian soldiers in cooperating with French troops deployed under *Opération Barkhane*, and in logistics and leadership in modernising the armed forces. Such training includes convoy operations, countering IEDs, infantry combat skills and use of explosives. Around 400 Chadian soldiers received training in 2017, and 320 within the first six months of 2018. In 2017 about 100 members of the Chadian armed forces received military training and instruction in France. The mandate of the 2008–9 EUFOR Tchad/RCA military mission to Chad and the CAR did not...
include training and equipping the Chadian armed forces; there is no other EU mission in Chad.

Between 2000 and 2018 US assistance to Niger was worth USD 233 million and focused upon building military capacity, counter-narcotics, counter-insurgency and support for peacekeeping, and provided training for 1 647 personnel. French assistance to Niger has focused upon equipment rather than training, and has included three helicopters in 2012, and in 2017 arms, light trucks, communications equipment, medical supplies, and body armour for Niger’s G5 Sahel battalion. A training programme for pilots, mechanics and other support personnel accompanied the helicopters. Other training under the auspices of Opération Barkhane included combat medicine and rescue. In 2017 Belgium agreed to provide SFA and in 2018 the Nigerien government initiated a Force Generation project to create 12 elite Special Intervention Battalions over five years. This includes multiple SFA providers and the Belgian Special Operation Forces (SOF) have set up a somewhat innovative “fusion cell” to coordinate training with SOF personnel from other Western states and Nigeria who are based in Niger. Germany is another provider of training to the SOF there. Since 2013, Canada has twice a year deployed about 25 francophone troops for two or three months to provide training in infantry skills and leadership. After months of diplomatic wrangling, an Italian training mission to Niger became operational in September 2018. By January 2019 it comprised 92 troops; training focused upon counter-insurgency and migration control.

EU CAP Sahel Niger was launched in 2012 to provide training, advice and equipment for strengthening Niger’s security forces and control migration. During 2018, the programme trained 2 557 personnel and provided equipment worth EUR 4.9 million. Between the launch of EU CAP Sahel Niger and 2019, some 13 000 members of the security forces had taken part in training courses.

France and the US have been the largest providers of security assistance to Mauritania, from the US worth USD 118 million in 2000–2018. US priorities were border security, building military capacity, counter-narcotics, counter-insurgency and support for peacekeeping. The US had by 2018 trained 4 574 personnel. The EU has no SFA programme in Mauritania.

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**Flintlock**, an annual regional exercise since 2005, involves African states and US and allied counter-insurgency forces, and aims to develop the capacity of African security forces. Flintlock is built on the concept of Western educating, training and mentoring of local forces in operational skills and regional collaboration. In 2018, approximately 1900 service members from African and Western nations participated in the exercise in Niger.46

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**Norwegian Security Force Assistance**

The Norwegian contribution to SFA to the countries studied illustrates the involvement of small European states such as the Nordic countries, Belgium and the Netherlands. SFA is presented as part of the Government of Norway’s responses to security challenges in fragile states. Norwegian SFA is usually provided in coalitions involving NATO members or other Western states. Norwegian armed forces have contributed SFA to the development of the East African Standby Force (EASF), a regional force with military, police and civilian components from its member states: Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda. Norwegian assistance is channelled mainly through the Nordic partnership NORDEFCO.47 In recent years, the Sahel has become a focal point for Norwegian engagement in Africa. Norway established an embassy in Bamako in 2017 and has developed a separate *Strategy for Norway’s Efforts in the Sahel Region, 2018–2020*.48 The government has donated NOK 15 million to the G5 Sahel joint force in its fight against insurgencies, organised crime and illegal trade, in addition to providing the force with civilian capacity building. In 2018, the Norwegian national budget set aside NOK 2.714 million for SFA via the Flintlock military exercise, which included provision of a Hercules transport plane and a number of special forces operators to provide training.49 The Norwegians are based at Camp Bifrost in Bamako.50 And in April 2018 Norway sent some 40 soldiers to Niger to provide training and mentoring for regional forces.51 Norway also contributes to EU CAP in Mali and MINUSMA. It made a joint contribution to the EUTM with Finland, Sweden and the Baltic States through NORDEFCO in 2013, while Norway declined an invitation to contribute trainers to the EUTM in 2014 and to contribute to the establishment of the French-led EU operation Task Force Takuba in 2020.52

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46 Participating African states included: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal. Western partners included Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States. See US Embassy in Niger (2018) *Niger Hosts 2018 Flintlock Exercise*. Press Release, 2 May.


