

# To Train and Equip Partner Nations – Implications of the European Peace Facility

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**In 2018, in an effort to make the European Union a more robust and credible security actor, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy proposed the establishment of a European Peace Facility (EPF). This off-budget financial instrument will, for the first time, allow EU funding of military training, equipment and infrastructure in partner countries where the EU is engaged in capacity building. The main rationale behind the EPF is to increase the effectiveness of current EU military training efforts and to enhance EU leverage in partner countries. However, the inherent risks of providing lethal equipment to conflict-torn states, combined with differing views among member states, are likely to lead to complicated decision-making processes. Furthermore, the focus on enhancing operational capabilities in partner countries should not come at the cost of broader institutional reform – if anything, increased operational effectiveness will render governance all the more important.**

**T**HE EU'S ROLE as an international security actor is in a formative phase. Increasing competition between great powers globally and in the EU's neighbouring regions have led to calls for the EU to step up its role as a geopolitical actor and relearn the language of power. This marks a departure from the EU's traditional approach of using enlargement, the neighbourhood policy, trade, development cooperation and international agreements to spread the EU model of integration and advance its interests.

The tension between policies seeking to promote stability and maintain influence using power politics, on the one hand, and to promote transformation and liberal values, on the other hand, is present in the EU's approach to partner countries in Africa and other neighbouring regions. The European Peace Facility (EPF) will inter alia enhance the EU's possibilities to provide military training, equipment and infrastructure as part of capacity building support to partners.<sup>2</sup> The intention is to meet longstanding shortcomings in ongoing EU training missions (EUTMs), where the armed

forces being trained often lack basic equipment, such as uniforms, weapons and ammunition, as well as to make the EU a more robust and credible security actor.

The prospect of giving support in the form of military equipment to partner countries has, however, been contested by some member states and civil society organisations. Since Article 41.2 of the Treaty on the European Union prohibits the use of the EU budget for expenditure arising from operations having military or defence implications, the EPF will be set up outside the EU budget. Critics of the EPF stress the risks involved in providing lethal equipment to partners and fear a broader shift in the EU's approach to peace-building – from 'soft' to 'hard' power.

This memo explores the motivations behind the EPF and highlights some of the challenges involved in providing military training and equipment, including arms and ammunition, in the context of ongoing training missions in Mali, the Central African Republic (CAR) and Somalia. After briefly describing the new areas to be covered by the EPF, it outlines the rationales behind and risks involved in

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2 Council of the EU. Council reaches a political agreement on the European Peace Facility. 18 December 2020. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/12/18/council-reaches-a-political-agreement-on-the-european-peace-facility/>. Accessed 14 January 2021.

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providing military training, equipment and infrastructure to partners. The memo thereafter applies this discussion to ongoing training missions, both in terms of boosting the effectiveness of training and enhancing EU leverage in partner countries. The analysis shows that managing the diverging views of member states and the risks involved in this type of support is likely to lead to complicated decision-making processes in Brussels as well as an even greater need for institutional reform and enhanced governance in the partner countries.

As the decision establishing the EPF had yet to be finalised at the time of research, the study builds on discussions with key stakeholders in EU institutions and member states regarding the reasons behind the EPF and its possible impact. Thirteen semi-structured interviews were held between July and October 2020 with officials dealing with EU security and defence policy in general and the EU training missions in particular. Interviews were conducted with officials from the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Swedish Ministry of Defence, the Swedish Armed Forces, the European External Action Service (EEAS), the EU Military Staff (EUMS) and the permanent representations to the EU of France, Ireland, Germany and Sweden. In addition, scholarly and policy-oriented literature, including previous FOI studies regarding EU crisis management and military capacity building, was consulted.

## WHAT'S NEW ABOUT THE EPF?

The proposal to create the EPF was put forward by the EU's High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR/VP) in June 2018. The purpose was to raise the EU's profile as a global security provider by gathering and expanding the scope of already existing financial mechanisms that had been set up outside the EU budget for operations having military or defence implications. The EPF is intended to cover three main areas:

- contributions to the funding of EU military operations,

- provision of support to partners' military peace support operations, and
- provision of support to the capacity building of partners' armed forces, including military training, equipment and infrastructure.<sup>3</sup>

The first two areas have to date been covered by two separate financial mechanisms. The Athena mechanism, set up and managed by the member states, covers the common costs of EU military operations, while expenses relating to national personnel and materiel are financed by the participating member states. The African Peace Facility (APF), created under the European Development Fund, and managed by the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO), provides support to institution-building and peace support operations carried out by the African Union. In contrast to the APF, the EPF will not be limited to Africa and may provide assistance to peace support operations carried out by various multinational organisations and to individual troop contributing countries.<sup>4</sup>

