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Leaders decided, among other measures, that September would be **amnesty month** for those possessing illegal weapons.

### ■ Special Focus: Situation in the Sahel

The new **joint force for the Sahel** is destined to step in where UN troops and France's Operation Barkhane have so far failed.

**Liptako-Gourma**, the border region between Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso, is the area of particular focus for the G5-Sahel.

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## On the Agenda

### AU summit marked by uncertainty over reforms

The 29<sup>th</sup> AU Summit from 27 June to 4 July 2017 in Addis Ababa was supposed to be critical in charting the organisation's way forward, following the groundbreaking decisions on AU financing and reform adopted in the past 12 months. There is, however, still little clarity on the implementation of these decisions.

During the 27<sup>th</sup> AU summit in Kigali in July 2016, the heads of state and government adopted a new funding mechanism – proposed by the AU High Representative for the Peace Fund, Donald Kaberuka – based on a 0.2% levy on non-African imports.

In January 2017 the heads of state had also agreed to the institutional reforms proposed by Rwandan President Paul Kagame in five areas: focussing on key priorities; realigning AU institutions in order to deliver on those priorities; connecting the AU to its citizens; managing the business of the AU efficiently and effectively at both the political and the operational level; and financing the AU sustainably and with the full ownership of member states.

### The progress report postponed the full implementation of the Kigali decision on funding to 2019

In the AU Assembly's final decision of January 2017, the scope, the reform timeline and the oversight mechanisms were still to be determined. The recent summit was supposed to shed light on these aspects.

However, the 29<sup>th</sup> summit did not come up with a clear vision of the way forward.

### Deadlines for implementation pushed back

The progress report presented by Kagame to his fellow heads of state and government at the summit postponed the full implementation of the Kigali decision on funding to 2019 instead of 2018 – a sign that these decisions are not as easy to put in place as was initially thought.

Meanwhile, the summit adopted a budget of US\$ 769 million for the 2018 financial year, based on the current system.

The progress report Kagame presented does, however, propose an oversight mechanism and identify recommendations to be put in place by January 2019, which is the deadline set by the ambitious implementation matrix.

According to this matrix, the following recommendations are among those to be implemented by January 2018: the establishment of a troika of AU

#### PSC Chairperson

##### H.E. Bankole Adeoye

Nigerian ambassador to Ethiopia and its Permanent Representative to the AU

#### Current members of the PSC

Algeria, Botswana, Burundi, Chad, Egypt, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Togo, Uganda, Zambia,

chairpersons; a review of the framework of partnership summits; the holding of only one ordinary AU summit in January every year, with the July summit to be a coordinating meeting with regional economic communities (RECs); and new mechanisms to impose sanctions and ensure implementation.

In the medium term – i.e. by July 2018 – the critical issue of division of labour between the AU and RECs should be clarified.

As the various documents on the relations between the AU and RECs vacillate between a vertical structure – emphasising the primacy of the continental organisation – and the principle of subsidiarity – giving the primary role to RECs – such a clarification would determine the fate of other recommendations, such as the proposed structure of the AU Commission.

By July 2018 the critical issue of division of labour between the AU and RECs should be clarified

### **Criticism emerges over the methodology of reform**

While there seems to be consensus on the necessity for reforms, many criticisms arose from member states from the southern, northern and eastern regions regarding the methodology. This methodology – used in July 2016 and January 2017 – consists of presenting reports directly to heads of state and government, instead of first going through the Executive Council, which consists of foreign ministers.

Critics argued that this does not leave enough time for heads of state and their delegations to fully consider the reports. They also pointed out that it bypasses the legal channels of decision-making set out in the AU Constitutive Act (the specialised technical committees, Permanent Representative Committee, and Executive Council).

In addition, it should be noted that none of the regional powers seems to champion the initiatives on funding and reform, leaving the leaders of small states in charge of shepherding these efforts.

### **Implementation of some recommendations raises questions**

On the substance of the reform, many recommendations face challenges regarding their implementation.