50 Information on Norwegian support to MINUSMA from: Norwegian Ministry of Defence (2019) *Norway supports UN operation in Mali for two new years*. Press release, 1 April.


4. Implementation: Difficulties Operating in Fragile Environments

Providing SFA in fragile environments such as Mali or Somalia involves challenges that soldiers and other personnel may be ill-equipped to manage. Personnel from Western countries frequently have no specific training or experience in providing SFA and have difficulty operating in an unfamiliar context.

Countries in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa are characterised by complex governance in which the state plays a role, but there are other sources of authority, such as clan leaders, warlords and informal networks which also play an important part in social organisation. In these contexts, written agreements with state officials may have little practical effect. Another challenges is that foreigners can usually only advise and not command members of the national armed forces. In consequence, personnel from states providing SFA are inhibited by the formal rules of state sovereignty – protocols must be signed with ministries even if it is obvious that power lies elsewhere. It is also difficult for personnel to adapt SFA programmes to political changes in recipient countries.53

Divergent goals between the recipient and provider of SFA may arise anywhere, but are more likely to lead to problems in highly fragile countries.54 None of the governments in the Sahel and Horn of Africa are fully democratic, and some are authoritarian states. In such an environment SFA providers can be naïve about the uses to which their assistance can be put. Civil society organisations have suggested that SFA has served to support repressive national leaders and the armed forces that maintain their hold on power. The International Crisis Group has criticised the provision of SFA to Chad, arguing that it might facilitate ‘strongman’ rule by President Déby rather than promote robust and legitimate public institutions.55 Human Rights Watch has called upon SFA donors to refrain from supporting Burkina Faso units that have been found to abuse human rights.56 Misappropriation of donated equipment is another concern. For example, in Somalia donated arms and other military equipment have been diverted to illicit markets.

Some observers have highlighted the danger that governments in the Sahel might exaggerate the gravity of security threats in order to receive assistance and to upgrade units that could be used against domestic opponents.57 External aid for the Chadian armed forces has been criticised for encouraging President Déby to seek political support focus his military rather than building popular support.58 Diverging interests of various national governments in the Sahel and Horn of

54 For the Sahel region: Warner. The Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership Building Partner Capacity to Counter Terrorism and Violent Extremism: 71.
58 Moncrieff. ‘In Backing Chad, the West Faces Moral Hazards’.
Africa hamper regional cooperation to counter transnational groups such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.  

Corrupt practices hinder SFA programmes. Leaders redirect funds meant for buying arms, uniforms, food or other essentials, or sell what has been donated. In Somalia (and elsewhere), units may be under strength because of ‘ghost soldiers’ – the practice by which commanders pocket the pay of non-existing soldiers. Most importantly, corruption saps the loyalty, élan and commitment of troops who perceive their officers as interested only in personal enrichment.

Because of a history of military coups, armed forces may be seen as a threat to the safety of the political leadership. Since 2010 there have been coups, or significant attempted coups, in Burkina Faso in 2015 and 2016, Chad in 2013, Mali in 2012, and in Niger in 2010. The fear that armed forces may mutiny or attempt to seize power affect SFA implementation. ‘Coup proofing’ strategies often reduce the overall effectiveness of the armed forces by, for example, frequently transferring officers so they cannot form close relationships with subordinates, appointing cronies to positions of high command, establishing multiple lines of authority, and duplicating force structures. US personnel have noted that leaders’ fears of forces strong enough to stage a coup have curtailed SFA provision. For example, in Burkina Faso US special forces were only allowed to train two units that had demonstrated loyalty to the President during previous protests and mutinies.