The Commission's strict interpretation of Article 41.2 of the Treaty on the European Union has until now made it difficult, however, for the EU to finance military training, equipment and infrastructure in partner countries. The recently added instrument to enable and provide 'train and equip' support to partners, the "Capacity building of military actors in support of development and security for development" (CBSD), which is part of the EU budget, has only been able to finance non-lethal equipment and support to partners.<sup>5</sup> This has meant that, where possible, EUTMs have had to rely on the patchy bilateral support of member states, or other international actors, for the provision of military equipment and infrastructure projects in partner countries.<sup>6</sup>

In the past year, the EPF proposal has been subject to intense negotiations and, in December 2020, the member states reached a political agreement to establish the EPF for the period 2021–2027, which corresponds to the EU long-term budget. The original HR/VP proposal amounted to EUR 10.5 billion for the budget period, but these figures were eventually reduced to EUR 5

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3 European Union External Action. European Peace Facility – An EU off-budget fund to build peace and strengthen international security. 2 June 2020. [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/46285/european-peace-facility-eu-budget-fund-build-peace-and-strengthen-international-security\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/46285/european-peace-facility-eu-budget-fund-build-peace-and-strengthen-international-security_en). Accessed 24 June 2020.

4 Deneckere, Matthias. *The uncharted path towards a European Peace Facility*. European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) Discussion Paper No. 248, 2019, p. 1–5.

5 CBSD is commonly shortened to 'Capacity Building in support of Security and Development'. Regulation (EU) 2017/2306 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2017 amending Regulation (EU) No 230/2014 establishing an instrument contributing to stability and peace, Official Journal of the European Journal, 15 December 2017 and Deneckere, *The uncharted path*, p 1–4.

6 Interviews with member state and EU officials, 9 and 20 October 2020.

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billion during member state negotiations on the EU budget in July 2020.<sup>7</sup> Although the funding was cut significantly, it still represents an increase compared to funds allocated during previous years for the Athena mechanism and the APF. According to one estimate, the proposed budget would grant approximately EUR 300 million per year to train and equip partners.<sup>8</sup> There are also hopes that the consolidation into a single instrument will reduce the administrative burden and ensure more coherent funding procedures.<sup>9</sup>

## RATIONALE AND RISKS OF THE EPF

During our interviews, several arguments for, but also alerts to the potential risks of, providing military training, equipment and infrastructure to partners were raised. The main rationale that emerged in favour of providing military equipment, including arms and ammunition, to partners is that it will enable the EU to deliver an integrated support package for capacity building. According to interviewees, the EUTMs have been limited to providing theoretical knowledge to partners, while relying on the partner countries, member states or other international actors to provide the military equipment to enable training. The EPF thus aims to provide a missing tool in the EU's toolbox and bridge a gap in previous financial instruments.<sup>10</sup>

Another rationale for the EPF is that it is expected to make EU support more responsive and flexible. The cumbersome bureaucratic experience of handling equipment donated bilaterally or through instruments such as the APF and the CBSD point to the need for improved procedures.<sup>11</sup> A dedicated EPF secretariat within the EEAS and a new financial mechanism might solve some of the administrative hurdles.

Furthermore, assistance within the EPF framework will not be limited to supporting ongoing EU missions, but may also finance military support to countries not covered by the mandates of current EUTMs. This may enable the

provision of broader regional support, for example to the G5 Sahel countries, or of assistance to countries where an EU presence on the ground might not be desired. One interviewee noted that this could ultimately reduce the pressure of deploying EU military personnel in countries where other support is considered sufficient.<sup>12</sup>

The new possibilities to train and equip partners are also closely linked to the ambition to strengthen the EU's credibility as a security actor and to enhance its influence in partner countries. EU actors worry that EU training efforts have been less attractive to partner nations compared to those of other actors. Member states with a strong presence in Africa have been concerned by training activities conducted by, for example, Turkey in Somalia and Russia in CAR. Both Turkey and Russia provide military equipment along with training and have as a result gained influence in the respective countries. To increase the EU's leverage to promote its ideas and values in military training, some member states argue that the EU needs to be able to support partners with military equipment.<sup>13</sup>

While the EPF enjoys broad support among EU institutions and several member states, for other member states the provision of lethal equipment enabled by the EPF is a highly sensitive issue. In some neutral countries, such as Malta and Ireland, national constitutions or current interpretations thereof limit the type of military assistance that may be offered to other states. In Sweden, sceptics worry about unintended consequences and argue that the provision of lethal equipment runs counter to the founding idea of the EU as a peace project.

A pressing concern regarding military capacity building in general, and training and equipping in particular, is the potential for former trainees to misuse their skills and equipment against civilians or democratic structures. The most dramatic manifestation of this risk on the political stage is the overthrow of a democratically elected government in a military coup. This risk has been reported in Mali for several years and was illustrated by the recent coup in August 2020.<sup>14</sup> Although those involved

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7 Novaky, Niklas. 'The budget deal and EU defence cooperation: What are the implications?'. *Euractiv*, 22 July 2020. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/defence-and-security/opinion/the-budget-deal-and-eu-defence-cooperation-what-are-the-implications/>. Accessed 19 August 2020.