The new funding mechanism's compliance with the World Trade Organization's (WTO) rules is a source of concern for many member states and their international partners. As 48 member states are party to the Marrakech Agreement creating the WTO, clarification on this matter would shape the sustainability of the import levy.

The establishment of a troika consisting of the last chairperson, the current chairperson and the upcoming chair would also, for example, require a

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\$769 million

THE AU BUDGET FOR 2018

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modification of the Constitutive Act. Clarification is needed on the role of the Assembly bureau, elected at the same time as the AU chair. Does the establishment of the troika mean that the AU will have a triennial work plan? Over and above the establishment of the troika, how can coherence and continuity from one chair to another be ensured?

In addition, strengthening the role of the chairperson would also call for a clear division of labour between the AU chairperson and the chairperson of the AU Commission to avoid any overlap or competition.

### Clarification is needed on the role of the Assembly bureau, elected at the same time as the AU chair

From the same perspective, the establishment of a reform implementation unit in the office of the chairperson also poses the risk of overlap with the deputy chairperson, who is officially in charge of the commission's administration and financing.

The difficulties with the reforms are illustrated by the fact that several bold propositions contained in the initial report on reforms have fallen by the wayside.

For example, the recommendation to limit the role of the Permanent Representative Committee (AU ambassadors in Addis Ababa) to a channel of communication between the AU Commission and the capitals – instead of an oversight body – no longer figures strongly. Another feature of the initial Kagame report – 'focus[ing] the AU on fewer priorities' – has not been allocated a deadline. After the euphoria in January, this shows the fragility of consensus among heads of state on the reforms.

Instead of delivering a package of reforms, the 29<sup>th</sup> summit rather revealed that the reform process remains the subject of discussion, debate and even disagreement among member states. It remains to be seen whether the diverging views can be reconciled in order to achieve a real consensus.

# On the Agenda

Burundi, Somalia, South Sudan discussed at the 29<sup>th</sup> AU summit



Peace and security issues took greater precedence at the recent bi-annual AU summit in Addis Ababa than in previous years. The crises in Burundi, South Sudan and Somalia were among the issues discussed, but no major decisions were taken by the heads of state and government.

The new chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC), Moussa Faki Mahamat, made sure that peace and security issues were among the major items on the agenda of the Assembly of the 29<sup>th</sup> AU summit. During previous summits, heads of state often adopted most of the recommendations of the Peace and Security Council (PSC), contained in its six-monthly report to the AU Assembly, with limited discussion.

Moussa Faki Mahamat made sure that peace and security issues were among the major items on the agenda

At this summit, over 20 PSC decisions on matters of peace and security were put to the Assembly. However, according to insiders, during this debate the AUC chairperson did not take a decisive stand on some of the conflict scenarios, nor did he push the assembly to consider tangible solutions.

In addition, there was no PSC summit ahead of the AU summit. This could have ensured bolder steps on some of the crises facing the continent. According to the PSC protocol, at least one summit meeting of the PSC has to take place every year. In 2016 the PSC met at heads of state level in January and on the margins of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in New York.

Interestingly, some important PSC members such as South Africa were not represented at the level of head of state at the 29<sup>th</sup> summit. Nigeria was represented by its deputy-president.

## Backtracking on Burundi

The decisions taken at this summit seemed to backtrack on the initial decisions taken by the PSC and were mostly in favour of the status quo in the countries in crisis.

In the case of Burundi, the AU now seems to condone the revision of the country's constitution in 2015, despite protests from opposition movements.

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DECISIONS MADE ABOUT  
CONFLICTS AT THE SUMMIT

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The AU, in its decision taken at the 29<sup>th</sup> summit, called on the government to take every step necessary to ‘build the widest possible consensus on the ongoing process of revising the Constitution, with the participation of all the stakeholders and on the basis of the Arusha Agreement of 2000’.

Yet, clearly, the constitutional revision suits the ruling regime and goes against the AU’s stance on unconstitutional changes in government that result from efforts to allow a regime to remain in power.

