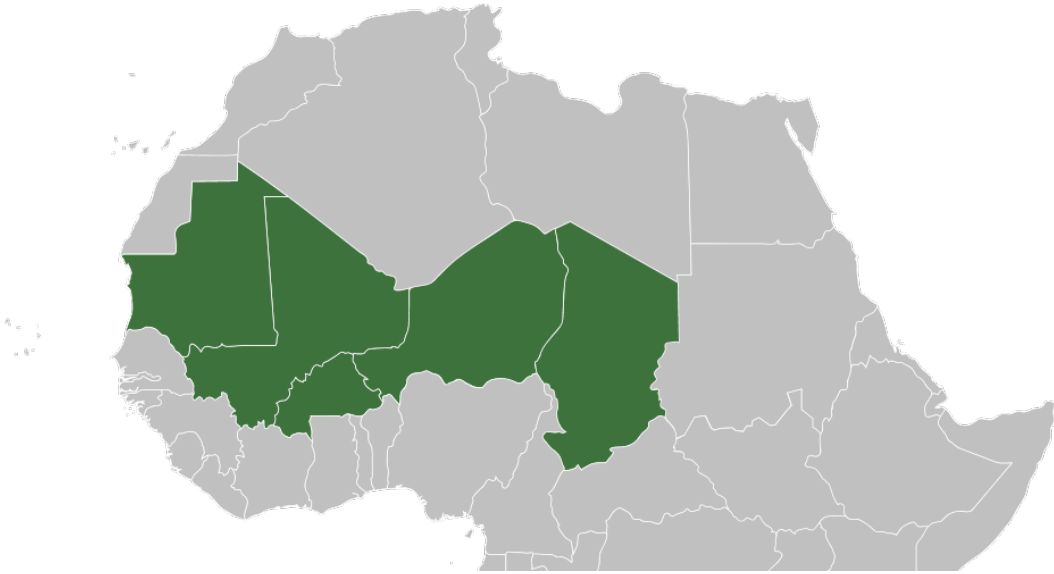# FOI

Joint Force of the Group of Five

A review of multiple challenges

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Sammanfattning

Som ett svar på en försämrad säkerhetssituation i Sahelregionen etablerade grupperingen "G5 Sahel" bestående av Burkina Faso, Tchad, Mali, Niger samt Mauretanien, en gemensam styrka. Syftet med denna studie är att ge en överblick över de huvudsakliga utmaningarna för den gemensamma styrkan (Force Conjointe du G5 Sahel – FC-G5S) för att uppnå full operativ förmåga under 2018.

De identifierade utmaningarna har placerats i tre kategorier: utmaningar kopplade till operationalisering av FC-G5S, farhågor rörande FC-G5S:s ramverk och problem som kan uppstå i insatsområdet.

De huvudsakliga utmaningar för operationalisering av styrkan har identifieras som bristen på finansiering samt att G5S-länderna även hotas av andra säkerhetshot som inte ingår i FC-G5S insatsområde.

De huvudsakliga farhågorna gällande ramverken identifierades som oklarheter gällande poliskomponenten, avsaknaden av adekvata nationella mekanismer för ansvarsutkrävande samt frånvaro av vision för hur den gemensamma styrkan ska underlätta humanitära- och utvecklingsinsatser.

Angelägna utmaningar i insatsområdet har identifierats som begränsad underrättelseförmåga, omfattande beroende av externt stöd och att det kan uppstå potentiella luckor i kommando- och kontrollstrukturerna i samband med rotationer av bataljonerna.

Nyckelord: G5 Sahel, terrorism, Sahelregionen, Afrika

Summary

The Group of Five for the Sahel (G5S), comprised of Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Chad, established a joint force (*Force Conjointe du G5 Sahel –* FC-G5S) in responding to a deteriorating security situation in the Sahel region. The aim of this study is to provide an overview of the main challenges facing the FC-G5S during the process of obtaining full operational capability in 2018.

The identified challenges were placed into three main categories: challenges linked to the operationalisation of the FC-G5S, concerns connected to the frameworks that outline the work of the FC-G5S, and issues that FC-G5S are or could be facing in the area of operation.

The main challenges for operationalising the FC-G5S were identified as the lack of financial resources and that the G5S countries also face other external threats that are not part of the zones of FC-G5S operations. The main identified framework concerns were the lack of clarity regarding the police component, absence of adequate national compliance frameworks, and a missing vision for how FC-G5S will facilitate humanitarian operations and development actions. The main in-theatre challenges were identified as limited intelligence capabilities, high dependency on external support, and the potential gaps in command and control structures during rotations of battalions.

Keywords: G5 Sahel, Joint Force, Sahel region, Africa, counterterrorism, G5 Sahel

Foreword

This report was commissioned by the Swedish Ministry of Defence and has been produced within the African Security Project. It provides an overview of the main challenges facing the joint force of the group of five during the process of obtaining full operational capability. The authors would like to emphasize that it is crucial to bear in mind that the countries are in the process of establishing the force. Hence, some of the *de facto* challenges are yet to be seen.

Innehållsförteckning

Abbreviations

ACSRT	African Centre for Studies and Research on Terrorism
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
AU	African Union
AU PSC	Peace and Security Council of the African Union
C2	Command and control
CELLRAD	*Cellule régionale de lutte contre la radicalisation et l'extrémisme violent/* Cell for the Fight against Radicalization
CEMOC	*Comité d'état-major opérationnel conjoint/* Joint Operational Army Staffs Committee
CISSA	Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa
CONOPS	Concept of operations
CSAMAP	*Centre Sahélien d'analyse des menaces et d'alerte précoce/* Sahelian Threat Analysis and Early Warning Centre
EU	European Union
EUCAP	European Union Capacity Building Mission
EUTM	European Union Training Mission
FC-G5S	*Force conjointe du G5 Sahel*/G5 Sahel Joint Force
G5	Group of Five for the Sahel
MEDEVAC	Medical evacuation
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MISAHEL	African Union Mission for Mali and the Sahel
MNJTF	Multinational Joint Task Force
OMCT	*Opérations militaires conjointes transfrontalières/* military cross-border coordination operation
UFL	*Unité de Fusion et de Liaison*/Fusion and Liaison Unit
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States

1 Introduction

During the past year, terrorist and violent extremist groups have increasingly spread from Mali into north-east Burkina Faso and western Niger.[1] The security situation in the Sahel region is in a continuous downward spiral, despite initiatives such as the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the French Operation Barkhane, and other initiatives.[2] The deteriorating situation carries serious risks of spill-over effects on regional and international peace and security unless addressed rapidly.[3]

In responding jointly to the situation, the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5S), comprised of Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Chad, had already called for the pursuit of resolute action to ensure security in the Sahelian region back in 2014.[4] The deteriorating security situation provided new impetus to the idea of establishing the multinational force, and it was launched by the G5S leaders in February 2017.[5] High on the agenda of FC-G5S will be the tackling of groups such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Jamaat al-Nasr al-Islam, and Ansar al-Dine, as well as Katiba Masine (an affiliate of Ansar al-Dine).[6]

A rapid operationalisation of the joint force (*Force Conjointe du G5 Sahel* – FC-G5S) addresses the different interests of actors such as the United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), France, and the United States (US). MINUSMA is the UN's deadliest ongoing peace operation,[7] and it seeks an exit strategy. The EU is worried about how instability would result in migration and the flow of illicit goods to Europe; at the same time, France wants to ease pressure on the thinly-stretched Operation Barkhane.[8] As for the US, its concern is the global war on terror.[9]

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[1] Security Council Report, "October 2017 Monthly Forecast," 28 September 2017.

[2] Institute for Security Studies, "Challenges and opportunities for the G5 Sahel force," 7 July 2017.

[3] United Nations Security Council (2017), *Report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel,* United Nations, p. 9.

[4] G5 Sahel (2014), *Convention portant creation du G5 Sahel,* G5 Sahel, p. 2.

[5] Le Monde, *"Les pays du G5 Sahel veulent leur force commune « contre le terrorisme »,"* 6 February 2017.

[6] Aljazeera, "G5 Sahel counterterrorist force explained," 3 November 2017.

[7] Since the beginning of the mission in 2013, and until October 2017, 146 fatalities have been incurred among MINUSMA staff (UN, 16 November 2017).

[8] Lebovich, Andrew, "Serious questions remain over G5 Sahel military force," *European Council on Foreign Relations*, 16 June 2017; Cold-Ravnkilde, Signe Marie, "Can the G5 Force Work Counterterrorism Magic in Africa's Sahel Region?" *PassBlue*, 15 June 2017.

[9] Aljazeera, "G5 Sahel counterterrorist force explained," 3 November 2017; van der Lijn, Jaïr (2017), *For the long run – A mapping of migration-related activities in the wider Sahel region,* Clingendael, pp. 18-19.

The first FC-G5S operation was conducted in the border area of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, between October and November, 2017.[10] The operation, named Hawbi, revealed that the forces were struggling with logistics, equipment, coordination, and means of communication. Without the support of Operation Barkhane, it would have been difficult to proceed with the operation.[11]

The G5S countries have set the target date for reaching full operational capability to March 2018. [12] However, security analysts raise doubts about whether the FC-G5S can succeed, where years of Western intervention have not.[13] In seeking to attain full operational capacity, the FC-G5S faces a number of challenges.

The aim of this study is to provide an overview of the main challenges facing the FC-G5S during the process of obtaining full operational capability next year. This study's contribution to the discussion on FC-G5S is that it offers synopses of the different types of challenges and concerns that have been debated. This overview is especially relevant for stakeholders at this point in time, when funding for FC-G5S is being discussed. This report's intended audience is in particular those policymakers in Sweden and Europe who work with the Sahel region.

1.1 Methodology and sources

A combination of primary and secondary sources in French and English have been utilised for the purposes of this report. These include reports from research institutes, academic articles, information from international organisations such as the UN, G5S policy documents, newspaper articles from both international and locally well-known and reputable sources, as well as radio news transcripts.