8 Hauck, Volker. *The latest on the European Peace Facility and what's in it for the African Union*. European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM), Briefing note No. 120, September 2020, p. 4.

9 Interview with a member state official, 16 October 2020.

10 Interviews with EU and member state officials, 8 and 11 September, 9 and 16 October 2020.

11 Interviews with EU and member state officials, 16 and 20 October 2020.

12 Interviews with EU and member state officials, 8, 9 and 16 October 2020.

13 Interviews with member state officials, 16 September 2020, 9 and 16 October 2020.

14 See, for example, Skeppström, Emma and Hull Wiklund, Cecilia. *European Union Training Mission in Mali: En insatsanalys*. FOI-R--3783--SE, December 2013, p. 30.

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in the coup appear not to have been trained by the EU, it points to a tangible risk that is inherent to increasing the capacity of military actors in a foreign country.<sup>15</sup>

Another unsettling prospect is the potential for trainees to desert the armed forces and join adversarial groups. This risk is particularly salient where armed groups are to be reintegrated into the national armed forces as part of a disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) process. In CAR, for instance, the armed forces and armed groups are in the process of setting up special mixed security units to be in charge of security provision in rural areas. In areas where armed groups are still active, former combatants may be faced with fighting their former armed groups. Should a soldier's salary and welfare not be properly seen to by the partner armed forces, there may be an enhanced risk of a transfer of loyalty, skills and weapons.<sup>16</sup>

On the flip side, advocates of the train and equip support enabled by the EPF argue that although there are certain risks involved in providing equipment to military actors, the status quo – that is, to train partner soldiers without ensuring that they have correct equipment – presents a greater risk. From this perspective, any training of combatants may have unintended consequences, but it is preferable that soldiers are well-trained and equipped so that they do not need to find their own weapons elsewhere.<sup>17</sup>

## BOOSTING EFFECTIVENESS OF TRAINING

As noted above, one of the major arguments for enabling the EU to provide military equipment and infrastructure to partner countries is to address well-known deficiencies in existing training missions. The most concrete way that the EPF may benefit trainees in partner nations is by enabling the EU to meet the basic required conditions for training, both in terms of lethal and non-lethal equipment.

At the heart of this argument is a long record of equipment shortcomings in the EUTMs. Already from the onset of the first training mission in Somalia, legal constraints have prevented the EU from providing material, equipment and infrastructure that would improve the training environment. To illustrate, EUTM Somalia focuses its training on light infantry companies in combat, but has continuously struggled with a lack of weapons, having famously employed replica weapons made of wood that render shooting exercises impossible.<sup>18</sup> Early on, training in map reading and radio communication have reportedly had to be cancelled at times due to a lack of access to maps, compasses or radios.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, when training started at the EUTM in CAR, soldiers arrived at the training without weapons or ammunition.<sup>20</sup>

Combat training without weapons and ammunition hampers the effectiveness of the training, due to a lack of applicability in the operational sphere.<sup>21</sup> The major benefit of EPF in the field is thus the increased ability to deliver training that will carry into the implementation stage in operations, according to the principle of “train as you fight”.<sup>22</sup> In Mali, there are no permanent targets available at the shooting ranges, and trainees have to pay for their own training equipment.<sup>23</sup> In CAR, the EU provides train-the-trainer courses, but Central African Armed Forces (Forces armées centrafricaines, FACA) are unable to train their soldiers due to a lack of weapons and ammunitions.<sup>24</sup> In Somalia, there is currently no dedicated training ground for attack. Moreover, it is very difficult to arrange shooting training – in five months trainees are only able to practice shooting three times. Through the APF, however, the EU has recently managed to invest in a shooting range that is about to undergo construction.<sup>25</sup>

Until now, the EU has attempted to navigate the lack of equipment and infrastructure for combat training primarily by soliciting bilateral donations from EU member

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15 European External Action Service. Informal meeting of EU Defence Ministers: Remarks by the High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell at the press conference, 26 August 2020. [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/84441/informal-meeting-eu-defence-ministers-remarks-high-representativevice-president-josep-borrell\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/84441/informal-meeting-eu-defence-ministers-remarks-high-representativevice-president-josep-borrell_en). Accessed 19 November 2020.