Training may be difficult if recruits lack even basic skills. Illiterate personnel are unable to follow written orders or read maps, let alone comprehend instruction manuals. One assessment of the EU Training Mission in Somalia found as many as 80 per cent of recruits were illiterate. A lack of basic mechanical competence may affect ability to drive vehicles or use arms and other equipment.

SFA programmes may be too small to achieve lasting change. An assessment of the Trans Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership compared it to “a band aid on a chest wound”; addressing the region’s security challenges would have taken a commitment on the scale and scope of the Marshall Plan. As highlighted below concerning Somalia, one way to use limited resources has been to focus upon small elite units (while disregarding the rest of the security forces). Progress may not be sustainable once outside support ceases, however, and a focus on small units does not address the severe problems of the remaining security forces.

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59 Warner. The Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership: Building Partner Capacity to Counter Terrorism and Violent Extremism: 78.
61 Reno. ‘The politics of security assistance in the horn of Africa’; Reno and Matisek. ‘A New Era of Insurgent Recruitment: Have ‘New’ Civil Wars changed the Dynamic’
65 Warner, p. 66.
5. In Depth Case I: SFA Provision in Mali

The most significant providers of SFA in Mali are the European Union and the United States. The most important EU programmes are:

- **The EU Training Mission in Mali (EUTM),** focused upon the Malian armed forces. Its objectives are to contribute to the political and security stabilisation of Mali, support the restoration of the rule of law over the whole country, and support the G5 Sahel through strengthening regional cooperation. The EUTM was initiated in 2013 and involves about 200 instructors and 380 support staff drawn from about 25 nations. The budget is EUR 59.7 million for the two-year period beginning in May 2018. As of March 2020 the EUTM had trained about 15 000 Malian personnel.

- **The EU Capacity Building Mission in Mali (EU CAP Sahel Mali)** focuses on reforming and improving the capacity of the Malian Police, Gendarmerie and National Guard. It was started in 2014 and as mid-2018 had an authorised strength of 203 staff, an annual budget of EUR 28.4 million, and 1100 trainees who had completed its training courses.66

- **The PARSEC project** is funded by the EU’s Emergency Trust Fund for Africa and implemented by Expertise France (the French government’s technical cooperation agency). It has a budget of EUR 28.3 million running from August 2017 until September 2020. PARSEC focuses upon the Malian civilian security forces (police, gendarmerie, national guard and customs) with an aim to build capacity, improve interoperability with the Malian armed forces, and enhance cross-border cooperation. Other activities include creating migration early-warning systems, providing reintegration support for migrants, and supporting the healthcare and education sectors.

- **The Rapid impact programme of action for the stabilisation of central Mali** is managed by the EU embassy running from May 2018 to May 2022. It has a budget of EUR 10 million and aims to strengthen the Malian security forces by supporting the employment of personnel, training (on subjects such as migration management), and building border posts. Other activities include providing assistance to victims of forced trafficking and other members of the civilian population.

**United States SFA programmes include** (some of the old pre-coup programmes are not included):

- **Excess Defense Articles (EDA),** which involves the provision of equipment previously possessed by the US armed forces.

- **Nonproliferation, Anti-Terrorism, Demining, programs** were worth a total of USD 1 million in 2018 and involved the provision of anti-terror assistance and conventional weapons destruction.

- **Peacekeeping Operations support for ‘Stabilization Operations and Security Sector Reform’** was worth USD 6 million in 2015.

- **Counter-Drug Assistance** involved training and was worth USD 393 00 in 2013–15.