To complement this work, the study has also made use of semi-structured interviews comprising researchers, practitioners from the UN, EU, and the diplomatic representation. Interviews with a total of 20 persons were carried out in Bamako and Stockholm in September and October 2017. Due to their positions and the sensitivity of the topics discussed, all the interviewees have been anonymised.

The G5S countries are in the process of establishing the FC-G5S, and analysing an ongoing development is difficult. To the extent possible, the identified challenges have been weighed against prior similar experiences in the Sahel

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[10] Radio France Internationale (RFI), "G5 Sahel: opération Hawbi, les premiers enseignements," 9 November 2017.

[11] Ibid.; RFI, "Mali: une première opération du G5 Sahel sans accroc," 4 November 2017.

[12] Full operational capability, according to the Defense Acquisition University (2011), is *"in general attained when all units and/or organizations in the force structure scheduled to receive a system have received it and have the ability to employ and maintain it";* United Nations Security Council (2017a), p. 19.

[13] See e.g. Aljazeera, "Western armies face uphill battle in Africa's Sahel," 8 November 2017.

region, the number of sources claiming the same concerns, and/or whether a source has profound insight regarding the topic.

All the identified challenges were then analysed and placed into three main categories. The first category presents challenges linked to the basis for operationalising the FC-G5S, i.e. issues related to proceeding with the operationalisation of the Force. The second category discusses concerns connected to the frameworks that outline the work of the FC-G5S. The third and last category comprises in-theatre challenges, issues that FC-G5S are or could be facing in the area of operation. Each category also has a number of sub-categories.

1.2 Outline of the report

Beyond this introduction, the second chapter of this report describes the background of the FC-G5S, as well as its mandate and foreseen activities. The third chapter presents challenges linked to the basis for operationalising the FC-G5S. Chapter four relates concerns regarding the frameworks that set the outlines for the Force. The fifth chapter advances challenges that the FC-G5S could face in-theatre. The sixth and final chapter summarises the challenges identified and provides concluding remarks.

2 Background

This chapter outlines the background of the FC-G5S. It also provides an overview of the mandate, structure, and planned activities of the Force.

2.1 FC-G5S – one of many initiatives

The G5S was established in February 2014, as an institutional framework for coordination of regional cooperation. The G5S has initiatives and activities in security and development within four main areas:

- Defence and Security

- Governance

- Infrastructure

- Resilience of populations.[14]

Activities are presented in the Priority Investment Programme (PIP), which for the period 2017-2019 comprises 19 programmes, and includes 101 projects, at a total cost of approximately €10 billion.[15]

Within the area of Defence and Security, the G5S has decided to set up a Sahelian Threat Analysis and Early Warning Centre (*Centre Sahélien d'analyse des menaces et d'alerte précoce* – CSAMAP), which is intended to become a transnational general intelligence centre. CSAMAP is likely to be situated in Mauritania.[16] Two colleges are also being established; a defence college in Nouakchott, and the Sahel Security College in Bamako.[17]

Another initiative within the Defence and Security area is the military cross-border coordination partnership. It was established in 2014, merging prior bilateral and multilateral military partnerships of the five countries under the umbrella of the G5S and in partnership with the French Operation Barkhane.[18] As a part of this partnership, more than 20 military cross-border coordination operations (*opérations militaires conjointes transfrontalières* – OMCTs) have been

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[14] G5 Sahel (2014), *Convention portant creation du G5 Sahel.*

[15] G5 Sahel, "Diplomatie préventive en Afrique Sub-saharienne paix et développement," 24 March 2017.

[16] G5 Sahel, "Vers la création du centre sahelien d'analyse des menaces et d'alerte précoce," 21 August 2017.

[17] Comité national Malien de coordination du G5 Sahel (2017), *Le Projet Sécurité & Développement,* G5 Sahel.

[18] Ministère des Armées, "Coopération transfrontalière dans la bande Sahélo-saharienne : un dispositif pertinent et des actions efficaces contre le terrorisme," 26 November 2016.

conducted between 2014 and November 2017.[19] The OMCTs involve border control and counterterrorist operations.[20]

In November 2015, the Heads of State of the G5S countries decided to create a joint force to combat terrorism and transnational criminal networks. This was followed by high-level consultations in 2016 and 2017, and subsequently announced during a G5S summit on 6 February 2017.[21] In the presence of the French president, the G5S leaders launched the FC-G5S in Bamako on 2 July 2017.[22]

The first phase of the FC-G5S will be built on previous OMCTs.[23] The difference between the OMCTs and FC-G5S is that the latter will be under a joint command structure. With the help of the French, the joint command structure will coordinate the actions of the different militaries and enable them to support one another and operate in one another's territory.[24]

2.2 UN "welcomed" the force

The Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU PSC) endorsed the Force's strategic concept of operations in April 2017. The AU PSC authorised the immediate deployment of up to 5,000 military, police, and civilian personnel for a renewable 12-month period.[25]

Following its endorsement, the AU PSC requested the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to approve the deployment of the FC-G5S, and to identify the modalities of financial and logistical support.[26] France acted as penholder on Resolution 2359 (2017), and sought the UNSC's endorsement under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which authorises the use of force.[27] Peace enforcement, as envisaged under Chapter VII, does not require the consent of the main parties and may involve the use of military force at the strategic or international level, which

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[19] Le Monde, "A Niamey, la force conjointe du G5 Sahel en pleine construction," 5 October 2017; Ministère des Armées (2017), *Dossier de presse: Opération Barkhane,* Ministère des Armées, p. 16.

[20] Ministère des Armées (2017), *Dossier de presse: Opération Barkhane,* pp. 8-10.

[21] United Nations Security Council (2017), *Report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel,* p. 2.

[22] Reuters, "French and West African presidents launch Sahel force," 2 July 2017.

[23] United Nations Security Council (2017), *Report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel,* p. 6.

[24] Shurkin, Michael, "Sahel G5 Force a sound idea to combat terror in Africa," *The Hill,* 4 November 2017.

[25] United Nations Security Council (2017), *Report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel,* p. 5.

[26] Institute for Security Studies, "Challenges and opportunities for the G5 Sahel force," 7 July 2017.

[27] Ibid.

is normally prohibited for Member States under Article 2(4) of the Charter, unless authorised by the Security Council.[28]

Difficult negotiations followed. The American and British delegations opposed the authorisation, arguing that the FC-G5S consists of troops that will intervene in their own territories, which does not fit the legal framework for peacekeeping operations.[29] As a result, the reference to Chapter VII in the initial draft was deleted, as was language authorising the FC-G5S to take all necessary measures to restore peace and security to the Sahel.[30] The lack of reference to Chapter VII effectively excludes any possibility of funding from the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations. In the end, the UNSC only "welcomed" the deployment of the FC-G5S, instead of explicitly approving it. This limits the scope of the resolution to a purely political support.[31]

2.3 Strategic concept of operations

Pursuant to the summit of the Heads of State of G5S in February 2017, the G5S Defence and Security Committee developed a strategic concept of operations (CONOPS) for the FC-G5S.[32] A strategic CONOPS articulates strategic intent for the utilisation of military or police capabilities to achieve an overall objective.[33]

2.3.1 Mandate

The FC-G5S strategic CONOPS was mandated to:

- combat terrorism, drug trafficking, and human trafficking, in order to create a secure environment by eradicating the actions of the terrorist armed groups and other organised criminal groups, with a view to restoring security and peace in accordance with international law;

- contribute as necessary to the restoration of state authority and the return of displaced persons and refugees;

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[28] United Nations (2008), *United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principals and Guidelines,* United Nations, pp. 34-35.

[29] Institute for Security Studies, "Challenges and opportunities for the G5 Sahel force," 7 July 2017.

[30] What's in blue, "Vote on a resolution welcoming the G5 Joint Force in the Sahel," 20 June 2017.

[31] Institute for Security Studies, "Challenges and opportunities for the G5 Sahel force," 7 July 2017; Desgrais, Nicolas, "G5 Sahel: l'union des cinq fait sa force," *The Conversation,* 1 July 2017.

[32] United Nations Security Council (2017), *Report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel,* p. 5.

[33] United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (2013), *Planning Toolkit,* United Nations, p. 20.

- facilitate humanitarian operations and the delivery of aid to the affected populations to the maximum extent possible; and

- contribute to the implementation of development actions in the space of the G5 Sahel.[34]

The strategic concept of operations is considered to be a "living document" by the G5S countries. It would be subject to further revision, to reflect ongoing discussions on the end-state of FC-G5S and the means to attain it, as well as the gradual establishment of a regional force.[35]

According to several analysts, the mandate aims to fill a gap between the mandates of MINUSMA and Operation Barkhane.[36] The mandate of FC-G5S exceeds Operation Barkhane's mandate in that it addresses both terrorism and transnational organised crime and includes the facilitation of humanitarian operations, development activities, and the restoration of state authority,[37] whereas Operation Barkhane's mandate authorises it to engage only designated terrorist groups.[38] The mandate of MINUSMA is limited to Mali and focuses on supporting the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali.[39]

The FC-G5S is also a product of long-desired Africanisation of international efforts. It places African security forces at the centre, with the ambition of making them more effective, rather than calling for a greater French footprint.[40]

2.3.2   Area of operation and command architecture

The current Chairman of the G5S ensures the control of the FC-G5S at the political level, while the Defence and Security Committee ensures its strategic control.[41]

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[34] African Union Peace and Security, "Communique of the 679th PSC Meeting on the draft Strategic Concept of Operations (CONOPs) of the Joint Force of the G5 Sahel," 21 April 2017.

[35] United Nations Security Council (2017), *Report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel,* p. 6.

[36] Cooke, et al. "Understanding the G5 Sahel Joint Force: Fighting Terror, Building Regional Security?" *Center for Strategic & International studies,* 15 November 2017; Institute for Security Studies, "Challenges and opportunities for the G5 Sahel force," 7 July 2017; Shurkin, Michael, "What is the Sahel G5 Force and Why should the US support it?" *RAND,* 6 November 2017.

[37] Cooke, et al. "Understanding the G5 Sahel Joint Force: Fighting Terror, Building Regional Security?" *Center for Strategic & International studies,* 15 November 2017.

[38] Shurkin, Michael, "What is the Sahel G5 Force and Why should the US support it?" 6 November 2017.

