



BULLETIN

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EU CSDP in the Light of the Crisis in Mali

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The launch of military training mission EUTM Mali should let to prepare Malian armed forces to autonomously safeguard the country's territorial integrity. The success of the operation is not sure, for the multifaceted security, economic and humanitarian crisis, which is accompanied by a fragile character of the interim Malian political system. For these reason the EU member states and Poland should consider broadening the official development assistance for Mali. The participation in EUTM operation and lessons learned from its preparations could be used by Poland to strengthen its agenda for reforms of Common Security and Defence Policy.

On 11 January 2013 France launched a unilateral military intervention in Mali to restore the country's territorial integrity, undermined by a civil war between the government in Bamako and the Tuareg rebels in the North of the country, and to stem the rising threat to Western and Northern Africa and Europe itself, posed by Islamist terrorist organisations, which have been using the Malian conflict to augment their social base and strengthen their logistics. The EU's operational involvement in the stabilisation of Mali, i.e. the launch of a military training mission for the Malian army—the EUTM Mali operation, with Polish participation—is a direct consequence of the intervention.

The Domestic Situation in Mali. From the beginning of the civil war between the central government and the Tuareg rebels from the North of the country, grouped in the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) and Ansar Dine (Defenders of Faith) Mali continues to be plagued by a security, political and humanitarian crisis. A dire internal situation has been further aggravated by the instability of the Malian government reeling from the March 2012 coup d'état staged by the Malian army, internal conflicts within the Malian armed forces, a wave of refugees from the North who are abandoning their homes in fear of the rebel advance and the spread of radical, Sharia-based Islam implemented by the Islamists organisations participating in the rebellion. The conflict is still far from over, despite French intervention and the deployment of the troops from the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA), formed by Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which stopped the latest advance of rebellion. French and the African troops are still involved in heavy fighting in the areas formerly under the control of the Tuareg rebels and the jihadists, who have now commenced guerrilla and terrorist attacks (including suicide and car bombings). At the same time, however, the capital Bamako is a witness to the ongoing political talks which are to legitimise the fragile situation in the country by, for example, the presidential election planned for July 2013. Its success will depend, however, on the progress in stabilising the security situation in the country.

The EU's Operational Engagement in Mali. Shortly after the start of the French intervention, on 17 January 2013, the EU Council established the EUTM Mali operation. Tasked to deliver a direct military aid to Mali, the operation will offer training support for the Malian armed forces, including training and advice on command and control, logistical chain and human resources. The mandate of the mission puts emphasis also on the training on International Humanitarian Law, human rights and the civilian control over the armed forces. The EUTM Mali budget of 12 million euro should allow to train four battalions of Malian armed forces and make them able to autonomously undertake combat operations against the rebellion. From about 450 of the missions' personnel, over 200 soldiers will be engaged only in training activities, while the remaining part will provide administrative and logistical support as well as physical protection of the mission. The latter does not mean, however, that EUTM Mali operation will be involved in combat, which is to remain a task of French and AFISMA forces. The EU operation will last for at least 15 months

and be command by a French brigadier general François Lecointre. Polish military contingent will count 20 soldiers, which will be engaged in logistical training for the Malian armed forces and offer administrative services as well as counter-mine protection for the mission's headquarters in Bamako.

EUTM Mali and the Evolution of CSDP. The launch of EUTM Mali operation on 18 February 2013 follows a long process of preparations, which started in summer 2012 and once again revealed a crisis of CSDP. This time EU member states did not even consider using battle groups—unlike, for example, in Autumn 2008 during the crisis in Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of Congo—to stabilise situation in Mali. Further, they were not keen to establish the operation unless it was clear which forces would take the burden of actual combat operations and, indirectly, protect the EU missions' personnel. On the one hand this situation demonstrated a growing reluctance of EU members to use battle groups (mainly for its financing mechanism, which makes the framework nation and its partners to cover majority of deployment costs) and the general unwillingness to engage in a conflict, which may last years. On the other, it confirmed the recent trend (augmented by the case of Libya) of launching individual military interventions, initiated by a single state or a group of countries and only later augmented by international tools, like the EUTM and AFISMA operations in case of Mali.

The approach of EU members to the crisis in Mali proves, that they have lost interest in using the CSDP structures and assets as well as political and logistical support of the Union as a whole to comprehensively address security crises. The character of the EUTM operation falls perfectly within the shape of the latest operational engagement of the EU: the EUTM Somalia, EUCAP Nestor and EUAVSEC South Sudan are all highly specialised and relatively small operations, performing only secondary tasks in the context of the real security challenges of the regions they are deployed to. This tendency—if reinforced—is likely to limit the potential to develop CSDP in the way, which would allow the EU to undertake more complicated military and civil-military missions, able to address key security challenges in its neighbourhood. The unwillingness of EU members to improve Union's military capabilities (epitomised best by gaps in the battle groups roster) and the lack of precisely defined strategic ambitions of the EU are likely—in a longer time frame—to degenerate the CSDP and weaken the position of the EU as a strategic actor. This, in turn, can adversely affect the overall perception of the Union in the world.

Chances for Stabilising the Situation in Mali and Options for Poland. EUTM Mali is not going to terminate its operations after the end of its original 15 month long mandate. Operations of the mission will be hindered by internal conflicts and divisions within the Malian army, comprised of members of different ethnic groups, proponents and opponents of the abolished president Touré and those responsible for the coup d'état of March 2012. The fact that the Malian army, due to its bad reputation, suffers from a severe lack of funding (in contrast with the AFISMA contingents which are co-financed by the African Union) will also be an obstacle to the final success of EUTM. It is also doubtful of EU-trained Malian army units will be able to accept responsibility for maintaining Mali's territorial integrity, safeguarding it against an array of asymmetric threats (mostly terrorism and organised crime), and if they instead engage in lucrative economic activities, often of criminal nature, or return to politics.

The EUTM Mali's stabilising effects could only materialise after a few years after its commencement when both the French and AFISMA troops withdraw. A parallel EU mission for the training of Somali troops has been active in Uganda from 2010, and its alumni are only now scoring some military successes in their fight against Islamist rebels. Yet, that is mostly due to the support they receive from the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the Ethiopian troops.

In this context providing Mali with development aid becomes a primary important issue. In February 2013 the EU decided to unfreeze 250 million euro earmarked for development aid for Mali, suspended in the aftermath of the coup. The sum will be further enhanced by another 115 million euro for humanitarian assistance to Mali's internal and external refugees. Consequently, the EU Member States, including Poland, should aim to enhance their bilateral assistance programs for Mali. Despite the fact that Western and Central Africa have not been named as priority in Poland's development aid programme, it would be worthwhile to consider, just like in the case of Myanmar, Polish support for Malian public institutions and society in the field of democracy and human rights.

In seeking to strengthen the CSDP so that the EU can effectively address various crises in its southern and possibly eastern neighbourhoods, Poland should use its participation in the EUTM Mali operation to reinforce its position as a promoter of reforms in CSDP, weakened—at least in the eyes of some EU members—by the lack of Polish participation in EU operations in Africa over the last three years. Further, Poland should use lessons learnt from EUTM preparations to bolster its arguments for improving the effectiveness of CSDP and indicate that the battlegroup crisis and limiting the ambition of CSDP to small technical assistance and training missions may in the long term undermine the general credibility of the EU as a strategic actor.