In addition to participating in the EU programmes, France has directly provided training and equipment to the Malian security forces (including via *Opération Barkhane*). Spain provides SFA

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66 Interview 04, Bamako August 2018.
via the Blue Sahel programme (partly funded by the EU), which has a much smaller budget of 
EUR 2.5 million. The specific programme in Mali, Group d’Action Rapid Surveillance 
Intervention (GARSI), runs from 2017–2021 and consists of approximately 100 personnel.67 The 
UN mission in Mali (MINUSMA) has focused on ‘non-lethal’ activities such as human rights, 
explosive ordnance disposal and depot management.68

5.1. Factors hindering impact

Even after large-scale SFA programmes had operated for years, results fail to impress. 
Significantly, the trainers themselves still have a low opinion of the Malian security forces.69 The 
more general challenges related to the conceptualisation and implementation of SFA 
programmes in the Sahel region has been enumerate in previous sections. In the following 
paragraphs a closer look at challenges related to the Mali SFA programmes reveal some the 
underlying mechanisms.

Firstly, the EU’s commitment to Mali is inherently short-term. The EU missions in Mali (EUTM 
and EU CAP) have had two-year mandates, which have been renewed with annual budgets. The 
process by which mandates are periodically renewed has the effect of ensuring that personnel and 
recipients do not know how long the missions will exist.70 Such uncertainty over the end-date of a 
mission precludes developing effective long-term strategies. Some other providers (notably 
France) have had a much longer-term engagement. The short-term focus of EU programmes also 
directly affects how they are implemented. Personnel have been seconded or hired for short 
periods (one-to-two years in EUCAP and for months in other programmes). In EUCAP about 30% 
of vacancies advertised during 2016–17 went unfilled because of a lack of qualified (particularly 
French-speaking) candidates and difficult safety and living conditions. The combination of short 
mandates and budgeting periods, high turnover of personnel, and posts that remained vacant, has 
had a negative effect upon the ability of the EU programmes to develop long-term strategies with 
in-depth local knowledge.71

Secondly, because of concern for their safety, the EUTM’s mandate most of the training has been 
carried out far from the areas of active operations. This has largely prevented personnel from 
mentoring Malians on patrol or in combat situations. The shortage of field mentoring means that 
for assessing impact and revising curricula, EUTM personnel are largely reliant on reports 
provided by Malian officers, or from French troops deployed under the auspices of Opération 
Barkhane.72 In contrast, US training provided prior to the civil war has been praised because it 
included mentoring in the field.73 As pointed out in a recent report by Dennis Tull, the EUTM has 
revised its approach and conducted training and mentoring outside the capital since 2017.74 It is 
still too early to assess the impact of these changes.

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67 Interview 10, Bamako August 2018. Complimentary, although somewhat inconsistent, information is available on EU Trust Fund, 
Government of Italy and Government of Spain websites.

68 For more information see for example United Nations Secretary General (UNSG) (2018) Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in 

69 Tull, ‘Rebuilding Mali’s army: the dissonant relationship between Mali and its international partners’.

70 B. Jakobsen (2018) Strengthening the capacity of the internal security forces in Niger and Mali: only limited and slow progress. Brussels: European 
Court of Auditors, p. 26.

71 Jakobsen, p. 23–5.

72 Duijn. ‘EUTM Mali, a Military Pillar of EU Strategy for the Sahel’: 8–9; B. Müller (2018) ‘EUTM Mali’s problematic strategy – more 
rebuilding than fielding an army’. Pivot Area. 30 April.

73 Interview 07, Bamako August 2018.

74 D. Tull (2020) The European Union Training Mission and The Struggle for a New Model Army in Mali, IRSM Research Paper 82, 11 
February; Council of EU (2020) ‘Press Release: EUTM Mali: Council extends training mission with broadened mandate and increased 
budget’. 22 March; Interview 13, Bamako August 2018.
Thirdly, the EUTM and EUCAP have emphasised improvement of specific technical and operational skills. Providing many short courses on subjects such as first aid or weapons management has meant that programmes can deliver on achievable objectives. The EUTM has focused on building up Malian troops’ basic infantry skills, with most trainees having attended short courses of up to four weeks on subjects such as marksmanship, first aid and navigation. The EUCAP has offered up to 25 different training courses within four themes: counter-terror activities, organised crime, border management. In 2013 the commander of the United States’ Africa Command discussed the shortcomings of focusing on teaching technical skills. Speaking after the start of the rebellion in Northern Mali and a military coup, General Ham admitted that the coup leader, Captain Sano, had received training in the US, where “tactical and technical matters such as operating equipment, improving tactical effectiveness and aerial re-supply to remote bases” had been emphasised. Not enough time had been spent on values, ethics and a military ethos that would encourage military personnel to see their role as defending the civilian government and Malian people.