[39] United Nations (2017), *UNSC Resolution 2364 (2017),* United Nations.

[40] Shurkin, Michael, "What is the Sahel G5 Force and Why should the US support it?" 6 November 2017; Lebovich, Andrew, "Serious questions remain over G5 Sahel military force," 16 June 2017.

[41] France Diplomatie, "G5 Sahel Joint Force and Alliance for the Sahel," 27 October 2017.

The Committee, which meets twice a year, is represented by Defence Ministers of the Member States.[42]

The FC-G5S exercises unified command through its central command in Sévaré, Mali, which was inaugurated in September 2017.[43] The central command is foreseen as having 90 staff and support staff, and the sector command posts in their respective zones (West, Centre, and East) as needing rehabilitation and support for 30 staff and support staff.[44] During the Malian chairmanship, the Force will be headed by General Didier Dacko, the former chief of staff of the Malian Armed Forces.[45]

Three sector command posts are planned, one for each zone (*fuseau*). The command post in the Central Sector in Niamey, Niger, was completed in October 2017. As of November 2017, measures have been taken to establish the command posts for Sector East in Wour, Chad, and Sector West, in N'beiket, Mauritania.[46]

Seven cross-sectoral battalion command posts will be spread over the three zones. Sector West will have one battalion stationed in Lere, Mali, and the other in N'Beiket, Mauritania. The Central Sector will have three battalions: Bankilare, in Niger, Boulikessi, in Mali, and Dori, in Burkina Faso. Sector East will have a battalion in Wour, Chad, and a second one in Madama, Niger.[47]

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[42] G5 Sahel (2015), *Règlement portant sur: La Mission, la Composition et le Fonctionnement du Comité de défense et de sécurité des Etats membres du G5 Sahel*, G5 Sahel, p. 4.

[43] France Diplomatie, "G5 Sahel Joint Force and Alliance for the Sahel," 27 October 2017.

[44] European Commission (2017), *Support to the G5 Sahel Joint Force,* European Union, p. 11.

[45] Le Monde, "A Niamey, la force conjointe du G5 Sahel en pleine construction" 5 October 2017.

[46] UN Security Council, "Le Secrétaire général exhorte le Conseil de sécurité à faire preuve « d'ambition » dans son soutien à la Force conjointe du G5 Sahel," 30 October 2017.

[47] European Union Training Mission to Mali (EUTM Mali), "Advisory Task Force EUTM Mali," 11 October 2017.
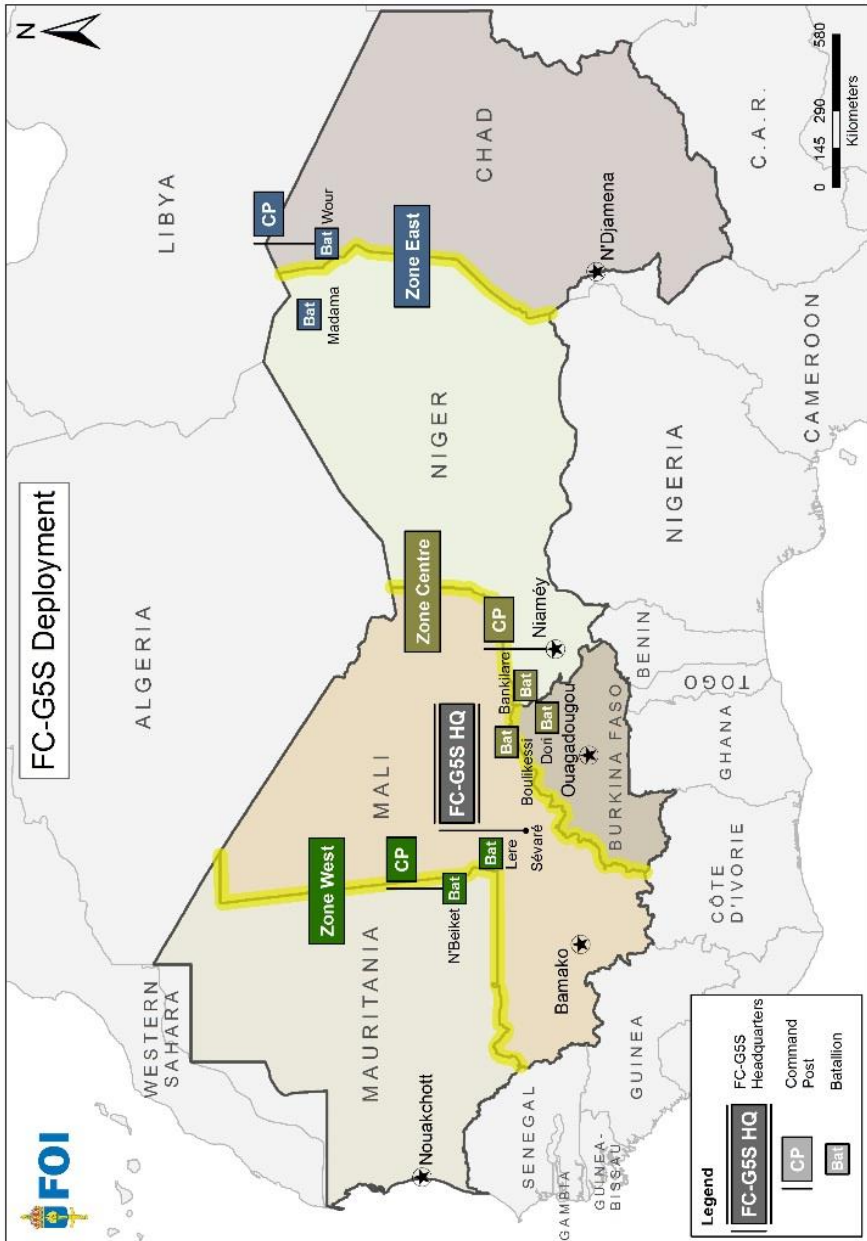
Figure 1. FC-G5S deployment (source: EUTM, modified by the authors)
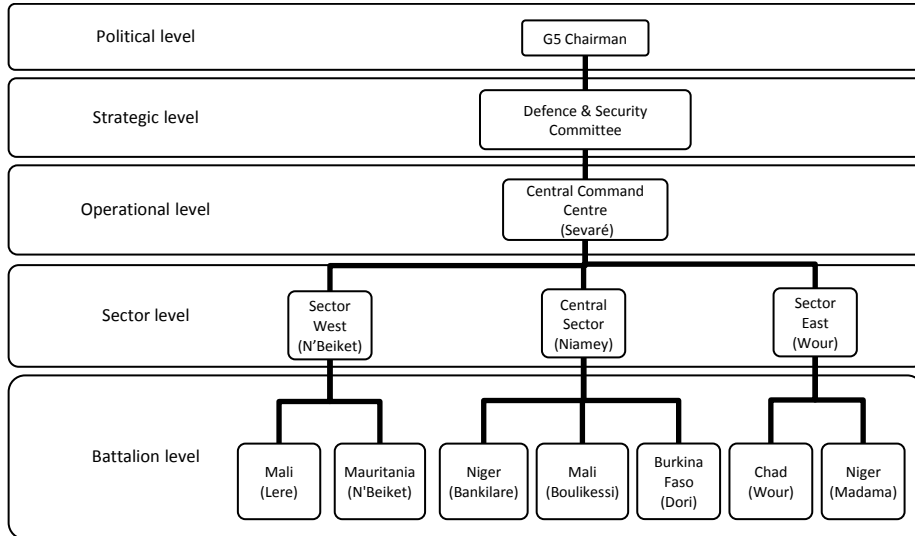
Figure 2. FC-G5S command architecture (source: UN; EUTM)

2.3.3 Deployment

The AU PSC authorised the deployment of up to 5,000 military, police, and civilian personnel.[48] According to a joint announcement by the foreign ministers of the G5S countries, the total number for the planned troop deployment has fluctuated up to 10,000 (including law enforcement and civilian components).[49]

The seven battalions would consist of 650 servicemen each. A police component is also foreseen in the strategic CONOPS, but there is still a lack of clarity about its scope and mandate. For the time being, 105 police personnel are foreseen, 15 in each battalion.[50] Even if not clearly indicated in the strategic CONOPS at this stage, the G5S chiefs of staff want these police units to be composed of 2-3 military police (*prévôté*) and 12-13 criminal investigators.[51] The full prosecution process

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[48] Ibid, p. 5.

[49] Jeune Afrique, "G5 Sahel : enfin une force conjointe à l'issue du sommet de Bamako?," 30 June 2017.

[50] European External Action Service (2017), *Options paper for CSDP support to the G5 Sahel Joint Force,* Council of the European Union, p. 3.

[51] United Nations Security Council (2017), *Report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel,* p. 6.

shall be carried out by specialised units at national level. This police component should add to the ensuring of civilian control over the penal chain.[52]

2.3.4 Two-phased approach

The strategic CONOPS delineates a two-phased approach to addressing security challenges in the Sahel.[53]

Phase 1

The immediate focus is on phase 1, which will be built on the joint border operations that had been conducted by the G5S countries. The operations will prioritise the Central Sector in the immediate term, with the aim of neutralising terrorist armed groups; preventing trafficking in persons, drugs, and arms; monitoring movements of weapons, ammunition, and explosives; and, consequently, disrupting supply chains and cutting these groups off from their sources of funding.[54]

The patrols will consist of armed forces of the contributing countries, on their own territories on each side of their respective borders. Sectors extend 50 km into each country on both sides of the border. Chad and the Niger have additionally decided to increase this to 100 km on both sides of their joint border in Sector East.[55]

Phase 2

Phase 2 would foresee the deployment of a full-fledged force operating throughout the Sahel. The FC-G5S should be able to conduct centralised operations in one or more locations in G5S territory. However, the strategic CONOPS does not provide details on the scale and scope, the command and control structure, nor the prerogatives of such a force. Neither has the timing for the transition to phase 2 been specified. The positions of the G5S countries on the conceptions of phase 2 vary significantly and will still require further discussion.[56] If the G5S countries decide to aim at making phase 2 fully operational, a joint vision and a shared definition of the scale and scope of such a force, as well as its end-state, would be required.[57]

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[52] European External Action Service (2017), *Options paper for CSDP support to the G5 Sahel Joint Force,* p. 3.