In its decision on South Sudan, the AU also seems to favour the current government. It made no explicit reference to the 2015 peace deal or to the hybrid court, which should have been established by now.

## In its decision on South Sudan, the AU seems to favour the current government

The AU mainly called on the South Sudanese government to ensure that the national dialogue that was initiated by President Salva Kiir Mayardit in December 2016 is ‘inclusive, independent and impartial’. It also endorsed the communiqué of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Summit of 12 June 2017, which urged IGAD members to convene a meeting to address the slow progress in the deployment of the regional protection force that was mandated by the UN last year.

## Morocco gets its way on Western Sahara statement

Morocco’s accession to the AU also had a notable impact on the tone of the AU’s decision on Western Sahara. A significant number of states supported Morocco’s appeal to remove a sentence from its draft communiqué requiring the AU to send an assessment mission to the disputed region of Western Sahara.

Terminology that has figured in AU statements on the Western Sahara for many years and that is considered critical of Morocco was also left out after some heated debates over the issue. For instance, there was no condemnation of the illegal exploration and exploitation of Western Sahara in the draft seen by the *PSC Report*.

## Some notable decisions to enhance security

One of the major decisions taken by the AU is the declaration of the month of September each year until 2020 as ‘Africa Amnesty Month’ for the surrender and collection of illegally owned weapons. This is an effort to implement the ‘practical roadmap to silence the guns by 2020’ – a roadmap that was adopted by the AU Assembly during the last summit in January.

The AU Assembly also adopted a decision calling on member states to intensify their lobbying to secure two permanent seats and five non-permanent seats for Africa at the UN Security Council. All member states were urged to make this a central part of their foreign policy, and to include this in their speeches at the upcoming 72<sup>nd</sup> UN General Assembly summit in September 2017.

In the case of Somalia, the AU called on the international community to ensure the implementation of the agreements that had been reached at the London conference held on 11 May 2017, especially on supporting the Somali national security forces. The AU Mission in Somalia’s (AMISOM) exit strategy between 2020 and 2021 is strongly tied to the development of the Somali National Army, which, it is hoped, will take over AMISOM’s role after its withdrawal.

# Situation Analysis

## Challenges and opportunities for the G5 Sahel force



On 2 July 2017 leaders of the G5 Sahel, which consists of Chad, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Mali and Niger, officially launched the new G5 Sahel force, in the presence of French President Emmanuel Macron. This followed a meeting in February 2017 in which the G5 Sahel heads of state announced that a new force would be set up to fight terrorism in the sub-region. This announcement followed the creation of the Liptako Gourma securitisation force by Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger in late January to combat instability in this border region (see article on page 11). This force has now been integrated into the G5 Sahel Joint Force (*Force conjointe du G5 Sahel*, or FC-G5S).

The FC-G5S's concept of operations was endorsed by the PSC during its 679<sup>th</sup> meeting on 13 April. The mandate of the FC-G5S, as defined by the PSC, is to:

- Combat terrorism and drug trafficking
- Contribute to the restoration of state authority and the return of displaced persons and refugees
- Facilitate humanitarian operations and the delivery of aid to affected populations, as far as possible
- Contribute to the implementation of development strategies in the G5 Sahel region

The FC-G5S is to be composed of 5 000 troops, mainly military, from member states. They will be deployed along the Mali–Mauritania border; the Liptako Gourma, which is the cross-border region between Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger; and the Niger–Chad border.

### UNSC resolution fails to provide financial support

The PSC asked the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to approve the deployment of the FC-G5S, and to identify the modalities of financial and logistical support. France, the architect of the resolution, wanted the UNSC's endorsement under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which would have allowed such support to the FC-G5S.

In the end, however, the UNSC only 'welcomed' the deployment of the FC-G5S instead of explicitly approving it. Moreover, the council also recalled that

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5 000

TROOPS IN THE  
G5-SAHEL JOINT FORCE

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it was the responsibility of the G5 Sahel states ‘to provide [the force with] the adequate resources’, while encouraging ‘further support from bilateral and multilateral partners’.