16 Interview with an EU official, 10 October 2020.

17 Interview with an EU official, 8 October 2020.

18 Harriman, David and Skeppström, Emma. *Insatsanalys EUTM Somalia*. December 2014, FOI-R--3986--SE.

19 Harriman and Skeppström, *Insatsanalys EUTM Somalia*.

20 Interview with a member state official, 11 September 2020.

21 Skeppström and Hull Wiklund, *European Union Training Mission in Mali*, p. 23.

22 Interview with an EU official, 9 October 2020.

23 Interview with a member state official, 16 October 2020.

24 Interview with an EU official, 20 October 2020.

25 Interview and e-mail correspondence with member state officials, 12 October and 27 November 2020.

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states, with mixed results. In a successful case, Germany was able to donate armoured personnel carriers to Mali.<sup>26</sup> However, even when donations have been possible, extensive “red tape” has hampered coordination and slowed delivery. In another example from Mali, a bilateral donation of ammunition is still being processed after 1.5 years, due to legal issues.<sup>27</sup> In Somalia, the EU appears to be having some success with providing non-lethal equipment, having recently donated EUR 15 million via the APF to equip four Somali National Army (SNA) battalions with vehicles and non-lethal personal equipment. This support, though, is not tied to the EUTM, and is instead explicitly linked to Somali forces who will soon take over responsibility for the AU peacekeeping mission in Somalia (AMISOM).<sup>28</sup>

The equipment that EUTM trainees lack is not exclusive to weapons and ammunition, but also touches on basic individual necessities. When EUTM Somalia first got off the ground with training in Uganda, the Somali trainees lacked uniforms, boots and even water bottles.<sup>29</sup> A study from 2014 found that Somali soldiers were in poor health and suffered from inadequate living conditions at the training camp, with neither enough food nor possibility for sleep.<sup>30</sup> To this day, the lack of even the most elementary non-lethal equipment, such as water and boots, remains a problem for the mission.<sup>31</sup>

Similar observations have been made in Mali. Trainees from the Malian army (Forces armées maliennes, FAMa) often have to travel large distances to arrive at the training camps from deployments in the northern part of the country, many times at their own expense. In addition to military equipment, they are often not supplied with food or water by their own organisation. This lack of basic equipment and material on offer at the training disincentivises partner forces from attending EUTM training and, according to interviewees, thus limits EUTM’s access to trainees.<sup>32</sup>

While the EU has technically been able to finance some non-lethal equipment via other instruments, such

as the APF, a burdensome bureaucracy acts as a hurdle to getting such material to the mission. By streamlining the EU’s assistance to defence and military actors into one instrument, the EPF will thus solve the issue of delivery of both lethal and non-lethal equipment. To illustrate, one interviewee remarked that one of the potential benefits of the EPF, from a trainer’s perspective, is the ability to provide rations and water to trainees, which in turn improves the training environment.<sup>33</sup>

By having a direct impact on the living and working conditions of trainees, the provision of equipment could also prove to have a positive impact on the soldiers’ morale – a core element of military capability.<sup>34</sup> Institutional factors, including welfare and training, are an important part of shaping morale.<sup>35</sup> One interviewee pointed to the importance of a clean and whole uniform as a source of an individual soldier’s pride, affecting his or her own self-confidence, which in turn affects their standing among the local population. Having weapons and ammunition also plays a role in gaining the trust of the local population whom the soldiers are there to protect.<sup>36</sup>

Providing equipment as part of the training may also encourage partner countries to release complete units for training, which would boost the effectiveness of training as opposed to training separate individuals. EUTMs have struggled with this, partly due to the fact that capacity building of partner forces often takes place in a context of an active conflict, in which the partner forces face high operational demands. A challenge faced by EUTMs is thus to succeed in incentivising partner forces to release personnel for training and to enact broader reforms even when they are simultaneously engaged in full scale combat operations.<sup>37</sup>

In Mali, for example, an EUTM course on armoured personnel carriers has consistently been shortened at the request of FAMa due to operational needs for personnel. This impacts the effectiveness of the training provided.<sup>38</sup>

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26 Interview with a member state official, 9 October 2020.

27 Interview with an EU official, 20 October 2020.

28 E-mail correspondence with a member state official, 27 November 2020.

29 Interview with a member state official, 11 September 2020.

30 Harriman and Skeppström, *Insatsanalys EUTM Somalia*.

31 Hellquist, Elin. *Somaliskt säkerhetsansvar mellan hopp och förtvivlan*. June 2019, FOI Memo 6777.

32 Interview with a member state official, 16 October 2020.

33 Interview with a member state official, 16 October 2020.

34 Childs, Sean. “Soldier Morale: Defending a Core Military Capability”. *Security Challenges*, Vol 12, No 2, 2016, p. 43.

35 Fennel, Jonathan. “In Search of the ‘X’ Factor: Morale and the Study of Strategy”. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol 37, No 6–7, 2014, p. 809.

36 Interview with a member state official, 11 September 2020.

37 Interviews with member state and EU officials, 16 and 20 October 2020.

38 Interview with a member state official, 16 October 2020.

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In CAR, the EU has been advising the Ministry of Defence on establishing a garrison model to enable units to be placed in garrisons across the country, with their families. This reform has been delayed due to high operational demands, leading to growing discontent among the military personnel.<sup>39</sup> A recurring claim is that providing training equipment will not only address existing shortcomings in the EU's training, but also provide the EU with greater leverage to push for further training and advising objectives.