[53] United Nations Security Council (2017), *Report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel,* p. 6.

[54] Ibid, p. 10.

[55] Ibid, p. 5.

[56] United Nations Security Council (2017), *Report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel,* p. 8.

[57] Ibid.

2.4 FC-G5S activities

The first FC-G5S operation took place in a zone stretching between Anssongo and Dori, which is situated in the tri-border area of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. The operation, named Hawbi, was conducted from the end of October to the beginning of November, 2017, and assembled 350 soldiers from Burkina Faso, 200 Nigerian soldiers, and 200 Malian soldiers. Operation Barkhane supported with 180 soldiers.[58]

According to a FC-G5S roadmap from October 2017, a total of six operations are planned until October 2018. The target date for reaching full operational capability is March 2018, which is when all the cross-border operations are intended to be commanded by the FC-G5S.[59]

2.5 Summary

- The FC-G5S builds on prior G5S military cross-border coordination operations. The difference is that the Force will be under a joint command structure.

- The FC-G5S strategic CONOPS was mandated to combat terrorism and transnational organised crime; it also includes the facilitation of humanitarian operations, development activities, and the restoration of state authority.

- The FC-G5S exercises unified command through its central command in Mali, with three sector command posts, one for each zone. Seven cross-sectoral battalion command posts will also be spread over the zones and consist of 650 servicemen each.

- The strategic CONOPS delineates a two-phased approach to addressing security challenges in the Sahel. Phase 1 will be built on prior joint border operations, while phase 2 would foresee the deployment of a full-fledged force operating throughout the Sahel.

- The target date for reaching full operational capability is March 2018, which is when all the cross-border operations are intended to be commanded by the FC-G5S.

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[58] RFI, "Mali: une première opération du G5 Sahel sans accroc," 4 November 2017.
[59] EUTM Mali, "Advisory Task Force EUTM Mali," 11 October 2017.

3 Challenges for operationalisation

This chapter presents challenges linked to the category concerning the operationalisation of the FC-G5S. Four main areas have been identified that could potentially hinder the underlying support for FC-G5S's reaching full operational capacity: funding the FC-G5S, the current poor status of the national forces, internal instability in the G5 countries, and parallel structures.

3.1 Funding

Funding is perhaps the most immediate challenge for the FC-G5S. The Force is not only struggling with lack of funding, but also with a short-term approach to sponsoring the FC-G5S, and poor institutional capacity to absorb the funding.

3.1.1 Lack of funding

Difficult negotiations took place regarding whether the UNSC should envisage the possibility of using UN-assessed contributions to support its budget.[60] In the end, the resolution recalled that it was the responsibility of the G5S countries "to provide [the Force with] the adequate resources," while encouraging "further support from bilateral and multilateral partners."[61] One major challenge now is how the Force will be financed.[62]

The funding for the Force is currently being consolidated. The G5S countries themselves have announced they will contribute €10 million,[63] while the EU has pledged a €50 million support package for the FC-G5S.[64] France has declared logistical assistance equivalent to €8 million by the end of 2017.[65] The US does not support UN funding to the FC-G5S, but has announced €51 million bilateral

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[60] Security Council Report, "October 2017 Monthly Forecast," 28 September 2017.

[61] United Nations Security Council, "Security Council Welcomes Deployment of Joint Force to Combat Terrorism Threat, Transnational Crime in Sahel, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2359 (2017)," United Nations, 21 June 2017.

[62] United Nations Security Council (2017), *Report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel,* p. 9; Cooke, et al. "Understanding the G5 Sahel Joint Force: Fighting Terror, Building Regional Security?" 15 November 2017.

[63] Reuters, "French and West African presidents launch Sahel force," 2 July 2017.

[64] RFI, "Force anti-terroriste: le G5 envisage le déploiement de 5250 hommes," 2 July 2017.

[65] Maliactu, "Sahel: vers une force antijihadiste, sous l'impulsion de la France," 2 July 2017; France24, "France seeks UN funding to fight terror, smuggling in Africa's Sahel," 30 October 2017; RFI, "Hawbi: la première opération de la force conjointe du G5 Sahel," 2 November 2017.

assistance to the Force.[66] Prior to the US announcement of its backing the Force with €51 million bilateral assistance, the FC-G5S had only received a quarter of its estimated €423 million budget.[67]

A planning conference to ensure the coordination of donor assistance is expected to be held in Brussels in December 2017.[68] For now, France has been in the front line to mobilise funding for the FC-G5S.[69] The question is whether the Force will find sufficient funding. According to a Western diplomat, the planning meeting in support of the FC-G5S, held in Berlin in September, was a disappointment in terms of interest in mobilising efforts. One reason could be that several European countries are already involved in MINUSMA.[70] Today, the African Union does not have the resources to support the FC-G5S.[71]

As the UN Secretary-General stated in his report on the FC-G5S:

Given its size and the high potential future costs associated with eventually making a full-fledged anti-terrorism force operational, mobilising sustainable and consistent financial support over several years will remain a significant challenge.[72]

Idriss Deby, President of Chad, which possesses the Sahel region's most capable military, has voiced reluctance to further commit his forces unless they are assisted financially.[73]

Several interviewees believed that the FC-G5S would still proceed with operations, even if the Force did not receive the estimated budget, arguing that the G5S countries have already conducted approximately 20 OMCTs.[74] However, they would have to cut down on operational support, at the expense of the security of the defence and security personnel and the local population in the area of

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[66] The pledge came at a moment of internal policy debate in Washington over US military engagement in the Sahel region, following an ambush in October 2017 by extremist fighters in Niger that killed four US soldiers.

[67] Reuters, "U.S. pledges up to $60 million for security in Sahel region," 30 October 2017; RFI, "Hawbi: la première opération de la force conjointe du G5 Sahel," 2 November 2017.

[68] Security Council Report, "October 2017 Monthly Forecast," 28 September 2017.

[69] Reuters, "A Washington, Parly presse les USA d'appluyer la force du 'G5 Sahel'" 20 October 2017; RFI, "Florence Parly (Armées): G5 Sahel, « nous allons convaincre les contributeurs »," 15 November 2017.

[70] Interview, Bamako, October 2017.

[71] Jeune Afrique, "La force du G5 Sahel doit être intégrée à la Minusma," 4 July 2017.

[72] United Nations Security Council (2017), *Report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel,* p. 9.

[73] Le Monde, "Idriss Déby: « Je ne suis pas un aventurier, un guerrier, je suis un homme seul »," 25 June 2017; Reuters, "French and West African presidents launch Sahel force," 2 July 2017.

[74] Interview, Bamako, 2017.

operation. The continuous attacks on national defence forces and UN peacekeepers is an issue that the FC-G5S will also have to face.[75]

Funding will remain a major challenge for the FC-G5S. A shortage of funds could potentially lead to unwillingness on the part of the G5S countries to proceed with their involvement in the Force, or to a situation where the operations would have to cut down on operational support.

3.1.2 Short-term funding approach

The FC-G5S is an *ad hoc* military coalition, which enables short-term funding but makes it more difficult to find lasting funding. Consequently, the short-term commitments make it more difficult for the FC-G5S to plan its operations.[76]

The FC-G5S mandate was endorsed by the AU PSC, making it eligible for EU funding through the AU. However, the AU was cut out of the EU's funding process for the G5S, to avoid a repeat of the shortfalls that have left the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) troops without essential equipment for over a year. The EU favours *ad hoc* initiatives because AU member states commit their own resources – national armies bear much of the costs – and consequently local ownership is stronger. It also allows the EU to donate discrete packages of assistance rather than getting involved in long-term commitments that are difficult to end.[77]

3.1.3 Absorption of funds

There is a lack of an overarching G5S institutional framework for channelling and disbursing donor contributions. The battalion-level command posts will require significant investments for their construction and to render them fully operational, protected, and secure. Currently, such investments are feasible only through bilateral partners.[78] However, the mechanism for bilateral support remains unclear.[79] Without an overarching institutional framework that oversees the disbursing of contributions received, there is an increased risk of corruption and possible competition for resources among the G5S countries. [80]

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[75] Interview, Bamako, 2017.
[76] Interview, Bamako, 2017.
[77] International Crisis Group (2017), *Time to Reset African Union-European Union Relations,* International Crisis Group, pp. 12-13.
[78] Ibid, p. 9.
[79] Interview, Bamako, October 2017.
[80] Interviews, Bamako, October 2017.

Instead of having one interlocutor, such as the AU, the G5S countries will currently have to handle a number of bilateral partners. This will increase the administrative burden on already weak institutions.[81]

In contrast to bilateral funding, the EU funding will be channelled through an external procurement provider, Expertise France, which is the French international technical cooperation agency.[82]

The development of a sound financial mechanism would be instrumental in gaining donor confidence and encouraging more partners to come forward.[83] The risk of feeding corruption, and that the assistance intended for sector command posts and the battalion-level ends up in the wrong hands, could be reasons why potential donors balk at contributing bilaterally. In the end, FC-G5S might end up an empty shell, since the battalions will not have adequate means for conducting intended operations.

3.2 Status of the forces

The FC-G5S will not create a new force alongside the existing militaries of the G5S countries. Rather, the idea is to make the whole of their military capacity greater than the sum of the parts, by establishing a joint command structure that will coordinate the actions of the different militaries and enable them to support one another and operate in one another's territory. However, all five nations, among the world's poorest, have relatively small defence and security forces, and limited resources.[84] Even if the G5S countries continue to receive support from Operation Barkhane and the initial budget, the status of the forces is too deprived to fulfil the mandate of FC-G5S.[85] At the same time, French officials say the budget can be reduced, closer to €250 million.[86]

3.3 Internal instability of states

Three of the five G5S countries have experienced a form of coup d'état in the past 12 years – Mali in 2012, Niger in 2010, and Mauritania in 2005 and 2008 – while

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[81] Interviews, Bamako, October 2017.
[82] International Crisis Group (2017), *Time to Reset African Union-European Union Relations.*
[83] United Nations Security Council (2017), *Report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel,* pp. 9-10.
[84] Shurkin, et al. (2017), *Mali's next battle: Improving Counterterrorism Capabilities,* RAND.
[85] Interviews, Bamako, October 2017.
[86] France24, "France seeks UN funding to fight terror, smuggling in Africa's Sahel," 30 October 2017.