While the European Union (EU) has announced that it will allocate 50 million euros to the force, the Sahel G5 will have to find additional support outside the UN, as the preliminary budget for one year is around 423 million euros. The *Security Council Report* reported that the United States and the United Kingdom had opposed a resolution that would have obliged the UN to financially support the operation. Apparently, the fact that the FC-G5S consists of troops that will intervene in their own territories did not fit the legal framework for peacekeeping operations.

### Funding and collective commitment the main challenges

The FC-G5S illustrates the collective ambition of its members to address the growing insecurity in the Sahel despite the presence of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and France’s Operation Barkhane, which is deployed across the G5 states. These forces have been hampered by an inadequate mandate to fight terrorism and limited capabilities in an extensive area with little state control, respectively. The new force, by focusing on terrorism and transnational crime in the border regions, is supposed to fill these gaps.

These forces have been hampered by limited capabilities and an inadequate mandate to fight terrorism

There is also an acknowledgement of the need for a comprehensive approach to fighting terrorism and transnational crime. In April, for example, Mali, Niger and Chad signed an agreement on judicial cooperation to fight terrorism and cross-border crime, including drug trafficking.

Apart from the financial challenges, the main endogenous challenge is the structure of the force. Will it be just a coalition of battalions with national commands, or an integrated one? The first option will raise challenges in terms of both cohesiveness and coordination. This model, which has been used by the African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), has caused a recurrent problem of command and control. Such an issue could have significant consequences in an area of intervention across five countries that is difficult to access. The effectiveness of the structure is also determined by the design of the area of operation. Will the right of pursuit and the force’s movements be without restriction, across all three borders?

Solving these issues depends on the degree of commitment of the G5 Sahel states. As there is little prospect of financial support from the UN, some states may re-consider their involvement in the force. Chad’s President Idriss

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\$423 million

THE BUDGET OF THE  
G5-SAHEL JOINT FORCE

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Déby recently warned that his country could not afford having troops in MINUSMA, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) against Boko Haram and now the FC-G5S. Terrorism also does not affect Chad and Mauritania to the same extent as Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso. It remains to be seen if they will maintain the same level of commitment with less external support. Chad, for example, is facing an economic downturn resulting from the drop in oil prices.

As there is little prospect of financial support from the UN, some states may re-consider their involvement in the force

### State authority vs. state legitimacy

The other issue is the correlation (or lack thereof) between the nature of the force and the characteristics of the instability in that region. Since last year, Liptako Gourma, the border region between Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, has experienced an increase in insecurity, with attacks against the security forces, border posts and local leaders. Several groups are operating in this area. Along the Niger–Mali border the threat consists mainly of Ansar Dine and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, while Hamadou Kouffa’s Katiba Macina and Malam Ibrahim Dicko’s Ansaru Islam are active along the Mali–Burkina Faso border.

However, the presence of these groups does not explain the growing insecurity in this region. Instability is the result of a sedimentation of problems, of which violent extremism is only the most recent layer. An important issue here is the challenges to the legitimacy of the state, owing to the blunders of the security forces and the perceived corruption of government agents, which contrasts with the poor delivery of basic services. There is also often-violent competition between pastoralists and crop growers, with resulting inter-community confrontations.

It is therefore unlikely that a strictly military approach will be enough to address the instability in the region. While restoring state authority is part of the force’s mandate, it is unclear what it can do to restore the legitimacy

of states condemned by the local population. While funding is a challenge to the operationalisation of the force, there is a risk that the civilian component – notably community outreach – will be neglected in favour of the military component.

### Lessons for the African Peace and Security Architecture

From a structural perspective, the creation of the FC-G5S illustrates the shifting dynamics within the architecture of peace and security in Africa. In this new configuration, regional mechanisms – not necessarily those officially recognised by the AU – are taking over the management of unstable situations and only request the PSC’s political endorsement. Both the PSC and the AU have limited control over such operations.