## ENHANCING EU LEVERAGE

A second line of argument in favour of the EPF is that it will enhance the EU's ability to deliver a more coordinated (also known as *integrated*) support package to partner nations. The EUTMs in Mali, CAR and Somalia all deliver both training of partner forces and strategic advice to either the Ministry of Defence or the command of the armed forces. According to this claim, strengthening the training pillar by providing equipment and infrastructure will give the EU greater leverage in its advisory activities.

Certainly, any sustainable improvement in a soldier's working conditions depends on institutional structures being in place to maintain these conditions. Should the soldier not receive a salary, for instance, there is a risk that he or she may desert, regardless of how much equipment the EU provides. This risk has been especially present in Somalia, where salary payments have been a well-known problem. As a result of recent reforms, all Somali soldiers now have their own bank accounts to facilitate salary payments and transparency.<sup>40</sup> However, until now, the EU has not been able to step in to assist with salaries. In Somalia, the mission has instead had to rely on the US to pay salaries, meaning that the EU has not been able to control the timing and frequency of payments.<sup>41</sup> In CAR, the salary support to FACA, handled by the UN peace-keeping mission MINUSCA, has run into financing problems.<sup>42</sup> At the time of writing, it is unclear whether the EPF will enable the EU to provide salaries for partner forces.

Not only do salaries have to arrive on time, but they have to be commensurate with the commitment expected of partner forces. Even when paid, salaries in Somalia have reportedly been so low that trainees have had to supplement their income with second jobs on the side, which also limits the amount of time that they have available for training. According to one interviewee, there are concerns that Somali soldiers trained and equipped by other actors are already selling weapons when funds run dry.<sup>43</sup> In a conflict area, a risk is that such behaviour will lead to a proliferation of equipment, in turn exacerbating the levels of violence.<sup>44</sup>

Nonetheless, at the core of the EPF lies a pervasive sentiment that partner armed forces are more immediately appreciative of equipment and training than they are of the provision of foreign support to broader institutional reforms. To support reform of the security and defence sector is to be involved in the core of that state's sovereignty, a very sensitive undertaking that requires trust and legitimacy in the eyes of the partner state. The hope is that the EU will gain such standing to advocate for institutional reforms by providing equipment and meeting partners' operational needs.<sup>45</sup>

Entangled in this argument is the idea that if the EU does not provide weapons, then other actors will, and the EU's influence will suffer as a result. Increased Russian engagement in CAR is a recurring example brought up by proponents of EPF. Russia is donating equipment and has flown FACA units to Sudan as part of weapons training. At the same time, Russia is directly advising the highest levels of government. Since there is little coordination between different capacity building providers, it is unclear to the EU what other training efforts consist of, and whether they involve international humanitarian law and human rights – largely seen in the EU as pivotal to building confidence in the militaries among the civilian population.<sup>46</sup>

In Somalia, there is also an array of other capacity building providers. Turkey, for example, is highly active, training two battalions annually in both Turkey and Somalia. While Turkey provides equipment as part of its training,

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39 Interviews with EU and member state officials, 11 September and 20 October 2020.

40 Interview with a member state official, 11 September 2020.

41 Interview with an EU official, 8 October 2020.

42 Interview with an EU official, 20 October 2020.

43 Interview with an EU official, 16 October 2020.

44 Nilsson, Claes and Zetterlund, Kristina. *Arming the Peace: The Sensitive Business of Capacity Building*. FOI-R--3269--SE, September 2011, p. 31.

45 Interviews with EU and member state officials, 8 September and 16 October 2020.

46 Interviews with EU and member state officials, 3 July, 11 September and 20 October 2020.

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the equipment is reportedly not interoperable with that of any other donor. The United States provides training to Somali elite forces, and the UK trains a brigade. The EU, meanwhile, trains one or two companies per year, less than half of the number of trainees reached by Turkey or the USA, and without providing equipment.<sup>47</sup>

A problem with the “leverage” approach is that donating weapons does not on its own guarantee any further institutional reforms – security sector reform (SSR) is a complex venture that at a minimum requires a locally anchored strategic framework to take effect.<sup>48</sup> Due to weak national institutions and governance in partner countries, the risk is that security assistance becomes foreign-owned and “supply-driven”, responding more to the available capabilities of donors than local needs. A large part of security assistance in Mali, for instance, is reportedly driven by foreign donors, with little strategic guidance from Malian partners.<sup>49</sup>