Burkina Faso saw a failed coup attempt in 2015.[87] An internal crisis could lead to the redirection to other domestic issues of a country's contribution to the FC-G5S.

Beyond the threats present in FC-G5S zones of operation, the G5S countries also face other security challenges. For example, Chad is continually faced with trying to tackle simultaneous crises along its borders (the Libyan crisis in the north, the Boko Haram insurgency in the south, and a deterioration of security along its borders with the Sudan and the Central African Republic in the southeast). In addition, Chad is also confronted with a severe fiscal and social crisis.[88]

Chad has noted that FC-G5S was often perceived as an additional effort being made to respond to the Malian crisis. They highlighted the seriousness of the threats facing Chad and its neighbours and that they were entirely disconnected from Mali, and stressed the need to address those threats simultaneously.[89] The strong focus on the Liptako-Gourma region could result in turning FC-G5S into FC-G3S, composed of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso.[90]

A reoccurrence of a coup d'état could potentially force a G5S country to prioritise its domestic turbulence, and put aside its contribution to FC-G5S. Due to the G5S countries' limited resources, this could also be the case if one of the other security challenges that they face gains strength.

3.4 Parallel structures

The FC-G5S is one of many initiatives that have the aim of improving the security in the Sahel region. The various parallel structures pose diverse challenges for the Force. The first concern is FC-G5S's extended dependency on Operation Barkhane. The second test is of a different character; the G5S countries will have to prioritise whether they should be deploying troops to MINUSMA or to the FC-G5S. The third struggle is that there are currently a number of African initiatives that the FC-G5S competes with for financial support, human resource expertise, and technical assistance.

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[87] Diallo, Ousmane Aly (2017), *"Jihad, and Insecurity in Central Mali,"* *Peace Review;* Baudais, Virginie, Chauzal, Grégory (2011), "The 2010 coup d'état in Niger: a praetorian regulation of politics?" *African Affairs;* Bøås, Mårten (2016), *State of play of EU-Mauritania relations,* European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs, p.6; Institute for Security Studies, "Burkina Faso a test for the AU's impact on crises," 2 November 2015.
[88] International Crisis Group (2017), *Fighting Boko Haram in Chad: Beyond Military Measures.*
[89] United Nations Security Council (2017), *Report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel,* p. 3.
[90] Interview, Bamako, October 2017.

3.4.1 Operation Barkhane

Operation Barkhane has to a large extent supported the OMCTs and the first FC-G5S operation, and the Force will continue to be highly dependent on France.[91] According to a number of observers, France see the FC-G5S as their exit strategy from the Sahel, but the Force would not be able to function without French support.[92]

This became evident during operation Hawbi, which, according to some observers, would not have been possible without the assistance of France.[93] Operation Barkhane supported the operation with a tactical air control party[94] and engineers, for handling homemade bombs, as well as with logistics, MEDEVAC,[95] and infantry soldiers.[96] Even though the operational decisions were made by the central sector command post in Niamey, the tactical coordination came from a French base in the region of In Tillit, in Mali.[97]

Operation Barkhane and the G5S were both established in 2014 and, from the start, the French have been heavily engaged in G5S' Defence and Security area. For example, they participate and advise in the G5S Operational Coordination Committee, where decisions are taken by the deputy heads of operations, and which has 4,000 soldiers across the G5S countries.[98]

From a French perspective, President Macron has played down speculation that he was seeking to reduce the burden on Operation Barkhane, saying that France would "remain engaged for as long as it takes."[99] Yet, the French security forces are overstretched, and also needs to deploy domestically, to respond to the rising threat of terrorist attacks at home.[100]

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[91] Lebovich, Andrew, "Serious questions remain over G5 Sahel military force," 16 June 2017.

[92] Aljazeera, "G5 Sahel counterterrorist force explained," 3 November 2017; RFI, "Mali: une première opération du G5 Sahel sans accroc," 4 November 2017; New24.com, "Sahel anti-terror force sees teething problems in first mission," 7 November 2017.

[93] RFI, "Mali: une première opération du G5 Sahel sans accroc," 4 November 2017; Ministère des Armées (2017), *Dossier de presse: Opération Barkhane,* p. 11.

[94] Tactical air control party is a small team of Air Force or Marine personnel who provide airspace de-confliction and terminal control of close air support at battle group level or below.

[95] Medical evacuation.

[96] Reuter, "G5 Sahel lauches military operation in African scrublands," 2 November 2017; RFI, "G5 Sahel: opération Hawbi, les premiers enseignements," 9 November 2017; RFI, "Mali: une première opération du G5 Sahel sans accroc," 4 November 2017.

[97] RFI, "Mali: une première opération du G5 Sahel sans accroc," 4 November 2017.

[98] Tisseron, Antonin (2015), *G5 Sahel : une simple organisation de plus?* Groupe de recherche et d'information sur la paix et la sécurité; interviews, Bamako, October 2017; Ministère des Armées (2017), *Dossier de presse: Opération Barkhane.*

[99] Reuters, "French and West African presidents launch Sahel force," 2 July 2017.

[100] Cooke, et al. "Understanding the G5 Sahel Joint Force: Fighting Terror, Building Regional Security?" 15 November 2017.

In sum, if France decides to reduce its presence, the question will be to what extent the FC-G5S will be able to conduct counterterrorist operations.

3.4.2 MINUSMA

Chad, Burkina Faso, and Niger have also deployed around 4,100 military personnel within MINUSMA.[101] The G5S countries will use existing militaries for the seven battalions. Therefore, according to the force commander, General Dacko, no recruitment of new forces is needed.[102] Due to the relatively small forces of the G5S countries, they will have to prioritise whether they should be sending troops to MINUSMA or the FC-G5S.

Chad is the third largest contingent to MINUSMA, and the Chadian president has expressed his reluctance to participate in FC-G5S, arguing that he could not "have 1,400 men in Mali and at the same time have 2,000 soldiers in the G5 Sahel."[103] Burkina Faso has a similar problem. According to an interviewee, Burkina Faso's total deployment capacity amounts to six army battalions. Two battalions are already engaged in MINUSMA on a one-year basis. Allocating two more rotating battalions to FC-G5S on a six-month basis will reduce Burkinabe defence capability to one remaining army battalion in active service over time. The country might not be willing to risk having only one battalion available for other domestic threats.[104] This is currently the case. Burkina Faso is facing numerous attacks and wants to redeploy its battalion that is presently in Mali towards its border.[105]

The allocation of national security forces to the battalions reduces State presence outside the FC-G5S areas of operation. New pockets of insecurity could open up when battalions are pulled from the national security forces.[106] The state presence around population centres also risks being reduced as a result of FC-G5S cross-border operations.[107]

3.4.3 African initiatives

There are currently a number of African initiatives that have the aim of improving the security in the Sahel region. This means that the FC-G5S is competing with

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[101] Reuters, "French and West African presidents launch Sahel force," 2 July 2017.

[102] RFI, "Didier Dacko, général malien: «Nous allons respecter la résolution des Nations unies,»" 30 June 2017.

[103] The Sahel Standard, "Chad Threatens to Withdraw Troops From Mali, G5 Operations," 26 June 2017.

[104] Interview, Bamako, October 2017; Touchard, Laurent, *Forces Armées Africaines 2016-2017,* Éditions LT, p. 203.

[105] RFI, "Le Burkina Faso multiplie les opérations pour sécuriser ses frontières," 5 November 2017.

[106] Interviews, Bamako, October 2017.

[107] Interview, Bamako, October 2017.

other actors, not only over financial support, but also over human resource expertise and technical assistance. Consequently, additional initiatives also weaken existing regional and continental cooperation.[108]

An example is the Multinational Joint Task Force, MNJTF, established by Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger to combat Boko Haram. The MNJTF is gradually gaining ground, but is facing numerous political, logistical, technical, and financial challenges.[109] In October 2017, several hundred Chadian troops left Niger's south-eastern Diffa region and were sent to Wour, on Chad's northern border with Libya. The troops had been redeployed to a different border within the framework of the FC-G5S. This could indicate a lower terrorism risk in the Diffa region.[110] However, initial reports indicate that the security situation there has already begun to deteriorate in the vacuum left by departing Chadian forces.[111]

A second example is the Joint Operational Army Staffs Committee (*Comité d'état-major opérationnel conjoint* – CEMOC), which was established in 2010 to coordinate intelligence activities between Algeria, Mali, the Niger, and Mauritania. In 2011, the countries agreed to form a 75,000-man counter-terror military force to police the Sahel-Saharan region. The Tamanrasset-based CEMOC was to coordinate the force, which was never formed.[112] According to numerous analysts, Algeria set up the CEMOC only to counter the French influence in the Sahel region.[113]

A third example is the Nouakchott Process, formally linked to the AU and launched in 2013. This is a framework of collective efforts of eleven countries (Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, Libya, Mauritania, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Algeria, Guinea, Niger, and Nigeria) to coordinate regional intelligence and action against terrorism and trafficking. However, the Nouakchott Process has been hindered by distrust between some of the partners.[114]

And, without going into further detail, there are also other examples of African initiatives linked to security:

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[108] Abderrahmane, Abdelkader, "The Sahel G5: France's Foothold in the Sahel," *The Broker online,* 2 February 2017; interview, Bamako, 2017.

[109] Assanvo, William, et al. (2016), *Assessing the Multinational Joint Task Force against Boko Haram,* Institute for Security Studies.

[110] IHS Jane's Country Risk Daily Report, "Chad's "redeployment" from Niger indicates lower terrorism risk to its territory from Diffa region," 15 October 2017.

[111] Thurston, Alexander, "America should beware a Chadian military scorned Trump travel ban," *Foreign Policy,* 18 October 2017.