Besides the FC-G5S, there is also the MNJTF in the Lake Chad Basin and the Regional Protection Force (RPF) in South Sudan, proposed by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), then endorsed by the PSC before being authorised by the UN Security Council in the framework of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). In this configuration, the PSC is merely used for political endorsement in order to ensure that these regional forces are eligible for external funding from, for example, the EU African Peace Facility.

It is unlikely that a strictly military approach will be enough to address the instability in the region

The PSC tried to remedy this situation in its statement on the FC-G5S by requesting that references to the PSC Protocol, the AU Strategy for the Sahel Region and the Nouakchott Process be introduced. However, it is unlikely that these additions will be enough to assert the AU’s authority over this mission, since the region had vanished from the PSC’s agenda for most of 2016. This was despite the deterioration of the situation and the presence (if limited capacity) of the AU Mission in the Sahel, chaired by former Burundian president Pierre Buyoya.

The AU may have to re-assert its authority over regional operations by acting as the financial intermediary

between regional economic communities and external donors. However, the challenges it encountered in transferring EU support to the MNTJF have reduced this probability.

### The establishment of the force reopens the debate on the format of African peace support operations

As the African Standby Force is yet to be fully operationalised, the establishment of the FC-G5S also reopens the debate on the format of African peace support operations. The FC-G5S, the MNTJF and UNMISS's RPF in South Sudan resemble 'coalitions of the willing' similar to the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC), but with the regional feature of the African Standby Force's brigades. The deployment of the FC-G5S should lead to internal reflection on the much-needed adjustment of the AU Peace and Security Architecture to these new developments, in order to assert the political relevance of both the PSC and the AU in similar situations in the future.

# Situation Analysis

## Liptako-Gourma: epicentre of the Sahel crisis?



While the entire region of the G5 Sahel (Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad and Mauritania) is confronted with serious security concerns, Liptako-Gourma, the border region between Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso, is the area of particular focus. There are complex reasons for the crisis in this area.

The reason for the focus on Liptako-Gourma by the G5 Sahel is the recent emergence of non-state armed groups, notably violent extremist groups. The most well known of these is the Katiba Macina of Hamadoun Kouffa, which became an ally of Ansar Dine in March 2017 within the *Groupe pour le soutien à l'islam et aux musulmans* (Group for the Support of Islam and Moslems) and operates mostly in the centre of Mali. Then there are the Ansarul Islam of Malam Ibrahim Dicko, active mostly in the Sahel region of Burkina Faso, and the *Etat Islamique dans le Grand Sahara* (Islamic State in the Greater Sahara [EIGS]), led by Adnan Abou Walid Al-Sahraoui and responsible for attacks in Burkina Faso and Niger.

Some commentators tend to describe the insecurity in this frontier region as merely an extension of the Malian crisis

Some commentators tend to describe the insecurity in this frontier region as merely an extension of the Malian crisis. One often hears people in Ouagadougou or the Sahel region in Burkina Faso complain about 'enemies from Mali'. They accuse Mali of failing to control its borders, and claim that Malian refugees in Burkina Faso are complicit in the attacks.

However, it is important to note that the insecurity in this area is spreading because the terrorist groups are growing their ranks – they recruit members by exploiting local conflicts. This is in turn linked to the inability of the national governments to integrate these border regions into national political systems, and the absence or weak levels of investment in these areas.

### Terrorist groups exploit local conflicts

The deteriorating security situation on the Mali–Niger border perfectly illustrates how terrorist groups use a local conflict to boost their numbers. In the early 1970s, when a serious drought hit the Sahel, tensions erupted in the border region, notably between the Fulani (Tollèbè) of Niger and the Touareg

(Daoussahaq) of Mali. The conflict was mainly over scarce natural resources and accusations of cattle raiding.

Following the armed rebellions of the 1990s, notably by the Touareg on both sides of the border, violence in this area became 'professionalised'. This led to bloody confrontations and the creation of a Fulani self-defence militia in March 1997. The inability of the security forces in the border region to quell these uprisings dealt a serious blow to both governments' standing among the people of the border region.