Finally, the many SFA programmes in Mali have not been adequately coordinated, and risk undermining the cohesion of the armed forces. There has been little coordination between the largest providers, the EU and US. Instead, in a rough division of labour the EUTM focused on improving infantry skills while the US built up military institutions by providing small numbers of officers with advanced training in the US. The gradual withdrawal of the US from the Sahel might lead to broader changes in the provision of SFA to Mali. There have also been complaints about lack of coordination between the EU and Malian government: EU policies have been developed in Brussels “with limited consultations with local partners in Mali – sometimes even [with] the EU delegation itself”. Malian interviewees stated that the EUTM’s training courses were based on elitist politics instead of needs on the ground in Mali.

Overall, SFA provision to Mali has been ineffective because it has:

- Focused upon short-term achievable objectives inadequate for the long-term task of reforming security forces operating in a highly fragile environment.
- Been provided by a plethora of uncoordinated programmes that risk undermining the cohesion of the Malian security forces.

Considering Mali’s history of conflict, it is very likely that stability and democracy will be manifest only after a long-term process of reforming the Malian state, including its security forces. Ending the fighting, trafficking, and other problems will probably take decades of commitment. SFA in other regions, however, such as Somalia and Afghanistan, shows that even efforts lasting decades can still be ineffective. There are reports of Malian officers resenting the European presence itself, believing, supposedly for reasons of national pride, that the EUTM has too great a role.

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75 Interview 04, Bamako August 2018.
77 Müller, ‘EUTM Mali’s problematic strategy – more rebuilding than fielding an army’.
79 Interviews 04, 07, 11, Bamako August 2018.
6. In Depth Case II: SFA Provision in Somalia

SFA providers in Somalia include not only the US, UK, EU, United Arab Emirates, and Turkey, but also multilateral organisations (AU and UN), and private security firms. Support has involved training and mentoring, as well as equipment transfers to support operations by AMISOM and the SNSF.

The US is the primary provider of SFA in Somalia. Between 2010 and 2018, forces in Somalia were the second largest recipients of its SFA in Africa, behind only Egypt. To support African troops deployed to AMISOM, the US operates several long-standing SFA programmes in Somalia as well as a number of regional missions. In 2010–18 the US budget for peacekeeping operations there was USD 1.7 billion, the majority of which went to providing training and equipment for AMISOM troops. Much of this training has been outsourced to private security contractors; since 2007 a US-based private security firm, Bancroft Global Development, has provided training and mentoring in Somalia for Ugandan and Burundian troops operating within AMISOM. The US spent a further USD 162 million on separate SFA programmes in Somalia. For example, the US has focused training efforts on the two companies of the Somali National Army’s DANAB (Lightning) elite infantry unit. In 2015–16 the US allocated over USD 26 million solely for training and equipping the DANAB unit (more recent information is classified).

The European Union Training Mission (EUTM) for Somalia in 2010, dedicated to capacity building for the Somali National Security Forces (SNSF). In the period 2010–19 its total budget was EUR 79.1 million. The training team provides unit-level training to SNA contingents, and both training and programme design and implementation support to SNA training teams and to the staff of the Somali-operated General Dhagabadan Training Centre. The EUTM program involves 500 trainees per year, and since 2010 has reportedly contributed to the training of over 5,700 Somali military personnel. Between 2012 and 2016 the EU ran the NESTOR programme which covered Somalia and other Indian Ocean states, and in 2017–2020 the CAP Somalia programme, both of which were aimed at developing the capacity of Somalia’s maritime police forces and coast guard. Between 2010 and 2019, the two programmes had a combined budget of EUR 146 million.