[112] Roussellier, Jacques, "The Forgotten Maghreb–Sahel Nexus," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace,* 31 October 2017.

[113] Jeune Afrique, "Le Niger, sa politique de sécurité, ses voisins," 5 May 2014.

[114] Tisseron, Antonin (2016), *Security and Development – What is the purpose of the G5 Sahel?* Thomas More Institute, p. 4.

- the African Union Mission for Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL), which is mandated to reinforce good governance, combat insecurity in all its forms (terrorism, organised crime, and armed banditry), and promote development;[115]

- The Fusion and Liaison Unit (*Unité de Fusion et de Liaison* – UFL), which has the aim of fostering intelligence exchanges between the participating parties;[116]

- the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA);[117]

- the African Centre for Studies and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT).[118]

These initiatives have struggled to actualize the conversion of form into function.[119] As an interviewee said, "the initiatives are hot until they run out of money, then they create new initiatives to find new financial means."[120] There is a risk that FC-G5S will struggle with similar challenges.

3.5 Summary

- While funding is the most pressing challenge for the FC-G5S, the Force is still likely to proceed with operations, even if they do not receive the estimated budget, at the expense of the security of the defence and security personnel and the local population in the area of operation.

- The FC-G5S is an *ad hoc* initiative that enables short-term funding, making it more difficult to find lasting funding. Consequently, the short-term funding commitments make it harder for the FC-G5S to plan its operations.

- There is a lack of an overarching institutional framework for channelling and disbursing donor contributions, which increases the risk of corruption. Having numerous bilateral partners also increases the administrative burden on already weak institutions.

- The FC-G5S will consist of the existing militaries of the G5S countries, which are relatively small and have limited resources to commit to fulfilling its mandate.

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[115] MISAHEL (2014), *Communiqué de presse: Le Mali doit aller plus loin dans le processus de réconciliation,* African Union.

[116] Cline, Lawrence E. (2016), "African Regional Intelligence Cooperation: Problems and Prospects," *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence.*

[117] Ibid.

[118] Ibid.

[119] Cline, Lawrence E., "African Regional Intelligence Cooperation: Problems and Prospects," 2016.

[120] Interviews, Stockholm, October 2017.

- Several of the G5S countries have experienced a coup d'état in the last 12 years. In addition to domestic political issues, the countries also face other external threats that are not part of the zones of FC-G5S operations. Hence an internal crisis could redirect a country's contribution to the FC-G5S to other domestic issues.

- The Force is highly dependent on Operation Barkhane, and it is uncertain to what extent FC-G5S would be able to conduct effective counterterrorist operations if France decides to reduce its presence.

- The G5S countries face numerous threats, and they are torn between deploying troops to FC-G5S, MINUSMA or MNJTF, since they have limited resources. A redeployment can create new pockets of insecurity where the forces have been pulled out.

- The FC-G5S is competing with other African security initiatives for financial support, human resource expertise, and technical assistance.

4 Framework concerns

This chapter presents concerns connected to the frameworks that outline the work of the FC-G5S. This study has identified three challenges connected to the strategic CONOPS: the lack of a strategy for how to combat trafficking, a limited law enforcement component, and a missing linkage between security strategy and development.

4.1 The police component

Part of the FC-G5S mandate includes efforts to combat human trafficking and drug trafficking. A police component is foreseen in the strategic CONOPS, but it still lacks clarity on its scope and mandate.[121] Without a strong police component, it is difficult to handle the trafficking aspects in the mandate.[122]

Even if not clearly indicated in the strategic CONOPS at this stage, the G5S chiefs of staff want to have 12-13 criminal investigators, who would accompany military units and take the lead as first responders for investigations and/or crime scene management, i.e. information collection and management, and criminal investigations in the area of anti-terrorism and organised crime.[123]

According to an interviewee, the initial plan for the strategic CONOPS was for a 100-man-strong police component in each battalion. But the G5S countries have disagreed about the size of the police component; Burkina Faso and the Niger have argued for an enlarged police component, while Mauritania has opposed the participation of any civilians in the operations.[124] Regardless of the size of the police component, the level of coordination and collaboration between the police officers and the military elements in the operations envisaged under phase 1 or phase 2 is not further specified in the strategic CONOPS.[125]

The modalities for arrests and detention of suspects are specified in the FC-G5S memorandum of understanding on extraterritoriality.[126] However, the prisons are

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[121] European External Action Service (2017), *Options paper for CSDP support to the G5 Sahel Joint Force,* p. 4.

[122] Interview, Bamako, October 2017.

[123] European External Action Service (2017), *Options paper for CSDP support to the G5 Sahel Joint Force,* p. 3.

[124] Interview, Bamako, October 2017.

[125] United Nations Security Council (2017), *Report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel,* p. 6.

[126] Interview, Bamako, October 2017.

overflowing and suspects have little prospect of receiving formal charges or trial.[127]

In the process of operationalising the FC-G5S, the discussions have concerned counterterrorist activities, leaving aside transnational organised crime.[128] But as one interviewee conferred, it was likely that human trafficking and drug trafficking was added to the FC-G5S mandate to increase the chances of receiving more funding.[129]

The range of armed groups embroiled in trafficking (and in some cases with jihadist groups) includes some that work with the Malian government and others involved in the country's ongoing peace process. Consequently, it would be difficult to reduce trafficking without also threatening the funding of these groups and prompting further violence and instability.[130] Another reason for not focusing on combatting criminal networks is that government officials are involved in criminal activities, gaining from illegal business.[131]

4.2 The accountability mechanism

The numbers for the military police are not clearly indicated in the strategic CONOPS, but the G5S chiefs of staff want units to be composed of 2-3 military police (*prévôté*).[132] However, the existing compliance frameworks at the national level lack adequate pre-deployment mechanisms (screening, robust training, and planning the protection of civilians) and post-deployment accountability mechanisms. The absence of a satisfactory human rights compliance framework for the FC-G5S compounds the risk that human rights violations could be committed during its operations.[133] The security forces may not only adversely

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[127] See e.g. Cook, Jennifer G., et al. (2016), *Militancy and the Arc of Instability*, Center for Strategic & International studies*;* The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism and The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (2017), *Action Agenda on Violent Extremist Offenders in Prison in Mali: Gaps, Challenges and Action Plans for the Rehabilitation and Integration of Violent Extremist Offenders in Prison in Mali,* p 8.

[128] Interviews, Bamako, October 2017.

[129] Interview, Bamako, October 2017.

[130] Lebovich, Andrew, "Serious questions remain over G5 Sahel military force," 16 June 2017.

[131] Muiderman, Karlijn, "The Sahel, a complex cocktail of crime and politics," *The Broker Online,* 26 August 2015; Bøås, Mårten, "Crime, Coping, and Resistance in the Mali-Sahel Periphery," *African Security,* 2015*;* Briscoe, Ivan (2015), *Crime after Jihad: Armed groups, the state and illicit business in post-conflict Mali,* Clingendael.

[132] European External Action Service (2017), *Options paper for CSDP support to the G5 Sahel Joint Force,* p. 4.

[133] United Nations Security Council (2017), *Report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel,* p. 9.

harm and violate the human rights of civilians, but also risk contributing to further destabilisation, including the fuelling of youth radicalisation.[134]

The military and security forces of the G5S countries have a poor track record when it comes to human rights violations.[135] According to Human Rights Watch, since late 2016 Malian forces have committed extrajudicial killings, and conducted enforced disappearances, torture, and arbitrary arrests of men accused of supporting Islamist armed groups, while a June 2017 cross-border operation by Burkinabe forces left two suspects dead.[136]

The UN is currently preparing a compliance framework for the FC-G5S, which includes vetting potential troops before deployment, to ensure they are not rights violators, and requiring that rules of engagement meet human rights requirements, including those dealing with sexual violence, use of force, and interactions with children. According to the UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Andrew Gilmour, donors will be more likely to allocate funding to the FC-G5S if the G5S countries work together with the UN on the compliance framework. [137]

So far, the UN has received positive reactions from the G5S countries regarding the compliance framework.[138] However, one interviewee was more sceptical towards military accountability mechanisms:

If a soldier commits abuses, he is merely relocated, and the records never appear in a vetting.[139]

In order for the proposed compliance framework to be effective, the existing compliance frameworks at the national level must also improve.

4.3 Security vs. Development

According to the FC-G5S mandate, the Force should facilitate humanitarian operations and contribute to development activities in the Sahel.[140] However, there

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[134] Ibid, pp. 8-9.
[135] See Human Rights Watch, "Mali: Unchecked abuses in military operations," 8 September 2017; United States Department of State (2015), *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015: Chad,* p. 1; Bøås, Mårten (2016), *State of play of EU-Mauritania relations,* European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs, p.19; United States Department of State (2016), *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016: Niger,* p. 1.
[136] Human Rights Watch, "Mali: Unchecked abuses in military operations," 8 September 2017.
[137] The Washington Post, "UN seeks to put human rights experts into new Sahel force," 18 November 2017.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Interview, Bamako, October 2017.
[140] United Nations Security Council (2017), *Report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel*, p. 9.

is currently a missing link between the security-based response of the G5S and its development goals.

The G5S has a dual emphasis on security and development, but the G5S development projects have faced obstacles in their implementation, due to the structural limitations of official development assistance in the Sahel region and insecurity on the ground.[141]

Insecurity tends to push development initiatives to the background and creates a discrepancy between what is said and the expectations of local population,[142] especially when the security-based response does not correspond with the surveyed needs of civil society in the region.[143] Instability is the result of a sedimentation of problems, of which violent extremism is only the most recent layer. The roots of instability – a governance deficit, chronic poverty, climate change, and development financing – must be dealt with at the same time.[144] This is of particular importance in the areas where the state is absent and the local population distrusts the military; otherwise, the FC-G5S will struggle with public support and could fuel resentment and grievances.[145]

Communicating with the population in order to inform them about the aim, and what is expected, of the FC-G5S in the areas where the Force will operate will be vital.[146] At the same time, the G5S will have to retake its focus on development initiatives and step up national efforts concerning the provision of basic services and state representation.