Many Fulani blame 'méharist' units for the deepening of the conflict with the Touareg, notably the Daoussahaq. These nomadic brigades, deployed by Mali at the end of the 1990s, were charged with the security of the most far-flung areas of the country. Their fighters, often recruited from the ranks of former rebels integrated into the army following the peace accords, have been accused of either ignoring the criminal activities plaguing the region, including cattle theft, or colluding with the criminals.

The conflict was mainly over scarce natural resources and accusations of cattle raiding

These resentments and tensions were instrumentalised by the *Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest* (Movement for Unity and the Jihad in West Africa [MUJAO]), and currently they are exploited by the EIGS and Ansar Dine to recruit within the Fulani community along the Niger–Mali border.

### Locals take sides

In a context marked by a challenge to social hierarchies, the emancipatory role played by groups such as Katiba Macina or Ansarul Islam also help them to recruit young people, who see joining armed groups as a way out. At the same time, locals tend to take sides and position themselves vis-à-vis these groups with the aim of settling old scores, often linked to the lack of proper judicial systems and competition over natural resources. It is thus vital that the various states concerned ensure equitable access to natural resources, and greater access to the country's judicial system.

The G5 Sahel states' inability to integrate these border regions into their national policies has led to the rejection of state authority, with locals viewing it as a foreign entity. In the northern Sahel region of Burkina Faso, for example, successive operations by security forces, often carried out with undue force against locals accused of complicity with the armed groups, have increased tensions between locals and the central government. Here, as elsewhere in the border region, inhabitants feel abandoned by the state due to a lack of service delivery and infrastructure that does not address their actual needs.

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THE CREATION OF A FULANI  
SELF-DEFENCE MILITIA

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At the same time, civil servants do not have the capacity to carry out their duties. The challenge is thus for states to ensure the buy-in of people living in the border regions where the central government has been absent for so long, keeping in mind that the aim is not to control these spaces but to improve governance.

### The need for a long-term vision

The various initiatives currently being undertaken in Liptako-Gourma, such as Burkina Faso's emergency programme for the Sahel and Mali's plan to secure central Mali, are steps in the right direction. However, if they are to have any political impact, these programmes and plans have to be based on a long-term vision for the border region. They cannot be a mere stopgap to address the current situation.

Furthermore, it is crucial that states invest in proper agricultural and cattle farming programmes. Merely launching schemes to fight organised crime is not