The UK contributes to the EUTM’s activities and has also publicly reported that it provided bilateral assistance to Somalia’s security forces since at least 2012. In particular, it runs a dedicated training centre for the SNSF in Baidoa, which has been operating since January 2017. In August 2018, the UK Ministry of Defence announced that the centre had turned out 500

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82 According to the US Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) fund budget, USD 1.5 billion was allocated to Somalia between 2010 and 2018. Approximately 75% of this funding supports AMISOM, while the remainder supports the SNSF.
86 EUTM Somalia. Undated. EUTM Somalia in Figures. Available at: https://www.eutm-somalia.eu/.
students since opening. The British Peace Support Team (BPST) in East Africa also delivers pre-deployment and in-mission training for AMISOM contingents, as well as training for the SNSF.

AMISOM itself has provided training and mentoring to the SNSF, both in and outside of Somalia, since 2009. Much of this has been ad hoc, and largely conducted to support UK or EU training activities. Kenya and Ethiopia also remain AMISOM contributors, and conducted independent SFA programmes between 2010 and 2012, training regional militias from the Jubaland and Galgaduud regions, respectively. These militias took part in military operations in Somalia in conjunction with troops from both donor countries.

Several other international actors provide bilateral SFA to the Somali security forces as well as to militias in the Somaliland and Puntland regions:

- In May 2015, the UAE opened a major training centre in Mogadishu. It has disclosed little information about the training programme. Government sources indicate that 10,000 trainees have passed through the programme, while other estimates put the number in the “hundreds”.
- The UAE has funded a counter-piracy programme to train the Puntland Maritime Police Force (PMPF) since 2011. The programme has been run by private security contractors, Saracen International and subsequently Sterling Corporate Services, and has reportedly turned out 1,000 PMPF trainees since its inception.
- In September 2017 Turkey opened a military training installation in Mogadishu at a reported cost of USD 50 million, and with a deployment of 200 troops. One company-size group receives training at a time, and the base has turned out over 600 Somali trainees since late 2017, as well as 185 officers.

6.1. Reasons for the lack of effectiveness of SFA in Somalia

These uncoordinated and sometimes rival SFA providers risk pulling the Somali security forces in different directions and exacerbating fragmentation. SFA has also suffered from practical obstacles and a broad lack of oversight and accountability. Largely as a result of the necessity of building the security forces while simultaneously fighting a counter-insurgency campaign, as in Mali, training provided to both AMISOM and the SNSF has prioritised individual soldier skills and small unit tactics. This approach has corresponded with battlefield victories, most apparent in relation to SFA provided to AMISOM’s troop contingents and elite SNA troops (specifically, the DANAB elite infantry brigade). Pre-deployment training and in-theatre mentoring to AMISOM’s Ugandan and Burundian troop contingents contributed to improve the effectiveness of operations against Al Shabaab in Mogadishu in 2011. Training provided by Bancroft Global Development considerably enhanced the capabilities of AMISOM’s sniper teams, allowing AMISOM to counter...
Al Shabaab snipers more effectively and reducing civilian casualties by limiting the use of indirect fire and heavy weapons in built-up areas.97 Nonetheless, results across the majority of the SNSF have been less encouraging. According to a 2017 Operation Readiness Assessment conducted by the Somali government and its international partners, after almost 10 years SNSF remains drastically understrength, under-equipped, and unable to conduct independent operations.98 This lack of progress can be attributed to a number of factors, many which resemble those enumerate in the case of Mali.