A related critique of the train and equip model of capacity building is that it leads to a disproportionate focus on the operational needs of partner nations at the expense of broader governance reforms.<sup>50</sup> To seriously address the security and defence structures of a partner country and support broader reform requires engaging in a long-term and difficult process with local partners that may not end up the way donors had hoped. The easier and more immediately tangible approach for donors is to point to quantifiable outcomes, such as the number of soldiers trained and the number of units equipped. This kind of easily measurable assistance, however, may in fact do little to actually address operational needs. Ultimately, if assistance is not tailored to what partners require, it may instead cause more harm than good by causing interoperability and sustainability problems down the line.<sup>51</sup>

A further concern is that injecting equipment will exacerbate levels of corruption that are already high in weak states. In the long run, corruption will undermine broader institutional reforms by further weakening the

effectiveness and legitimacy of state institutions.<sup>52</sup> There are suspicions that in Somalia, for example, national demands to distribute equipment centrally may lead to the selling of excess equipment on the illegal market.<sup>53</sup> Increased corruption could pose further risks to the legitimacy of partner institutions and governments among the local population. As other analysts have noted, EU support to institutions perceived as corrupt may harm European soft power in the long run.<sup>54</sup>

## COMPLICATED DECISION MAKING AND RISK MITIGATION

As a result of concerns regarding the provision of lethal equipment to partners, a significant part of the EPF negotiations has revolved around risk mitigation strategies, including decision-making procedures and the adoption of necessary safeguards. Member states and NGOs with a strong developmental footprint have been particularly vocal on the need for these types of measures.

Within EU institutions, there is an acknowledgment that any military assistance to a partner country must form part of an overall political strategy, which needs political backing both in Brussels and in the field. Since unanimity will be required for any EPF decision, in accordance with to the inter-governmental decision-making procedures of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, member states will have significant influence. Moreover, both the HR/VP and member states may propose EU action.<sup>55</sup> The European Parliament will not have a formal oversight role, but will obtain regular briefings on the implementation of the EPF. This means that the European Parliament will have a limited role in ensuring transparency and accountability of the EPF on the European level.<sup>56</sup>

Some sceptical member states have gone one step further and advocated for the possibility to abstain from contributing to specific actions of the EPF. According to Article 31 of the Treaty on the European Union, a member

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47 Interviews with EU and member state officials, 12 and 16 October 2020.

48 Hellquist, Elin and Sjökvist, Emma. *Local Ownership in Military Capacity Building*. June 2019, FOI Memo 6767.

49 Tull, Denis M. *The European Training Mission and the Struggle for a New Model Army in Mali*. IRSEM Research Paper No 89, 11 February 2020, p. 7.

50 Deneckere, Matthias, et al. *The future of EU security sector assistance: Learning from experience*. European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM), Discussion Paper No. 248, 2020, p. 3.

51 Tull, *The European Training Mission*, p. 6.

52 Hull, Cecilia et al. *Managing Unintended Consequences of Peace Support Operations*. FOI-R--2916--SE, December 2009.

53 Interview with a member state official, 12 October 2020.

54 Schmauder, Anna et al. “Strategic Missteps: Learning From a Failed EU Sahel Strategy”. 5 November 2020, ISPI – Istituto per gli studi di politica Internazionale. <https://www.ispionline.it/it/publicazione/strategic-missteps-learning-failed-cu-sahel-strategy-28130>. Accessed in November 2020.

55 Interview with EU officials, 9 October 2020.

56 Hauck, *The latest on the European Peace Facility*, p. 1.

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state has the right to abstain from Council decisions on foreign and security policy and is thereafter not bound by them. However, at the time of writing, the question of how costs for actions that are not supported by all member states would be distributed remains to be worked out.<sup>57</sup> This division between member states is likely to further complicate decision making.

Prior to any decision, the newly established EPF secretariat of the EEAS will conduct a risk assessment and propose necessary risk mitigation measures and conditions for potential assistance. The EEAS will largely rely on existing conflict sensitivity methods in the EU, including broad dialogue with local authorities, NGOs, EU representatives and partners in the field.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, informed decisions rely on a strong EU and member state presence and military expertise in the field. It is reasonable to question what such risk assessments will entail in practice, given that previous evaluations have been critical of the EU's ability to systematically perform conflict analysis and adopt 'do no harm' approaches in the security sector.<sup>59</sup> The risk assessment matrix developed for the CBSD instrument, however, has been highlighted as a step in the right direction.<sup>60</sup>

Potential mitigation measures include setting conditions linked to human rights and international humanitarian law and ensuring that there are ways to terminate the support if basic conditions are not met. There are also suggestions that the EU should follow the UN's human rights due diligence policy until the EU develops its own.<sup>61</sup> Any provision of military equipment is to follow the EU common rules for weapons exports. Particular safeguards that have been proposed include either using existing national export control regulations or developing an EU framework ensuring marking, tracing, secure storage and post-shipment controls.<sup>62</sup>

One issue under discussion is whether weapons provided for training should be supervised by the EU or donated directly to the partner country. At the time of writing, there is little clarity as to how this issue will be resolved. Handing over equipment directly to the partner country is seen by some as a potential way to promote

local ownership, but it would also reduce the EU's opportunity to maintain control over weapons and ammunition. Another proposal is for actors other than the EUTMs, such as the EU delegation or individual member states, to be charged with delivering the equipment in order to avoid overburdening the missions.<sup>63</sup> Importantly, for the provision of equipment to become sustainable, there is a need to also plan for maintenance, spare parts and logistics in the long term.