4.4 Summary

- There is a lack of clarity on the size, scope, and mandate of the police component foreseen in the strategic CONOPS. Without a strong police component, it is difficult to handle the trafficking aspects in the mandate. Moreover, there are currently limited incentives and little political will to tackle transnational organised crime, since it could further fuel violence and instability.

- Even if the modalities for the arresting and detaining of suspects are specified, the prisons in the G5S countries are already overflowing and suspects have little prospect of receiving formal charges or trial.

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[141] Tisseron, Antonin (2016), *Security and Development – What is the purpose of the G5 Sahel?* Thomas More Institute, p. 4.

[142] Ibid.

[143] Interviews, Stockholm, September 2017.

[144] United Nations, "Success of Joint Sahel Counterterrorist Force Hinges on Cooperation, Funding to Fill Capacity Gaps, Key Peacekeeping Official Tells Security Council," 15 August 2017.

[145] Interviews, Stockholm, September 2017.

[146] Interviews, Bamako, October 2017.

- The G5S chiefs of staff want units to be composed of 2-3 military police, but the existing compliance frameworks at the national level lack adequate pre-deployment mechanisms and post-deployment accountability mechanisms.

- The G5S development projects have faced obstacles in their implementation, but a strictly military approach in areas where the state is absent, and the local population's distrust of the military, will make it difficult for the FC-G5S to operate.

5 In-theatre challenges

This chapter presents challenges that the FC-G5S might encounter in-theatre, namely: limited intelligence capabilities; dependency on external logistics and medical support; equipment and capability shortfall; lack of coordination; and the rotation of battalions.

5.1 Intelligence capabilities

Effective counterterrorist operations rely on good intelligence information. Yet, the G5S countries lack adequate intelligence capacity.[147] Hence, the FC-G5S is likely to face challenges with regard to collecting intelligence information, identifying terrorists, and sharing information among the G5S countries.

5.1.1 Collecting information

Lessons learned from previous human intelligence operations conducted in Mali indicate a need for improved protection of informants. Armed groups in Mali have threatened and killed local populations whenever there has been a suspicion of collaboration with French forces, the government, or the UN peacekeeping mission.[148] Unless security forces can provide security to population centres over time, the local population will have limited incentives to share information.[149]

According to several interviewees, if the FC-G5S is perceived as an imposed external initiative, it will struggle to get information about or from the local population, as has been the case with MINUSMA and Operation Barkhane.[150] Many doubt the G5S countries' ownership of FC-G5S. Though the initiative will be African-led, it is a matter of some contention whose agenda the Force will be serving, especially when the majority of funds will come from outside the continent, together with the extensive support of France.[151] The lack of transparency regarding the nature of Operation Barkhane's involvement in FC-G5S has also put in question its being labelled as an African-led force.[152]

Ethnic divisions between local populations and security forces have previously resulted in disparate sources of information. The discriminate inclusion of ethnic

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[147] Interview, Bamako, October 2017.
[148] Shurkin, et al. (2017), *Mali's next battle: Improving Counterterrorism Capabilities,* RAND; interviews, Bamako 2017.
[149] Interviews, Bamako, October 2017.
[150] Interviews, Stockholm, September 2017; interviews, Bamako, October 2017.
[151] Aljazeera, "G5 Sahel counterterrorist force explained," 3 November 2017.
[152] Interview, Bamako, October 2017.

groups in counterterrorist operations has in some cases fuelled violence and created proxies.[153]

The FC-G5S lack the technical means, such as drones, for data collection. Thus, the G5S countries will continue to rely on external partners, mainly France, for intelligence information.[154]

5.1.2   Terrorist identification

The distinctions between different armed groups are often blurred and it is difficult to separate who is a so-called terrorist from the ongoing political, social, and economic conflicts.[155] Capturing suspects can create resentment among the local population and fuel inter-communal conflicts; it can also have an impact on the Malian 2015 peace agreement.[156]

The Malian security forces have struggled to distinguish between who is a terrorist and who is a part of a so-called compliant armed group.[157] The two groups operate in the same space with the same methods; Malian officers interviewed for a RAND study in 2016 appeared to resent the international community for insisting on what they regard as a largely artificial distinction between the rebels and the jihadists.[158] The first FC-G5S operation, code-named Hawbi, faced a similar problem. The eight people who were stopped by the Force and Operation Barkhane were confirmed as being a part of the *Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad* (CMA), one of the signature groups of the Malian peace agreement in 2015, and were later released.[159]

Another dimension is the humanitarian cost of counterterrorist operations, where fighting in populated areas exposes civilians to crossfire. Arrests, when men are extracted from their community, can also create social, economic, and psychological crises, no less because of the isolation and uncertainty of those who remain without them.[160]

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[153] Interviews, Bamako, October 2017.

[154] Interview, Bamako, October 2017.

[155] Wing, Susan D. (2016), "French intervention in Mali: strategic alliances, long-term regional presence?" *Small Wars & Insurgencies,* p. 71.

[156] Interviews, Bamako, October 2017.

[157] *Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad* (CMA) is one of the signature groups of the Malian peace agreement in 2015.

[158] Shurkin, et al. (2017), *Mali's next battle: Improving Counterterrorism Capabilities.*

[159] RFI, "Mali: libération des huit personnes de la CMA arrêtées par la force conjointe du G5 Sahel," 12 November 2017.

[160] Sahelien, "In the Sahel, security is impossible without integrative vision," 22 November 2017.

5.1.3   Information-sharing mechanism

The FC-G5S struggles with obtaining secure channels for sharing intelligence information and will continue to depend on French support,[161] not only in terms of technical equipment, but also coordination. According to an interviewee, intelligence-sharing agreements are bilateral in character, which in turn creates problems for coordinating operations between FC-G5S battalions.[162] The likely solution is to feed intelligence directly to FC-G5S operations via Operation Barkhane, and France will be able to share "washed" intelligence with FC-G5S.[163]

There has also been a great deal of mistrust between countries in sharing intelligence information.[164] According to an interviewee, information-sharing has improved as a result of the OMCTs, but there is still a great deal of mistrust between the countries.[165]

5.1.4   Algeria

Algeria is the military and strategic regional power and their intelligence services have good knowledge of Jihadist movements active in the region.[166] The current FC-G5S Force Commander, General Dacko, is concerned about the relationship with Algeria.[167] When FC-G5S was initiated, Algeria felt sidestepped by the French. According to Sahel experts, France criticized Algeria for playing both sides with terrorist groups in the Sahara and has overlooked its attempts to play an important regional security role.[168] Algeria, on its part, fears that FC-G5S will push terrorists across its borders.[169]

At the same time, the FC-G5S will have to cooperate with Algeria, with which the G5 Member States share a collective border roughly 2,500 km long.[170] Algeria has long provided fuel for the Malian army's patrols of areas of insecurity. It has also trained at least two Nigerian counterterrorist battalions.[171] However, according to General Dacko, there has not as yet been any process to formalise security

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[161] Interviews, Bamako, October 2017; Aljazeera, "G5 Sahel counterterrorist force explained," 3 November 2017.

[162] Interview, Bamako, October 2017.

[163] Interview, Bamako, October 2017.

[164] Cantens and Raballand (2016), *Fragile Borders: rethinking borders and insecurity in Northern Mali,* Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, p. 7.

[165] Interview, Bamako, October 2017.

[166] Le Monde, "La sécurité au Sahel se construit sans l'Algérie : jusqu'à quand?" 24 March 2016.

[167] Reuters, "Short on boots and backing, West Africa force faces uphill battle," 8 November 2017.

[168] Roussellier, Jacques, "The Forgotten Maghreb–Sahel Nexus," 31 October 2017.

[169] The Arab Weekly, "French-sponsored G5 force may not offer stability on Maghreb's border," 9 July 2017.

[170] Reuters, "Short on boots and backing, West Africa force faces uphill battle," 8 November 2017.

[171] Le Monde, "La sécurité au Sahel se construit sans l'Algérie: jusqu'à quand?" 24 March 2016.

cooperation between the FC-G5S and Algeria.[172] The G5S countries have a special liaison with France, but the strained relationship between France and Algeria could hamper the effectiveness of the Force.

5.2 External logistics and medical support

The G5S countries comprise an area the size of Europe, with a climate that is difficult for humans as well as equipment.[173] The FC-G5S sector command posts in zone East and West, together with the battalion command posts, are situated in remote and isolated areas.[174] FC-G5S is dependent on external support when it comes to logistics and medical assistance, particularly on battalion level. It is still unclear who will provide this support to the FC-G5S. MINUSMA could potentially provide assistance in the future, but it is also currently struggling to sustain its own operational capacity. Furthermore, MINUSMA's mandate is limited to Mali.[175]

Due to the remote and isolated areas where the FC-G5S will operate, the logistical and medical support will be one of the main challenges for the FC-G5S.

5.3 Equipment and capability shortfall

The FC-G5S has an equipment and capability shortfall and are heavily dependent on external contributions. The list of equipment needed is long, including unmanned aerial systems, interoperable information and communications infrastructure, and individual personal protective equipment.[176] During the first FC-G5S operation, the African combatants were not fully equiped with body amour nor armoured vehicles.[177]

The outcome of the donor conference in Brussels in December 2017 is yet to be seen. Even if additional pledges were to arise, there is a risk that goods, services, and works will not be delivered in time to enable the deployment of the force. According to several interviewees, FC-G5S will continue to conduct operations,

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[172] Reuters, "Short on boots and backing, West Africa force faces uphill battle," 8 November 2017.

[173] Ministère des Armées (2017), *Dossier de presse: Opération Barkhane,* p. 14.

[174] United Nations Security Council (2017), *Report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel,* p. 9.

[175] Interviews, Bamako, October 2017.

[176] United Nations Security Council (2017), *Report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel,* p. 9.

[177] RFI, "Mali: une première opération du G5 Sahel sans accroc," 4 November 2017.

despite being poorly equipped.[178] Without proper equipment, FC-G5S will risk the security of its troops.