Firstly, there are practical challenges facing the implementation of SFA, including cultural and language incompatibility and the illiteracy of the majority of Somali recruits. The EUTM in Somalia works primarily through English-Somali interpreters, but many of the European personnel reportedly have poor English language skills, creating obstacles to effective communication between trainees and instructors.99 Moreover, in the absence of functioning Somali security institutions, the short-term tactical-level focus of SFA provision to the SNSF has meant that trained troops are unable to integrate into an effective overarching military structure.100

Secondly, challenges have been compounded by the crowded nature of international SFA efforts and the divergence of motives and goals among SFA providers. There has been no unified approach to training, doctrine or training standards, resulting in an uneven output across the SNSF.101 Although both Somali and SFA observers have repeatedly identified the problem, efforts to enhance cooperation have been unsuccessful.102

Thirdly, poor oversight and accountability has also undermined progress. Resources provided by donors, including weapons and ammunition, are at risk of being diverted for other purposes, or find their way into black markets. In 2014, assault rifles provided to the SNA by Ethiopia were being sold in two marketplaces in Mogadishu, both used by Al Shabaab.103 Endemic corruption, including the presence of ghost soldiers on the SNSF payroll, has meant that resources are not guaranteed to reach their intended recipient. In December 2017 the US suspended food and fuel aid, as well as cash stipends, to much of the SNA because of corruption concerns.104 Limited assistance was resumed in 2019 after reforms were implemented by the Somali authorities.105

Fourthly, SFA programmes in Somalia have repeatedly failed to take adequate account of fragile political and clan dynamics, including rivalries within the Somali state and security apparatus. SFA provision has been linked to outbreaks of violence between Somali factions. Competition for resources provided via these programmes has led on several occasions to conflict within the SNSF itself. On 23 April 2018 two groups of SNA troops exchanged gunfire at a training facility in Mogadishu, reportedly when one of the groups attempted to loot the base’s supply of weapons

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102 For example, in 2016, a formal mechanism – the S6 Group – was established to improve coordination between the primary SFA providers in Somalia, comprising Turkey, the UAE, EU, US, UK, as well as the UN. However, there is little evidence that this mechanism has been effective, and it has been since abandoned.


and equipment.\textsuperscript{106} Later reports indicate that some 600 assault rifles were stolen and later sold on the black market.\textsuperscript{107}

Finally, agendas pursued by SFA providers have directly contributed to Somalia’s political fragmentation. Training programmes run by Kenya and Ethiopia to support militias in border areas have exacerbated tensions between regional groups and the central government. In February 2015 a dispute over formation of a regional government led to a violent confrontation between the Ethiopian-trained Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama (ASWJ) militia and SNA troops at Guricel, 400km north of Mogadishu, in which at least 16 people were killed and 14 wounded.\textsuperscript{108}

These challenges indicate that effective implementation of SFA in Somalia will rely on establishment of an effective coordination mechanism between providers and increased focus on accountability and oversight. Nonetheless, as long as the Somali security apparatus remains internally fragmented, any gains in building capability are likely to be stunted by the lack of a functional institutional framework.

\textsuperscript{106} Reuters (2018) Rival groups from Somali army clash at former UAE training facility, 23 April.
\textsuperscript{108} Al Jazeera (2015) Somali troops in deadly clashes with Sufi fighters, 11 February.
7. Conclusions

Since 2010, the level of violence in the countries studied here has worsened, in several cases dramatically. Within the complex context of the Sahel and Horn of Africa, it is difficult to establish whether external intervention including the provision of SFA has had any impact, positive or negative, on this development. What can be concluded is that the provision of SFA has so far not brought stability to these countries or reduced the incidence of armed conflict. Findings from this report suggest that it is very difficult for SFA programmes alone to solve the deep structural problems within the security forces of these highly fragile states. Even if individual units can be brought up to a uniform standard, doing so would have a limited impact if the rest of the security forces cannot operate effectively. Furthermore, even if SFA has improved the coercive force of the state, this would not in itself remove the underlying causes of instability related to poverty and other aspects of state and societal fragility.

In terms of future programme design, decision-makers need to consider that SFA in highly fragile regions is not a quick and cheap solution to the problems they want to address. Commitment by the provider needs to be long-term and based on a close partnership with the recipient government, an understanding of the recipient’s needs, and how they can be matched with the resources offered by providers. The partnership needs to be adequately funded, so that during implementation the shortcomings outlined in this report can be mitigated. Mandates and budgets need to be of long enough duration to allow realistic long-term planning. The recipient government must allocate adequate resources in the early stages to ensure that it is able to identify needs and objectives and create plans.