## IMPORTANCE OF GOVERNANCE REFORMS

The above debates deal primarily with risk mitigation measures prior to delivery of equipment. As such, they do not take into account the interplay of factors that will occur once equipment, especially the lethal kind, is injected into the mission area. For instance, the risk that lethal equipment provided by the EU ends up in the "wrong hands" is enhanced when other institutional structures and processes within the partner forces, such as salary and human resources systems, are inadequate, potentially incentivising trained soldiers to sell their weapons or switch sides. Ensuring that such processes are robust, sustainable, and reliable is thus even more important when it comes to train and equip support.

The question is how feasible it is that the EU will be able to promote the necessary reforms to mitigate the risks involved in increasing its equipment support. In order to be sustainable, salary, human resources, and follow-up systems are heavily dependent on dedicated resources and the willingness of partners. In Mali, for instance, the EUTM made efforts to assist FAMA in setting up a human resources system to maintain records of FAMA personnel, but efforts were stalled due to a perceived unwillingness on behalf of FAMA commanders in the field. There are reports of parts of FAMA being opposed to implementing systems to increase the transparency of personnel figures in order to gain from discrepancies. While corruption likely plays a part in slow progress, so do weak capacities, limited resources, and Malian concerns for sovereignty.<sup>64</sup>

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57 Interviews with member state officials, 3 July and 11 September 2020.

58 Interview with EU officials, 9 October 2020.

59 Hauck, *The latest on the European Peace Facility*, p. 4.

60 Deneckere, et al., *The future of EU security sector assistance*, p. 32.

61 Interview with a member state official, 16 October 2020; Hauck, *The latest on the European Peace Facility*, p. 1.

62 Interview with a member state official, 16 September 2020; Hauk, Stella and Mutschler, Max. *Five ways to make the European Peace Facility a role model for arms export control*. BICC - Bonn International Center for Conversion, Policy Brief, 6/2020.

63 Interviews with EU and member states officials, 8 September, 8 and 16 October 2020.

64 Interview with a member state official, 12 October 2020; Tull, *The European Training Mission*, p. 11–12.



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A possible and related approach that would help mitigate some of these concerns is to ensure that adequate follow-up mechanisms are in place to keep track of where trained and equipped personnel end up.<sup>65</sup> To date, EUTMs have little to no knowledge of the whereabouts of their former trainees. EUTM Somalia has trained nearly 7000 Somali soldiers, but does not know where they are or in what capacity they are working. There are suspicions that the mission, especially in the early days in Uganda, unintentionally trained the same soldiers more than once.<sup>66</sup> In Mali, the mission has not had any follow-up on what happened to trainees after training. The little follow-up information available to the mission has been provided by other missions in Mali, such as the UN peacekeeping mission, MINUSMA, and the French-led operation Barkhane, in cases where they came into contact with former EUTM trainees.<sup>67</sup> A concern voiced by interviewees is that trainees in all missions have not been practising what they were trained for.

In fact, there is always a risk that trainees will apply their skills in ways that donors have not intended, reaffirming the importance of robust follow-up and monitoring.<sup>68</sup> A twofold solution to this issue is currently underway in the EU: (a) for missions to offer training in remote locations, closer to partner units' area of operations, in order to enhance access to partner forces; and (b) for trainers to accompany partner units in the field to monitor the implementation of the training. Since the fifth mandate of EUTM Mali, in which the area of operations is expanded to include the whole country, the mission is to extend training to remote locations.<sup>69</sup> Similarly, the latest mandate for EUTM CAR has expanded the area of responsibility to cover the whole country and for accompanying FACA units as mentors.<sup>70</sup>

Since the EUTMs are so-called non-executive EU missions, trainers will not be able to follow partner units in combat. The hope is rather that debriefing sessions after operations will allow greater insight into the implementation of the training.<sup>71</sup> Mentoring outside the confines of the training camp involves a higher risk to the trainers.

Ensuring that it is feasible and safe places high demands on access to air transport and medical evacuation capabilities. The provision of lethal equipment adds impetus to the EU's ongoing efforts to accompany trainees in operational settings and to reach new trainees in remote locations. Yet, these ambitions may prove difficult to fulfil given EUTM's history of high vacancy numbers. The EPF does not address the manning shortfalls that have plagued EUTMs for a long time. In CAR, for instance, the new mandate, including mentoring in the field, calls for 400 personnel, while in reality the manning level currently stands at 250. Moreover, the two existing force protection platoons will need to be reinforced in order to enable more travel.<sup>72</sup> Combined with the added security risks for trainers, providing training and mentoring in remote locations may aggravate current vacancy issues for missions that are already strained.