5.4 Coordination

The UNSC Resolution 2359 "urges the FC-G5S, MINUSMA and the French forces to ensure adequate coordination and exchange of information, through relevant mechanisms, of their operations, within their respective mandates."[179] The FC-G5S will have to coordinate with MINUSMA, Operation Barkhane, and US Special forces,[180] in the areas where the forces will operate, to avoid disturbing or being disturbed during each other's operations. However, there is currently a lack of coordination between them.[181]

According to an interviewee, there have been efforts to improve the coordination by putting new liaison structures in place, in Sévaré. However, it is difficult for MINUSMA to coordinate with FC-G5S without compromising its peacekeeping mandate.[182] The 2015 Report of the UN High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations stated that UN peacekeeping missions, due to their composition and character, are not suited to engagement in military counterterrorist operations. In situations, "where a UN peacekeeping operation is deployed in parallel with a non-UN force undertaking military counterterrorist operations or other offensive operations, a clear division of labour and distinction of roles must guide their respective operations."[183]

It has been argued that the UN mission may already have crossed the line into a "counterterrorist mode" and, due to recent operations in Mali, the MINSUMA is increasingly perceived as a party to the conflict.[184] Remaining impartial is particularly important for the UN; it is a core principle of its peacekeeping

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[178] Interviews, Stockholm, September 2017; interview, Stockholm, October 2017; interviews, Bamako, October 2017.

[179] United Nations Security Council, "Security Council Welcomes Deployment of Joint Force to Combat Terrorism Threat, Transnational Crime in Sahel, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2359 (2017)," United Nations, 21 June 2017, p.3.

[180] US Special Forces are present in the Sahel region, but it is still unclear what role the US will play. Coordination will still be needed. In October 2017, four US soldiers and five Nigerien troops died in an ambush not far from the Nigerien town, Tongo Tongo. The area is situated in the Liptako-Gourma region, a part of FC-G5S's Central Sector.

[181] Interviews, Bamako, October 2017.

[182] Interview, Bamako, October 2017.

[183] High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (2015), *Uniting our strengths for peace – politics, partnership and people,* pp. 31-32.

[184] Karlsrud, John, "Towards UN counterterrorist operations?" *Third World Quarterly,* 2017, p. 1224.

operations and a prerequisite for its ability to talk with everyone.[185] Thus, it is still unclear how FC-G5S will coordinate with MINUSMA without being perceived as a party to the conflict.

5.5 Rotation of battalions

The battalions will be put under the direct joint command for six months, and thereafter rotated back to respective national security forces.[186] This configuration creates new challenges in terms of human resource management. According to an interviewee, the rotation of staff personnel will likely create gaps in command and control (C2) structures. The security forces of the G5S countries generally lack adequate C2 capacities above company level and have limitations on platoon level.[187] Rotating battalions will have difficulties building the capacity needed to direct cross-border operations.[188]

Moreover, the equipment provisioned for FC-G5S is likely to remain at forward operating bases during rotations.[189] Rotating personnel thereby risk being unarmed and unprotected in areas of operations. [190]

5.6 Summary

- The G5S countries lack adequate intelligence capacities and technical means, considering the zones they are planning to cover.

- It is difficult to separate who is a so-called terrorist from the ongoing political, social, and economic conflicts.

- FC-G5S will likely continue to depend on Operation Barkhane for sharing intelligence information.

- The FC-G5S is dependent on external support when it comes to logistics, medical assistance, and equipment.

- There is lack of coordination between FC-G5S, MINUSMA, Operation Barkhane, and American forces in the area where the Force will operate;

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[185] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (2017), *Multilateral peace operations and the challenges of terrorism and violent extremism,* p. 9.

[186] RFI, "Didier Dacko, général malien: «Nous allons respecter la résolution des Nations unies»," 30 June 2017.

[187] Interview, Bamako, October 2017.

[188] Interview, Bamako, October 2017.

[189] A forward operating base is any secured forward military position, commonly a military base that is used to support tactical operations.

[190] Interview, Bamako, October 2017.

this could increase the risk of disturbing or being disturbed during each other's operations.

- The rotation of staff personnel will likely create gaps in command and control structures and the rotating battalions will have difficulties building the capacity needed to direct cross-border operations.

6 Concluding remarks

This study aims to contribute an overview of the main challenges the FC-G5S faces during the process of obtaining full operational capability, targeted for March 2018. The identified challenges have been considered in three different categories: challenges concerning the basis of operationalisation, concerns regarding the FC-G5S framework, and in-theatre challenges. This chapter highlights the main concerns in each category.

6.1 Challenges for operationalisation

The main challenges in this category are: the lack of funding, and other security threats than the terrorist armed groups and other organised criminal groups present in FC-G5S zones of operation.

A. The G5S countries lack financial resources; Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso are among the poorest countries in the world, and their national security forces are deprived. The budget for the FC-G5S is estimated at €423 million, for the Force's first year of operation, but only about a third of that amount has currently been pledged. The Force might still proceed with operations even if they do not receive the estimated budget. However, there is a risk that it would be at the expense of the security of the defence and security personnel and of the local population in the area of operation.

B. Several of the G5S countries have experienced a coup d'état in the last 12 years. In addition to domestic political issues, the countries also face other external threats that are not part of the zones of FC-G5S operations. The Force intends to use existing militaries, and since the G5S countries have limited resources, they have to choose between deploying soldiers to FC-G5S, MINUSMA, MNJTF, or other insecure zones on their territories. For example, Burkina Faso has recently threatened to redeploy its battalion that is presently in Mali. A reallocation could potentially create new pockets of insecurity. Considering the multiple security challenges that the Sahel region is dealing with, such a reallocation and its consequences would continue to be a major challenge for both the G5 countries and the FC-G5S.

6.2 Framework concerns

Three main challenges have been identified in this category: lack of clarity concerning the police component, lack of adequate national compliance

frameworks, and the lack of vision for how FC-G5S will facilitate humanitarian operations and development actions.

A. The strategic CONOPS mandates the FC-G5S to combat drug and human trafficking. However, the police component foreseen in the strategic CONOPS still lacks clarity as to its scope and mandate. This is especially relevant when it comes to the size of the police component, and the level of coordination and collaboration between the police officers and the military elements in the operations. A potential explanation for the lack of interest of the G5S countries in discussing the police contribution is the limited incentive to target transnational organised crime.

B. The poor track record of human rights violations of the military and security forces of the G5S countries makes the military police component of particular interest. Regrettably, the existing compliance frameworks at the national level lack adequate pre-deployment and post-deployment mechanisms. The UN is currently preparing a compliance framework for the FC-G5S, but the question is whether it will be used by the Force.

C. The mandate of FC-G5S is military-oriented, and it only states that the Force should facilitate humanitarian operations and contribute to the implementation of development actions. But the G5S overall agenda is dual, with both a security and a development side. The strong focus on military-based response of G5S does not correspond well with the needs of the population, especially in areas where the State is absent. With a military-only approach, the FC-G5S will likely have to struggle with public support, and further fuel resentment and grievances in areas of operation.

6.3 In-theatre challenges

The main challenges identified in this category are: limited intelligence capabilities, high dependency on external support for logistics, medical assistance, and equipment, and the potential gaps in command and control structures during rotations of battalions.

A. One of the main concerns is for the limited intelligence capabilities of the G5S countries, since effective counterterrorist operations rely on good intelligence information. The FC-G5S will face particular challenges regarding the collection of intelligence information and the identification of terrorists. It is difficult to separate a so-called terrorist group from other armed groups. Capturing suspects on the basis of vague information can create resentment among the local population, leaving them with even less incentive to share information.

B. The FC-G5S is to a great extent dependent on external support when it comes to logistics, medical assistance, and equipment. With external funding also comes certain conditions from international actors. If the FC-G5S is perceived as being an imposed external initiative, it risks losing the support of the public.

C. An important issue that needs to be solved is the rotation of battalions. The battalions will be put under the direct command of FC-G5S for six months, and thereafter rotated back to respective national security forces. The rotation of staff personnel will likely create gaps in command and control structures, since the security forces of the G5S countries generally lack this capacity.

6.4 Way forward

This overview has highlighted the shortcomings of the FC-G5S. While the Force indeed has to overcome a number of challenges before becoming an executive actor, it is also important to remember that the FC-G5S is a real attempt to respond to the deteriorating security situation in the Sahel region. The mandate of the FC-G5S is intended to fill a gap between the mandates of MINUSMA and Operation Barkhane. Rather than calling for a greater external footprint, the Force is placing African troops at the centre, with the ambition of making them more effective. By highlighting the main challenges, there is also the possibility to seek solutions during the implementation process.

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Annex 1. Interviewees and informants

Researcher, SIPRI, Stockholm, 29 September 2017

Researcher, SIPRI, Stockholm, 29 September 2017

Researcher, SIPRI, Stockholm, 29 September 2017

Officer, Swedish Armed Forces, Stockholm, 5 October 2017

Officer, Swedish Armed Forces, Stockholm, 5 October 2017

Officer, Swedish Armed Forces, Stockholm, 5 October 2017

Officer, EUCAP Mali, Bamako, 9 October 2017

Diplomat, Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Bamako, 10 October 2017

Desk officer, Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Bamako, 10 October 2017

Diplomat, French Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Bamako 11 October 2017

Advisor, EUTM Mali, Bamako, 11 October 2017

Officer, EUTM Mali, Bamako, 11 October 2017

Officer, EUTM Mali, Bamako, 11 October 2017

Diplomat, German Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Bamako, 12 October 2017

Desk officier, MINUSMA, Bamako, 12 October 2017

NGO staff, Institute Malien de Recherche Action pour la Paix, Bamako, 12 October 2017

NGO staff, Institute Malien de Recherche Action pour la Paix, Bamako, 12 October 2017

Diplomat, American Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Bamako, 13 October 2017

Desk officer, MINUSMA, Bamako, 13 October 2017

Desk officer, Malian Ministry of Defence, Bamako 13 October 2017

The Group of Five for the Sahel (G5S), comprised of Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Chad, established a joint force (*Force Conjointe du G5 Sahel* – FC-G5S) in responding to a deteriorating security situation in the Sahel region. This report provides an overview of the main challenges facing the FC-G5S during the process of obtaining full operational capability in 2018.