At the operational level, a successful SFA programme needs personnel with a long-term commitment to the recipient country. Building rapport and knowledge of local languages and culture is essential and takes time. Such commitment can be based on long-term deployments, but it can also be realised through individuals or units returning to the same location on successive tours. Filling vacant positions is essential.

Training must focus not only on technical skills, but also promote professionalism. It is a vital that security forces stop posing a threat to the people they are supposed to protect. This requires more than occasional courses on human rights and international law; it takes time to change from a culture of abuse to the creation of a professional ethos, respect for lawful authority and human rights.

SFA programmes must encourage the cohesion of the recipient state’s security forces. At the political level, provider governments need to consider whether the presence of another SFA programme will indeed improve security (rather than exacerbating the fragmentation of the security forces). Mandates, budgets and objectives should be developed with a view to encouraging cooperation with other providers, the recipient government and other relevant actors (such as UN missions or regional organisations). Providers should seek to establish regular contact with each other and with agencies in the recipient government, with an aim to encourage cohesion and professionalism.\(^\textit{109}\)

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\(^{109}\) For an example of how Belgian SFA providers set up a ‘fusion centre’ to coordinate SFA in Mali see: Wilén. Belgian Special Forces in the Sahel: A Minimal Footprint with Maximal Output.
8. Appendix: Summary of Data

Table 1: Summary of SFA activities 2010–2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provider</th>
<th>Types of programme</th>
<th>Spending USD millions</th>
<th>Trainees</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Counter-insurgency, counter-terror</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>Border security, building military capacity, counter-terror, support for peacekeeping</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>15687</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Counter-insurgency, counter-terror</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>Building military capacity, counter-terror, support for peacekeeping</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>3179</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>Border control, counter-insurgency, counter-organised crime, counter-terror, migration control</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>18,600</td>
<td>Provided via the EUTM for the armed forces and EU CAP Sahel Mali for law enforcement forces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Counter-insurgency, counter-terror</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>Building military capacity, counter-narcotics, counter-terrorism, support for peacekeeping</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>5121</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Border control</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Mauritania</td>
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<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>Border security, building military capacity, counter-narcotics, counter-terror, support for peacekeeping</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>5405</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Number</td>
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<td><strong>Niger</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>Border control, counter-insurgency, counter-organised crime, counter-terror, migration control</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>Provided via the EU capacity building programme for law enforcement forces.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Counter-insurgency, counter-terror</td>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehensive SFA statistics for SFA not available.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>Building military capacity, counter-narcotics, counter-terror, support for peacekeeping</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>5851</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Somalia</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMISOM (UN Mission)</td>
<td>Military and police capacity building</td>
<td></td>
<td>USD 50 million budget in 2017. Trained 585 in 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>Provided via the EU Training Mission for the armed forces and EU capacity building mission for law enforcement forces.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>Military training to ASWJ militia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Military and police capacity building</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>Counter-piracy, military capacity building</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
<td>500 trainees between January 2017 and August 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>Building military capacity, counter-terror.</td>
<td>2520</td>
<td>4492</td>
</tr>
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Compounding Fragmentation

Security force assistance to fragile states in the Sahel and Horn of Africa

Western countries attempt to remedy instability and insecurity in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa by providing Security Force Assistance (SFA). Since 2010, billions have been spent on training and equipping armed forces and security forces in the six countries studied here: Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Somalia. SFA has been intended to address long-term structural problems related to the low capacity of state security units, including ineffectiveness, corruption, and abusive practices. But it is also used to combat short-term symptoms of instability and debilitated state capacity such as insurgencies, organised crime, illegal immigration and smuggling.

In this comprehensive review of SFA efforts, we highlight how such assistance might contribute to political fragmentation within states, and in particular within their security forces. Arguably, SFA efforts in the countries investigated often appear to be ineffective and, at times, even counter-productive.

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