The EU's ambition is to ensure that all appropriate measures are in place to minimise known risks, such as that of soldiers switching sides, by complementing new training possibilities provided by the EPF with advocating for institutional reform. However, in practice such efforts may further complicate the EU's relationships with partner countries. More EU support may inadvertently lead to increased partner dependency on the EU. There is also a risk that pushing too hard on monitoring efforts and governance reforms will cause tensions in the relationship that may counteract any potential enhanced leverage. Additionally, partner countries may increase their leverage versus the EU as potential customers for European defence industries. In short, the new support to partners enabled by the EPF is likely to be accompanied by new challenges that the EU will have to navigate in its quest to enhance its role as a security provider.

## CONCLUSIONS

The new possibility that the EPF provides to deliver military training, equipment and infrastructure to partners is tied to the EU's desire to enhance its standing as a global security actor. This has caused a debate regarding the EU's

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65 Interview with an EU official, 16 October 2020.

66 Interview with a member state official, 12 October 2020.

67 Interview with an EU official, 20 October 2020.

68 Interview with a member state official, 16 October 2020; Skeppström and Hull Wiklund, *European Union Training Mission in Mali*, p. 31.

69 Interview with an EU official, 20 October 2020.

70 Interview with an EU official, 20 October 2020.

71 Interview with an EU official, 20 October 2020.

72 Interviews with member state and EU officials, 12 and 20 October 2020.

role in partner countries, reflecting a tension between a focus on 'hard' security and stability or 'soft' development and institutional transformation. However, one could argue that by stepping into the military capacity building sphere in the first place, the EU has already moved in a direction of promoting its hard power. The real issue is what the EU is striving for: Is it to promote institutional reform and rule of law in partner countries, or to be a power player focusing on its geopolitical influence?

Proponents of the EPF argue that it will enable the EU to do both, that providing military equipment will allow the EU to promote its values in training, while at the same time strengthening the EU's influence in the partner countries. However, a focus on geopolitical competition with other actors may lead to a supply-driven approach to capacity building that does not have the long-term interests of partners, multilateral coordination and local ownership as its primary focus. Furthermore, even with an enhanced possibility to provide military equipment, the EU will remain a rather slow-moving actor, with complex decision-making procedures that cannot match those of bilateral security providers.

In the EU training missions, the EPF will make it easier for the EU to meet the basic training needs of partner force soldiers, including uniforms, weapons and ammunition. Additionally, the EPF will contribute to parallel EU efforts to increase the effectiveness of units within partner armed forces via training in remote locations and accompanying partner forces in the field. However, without the enactment of institutional reforms, such as functioning human resource and salary systems, adequate follow-up mechanisms, operational planning processes, and respect for human rights, any resulting increase in operational capacity will be unsustainable. In a worst case, if enhanced skills or weapons are transferred to armed groups, it may contribute to further destabilisation and increased levels of violence. Such unintended consequences would ultimately undermine the EU's reputation and influence as a security provider and development partner.

Broader governance initiatives aimed at increasing the accountability and legitimacy of the partner state therefore take on an added importance when equipment is provided. On an institutional level, the differing positions of member states are likely to lead to cumbersome decision-making processes for EPF actions. The EU furthermore needs to adopt conflict sensitive methods in order to minimise the inherent risks of providing military equipment to partners. To start, any engagement should be based on a local conflict analysis that is informed and supported by EU and member state expertise in the field. Given that provision of military equipment is a completely new venture for the EU, it is important to agree on adequate export control mechanisms, including marking, tracing, and secure storage and post-shipment controls of any equipment provided. Prior to pushing ahead with delivering military equipment, the EU also needs to develop risk mitigation policies that include due diligence and 'do no harm' approaches. The matrix developed for the CBSD appears to be a good start for an initial risk assessment at the EU level, which, together with other measures, needs to be applied systematically.

Any EU engagement in a partner country also requires strong political backing from member states. The provision of equipment enabled by the EPF should complement, not replace, strong member state engagement in EUTMs and other EU efforts in partner countries. It is important that member states do not see the increased budget and scope of security assistance provided by the EPF as an opportunity to decrease the personnel contributions to EUTM missions, or the support to development programs. Additionally, coordination of EU efforts in partner countries will be pivotal to ensure realisation of the integrated approach envisioned for the EPF. This means monitoring the delicate balance between enhancing operational capacities and supporting governance reform, to ensure that all efforts are part of a long-term, locally anchored strategy for sustainable security in partner countries. ■

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