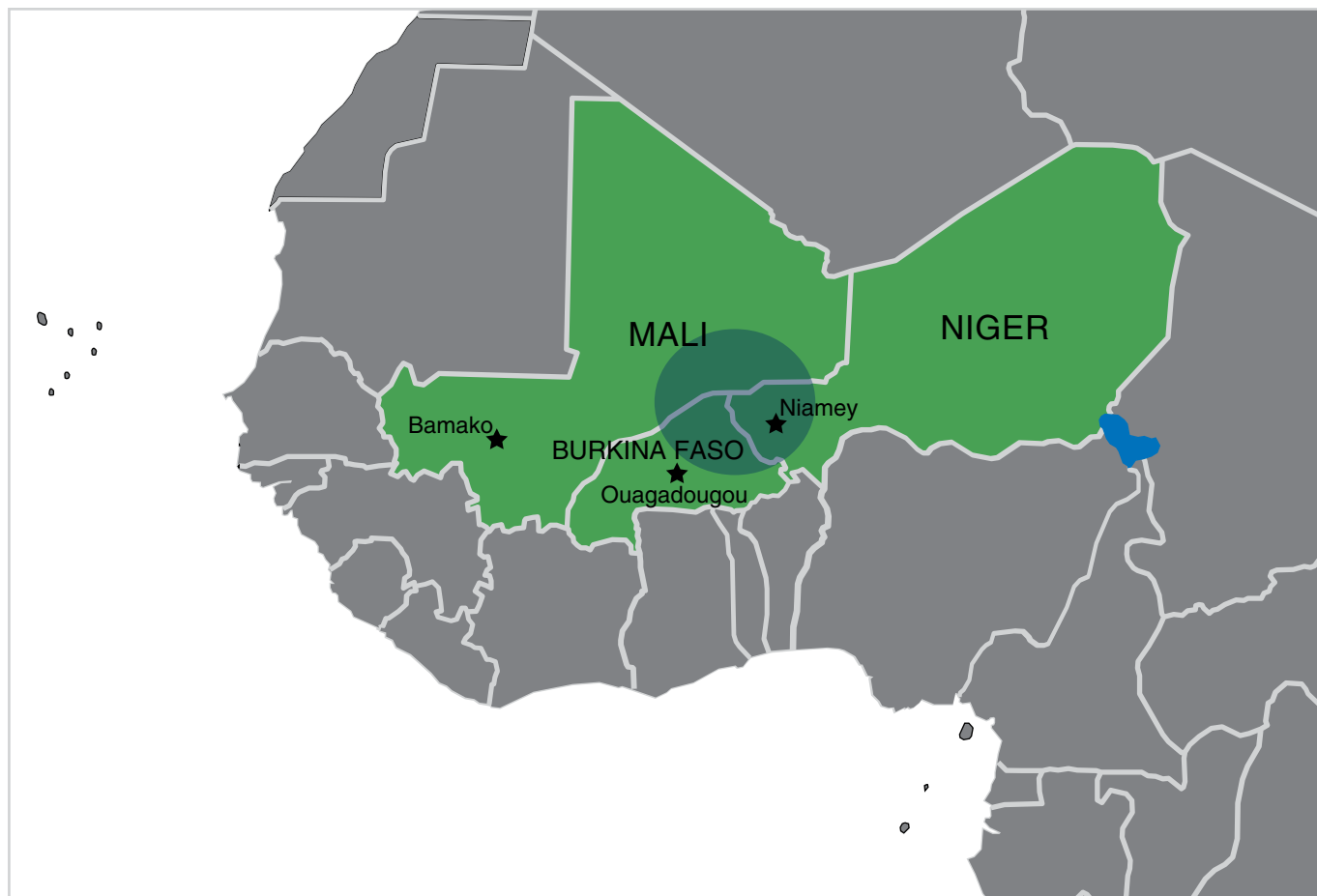
enough. These areas, so far away from the capitals, are used as thoroughfares for trafficking and the locals are compelled to adapt to this state of affairs.

These areas are used as thoroughfares for trafficking and the locals are compelled to adapt to this state of affairs

In order to stop the insecurity in the Sahel, particularly in Liptako-Gourma, it is necessary to redefine the state's presence there. This can only be done through a new social contract between communities and the state that restores the state's relevance through its providing basic services adapted to the diversity of this region, populated by both nomads and pastoralists.

It is only through a real political project for these territories that the mobilisation, at various levels, which has been noted lately, will have meaning and produce results.

### The Liptako-Gourma region





## PSC Interview

Not all young people in jihadist groups are 'radicalised youth'

The crisis in the Sahel has become one of the focus areas of the AU and regional organisations. The recent launch of the G5 Sahel Joint Force has created some optimism that the fight against jihadist armed groups in the region may finally be won. The Institute for Security Studies' (ISS) Dakar office director Lori-Anne Théroux-Bénoni told the *PSC Report* that violent extremism has complex root causes that policymakers should take into account.

### **You have done extensive research on violent extremism and radicalisation among the youth in Mali. What are the main causes of this radicalisation?**

One of the most important conclusions of this work is that radicalisation might be a misnomer. The team of 17 researchers that collected testimony from 76 young people who have been involved with Malian 'jihadist' groups – AQIM [al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb], Katiba Macina, MUJWA [Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa], etc. – rarely met radicalised youth, in the sense that their participation in such groups was the result of a religious indoctrination process. This led the team conducting this ISS project to conclude that it was more appropriate to seek to understand the youth's association with violent extremist groups instead of assuming an alleged 'radicalisation'.

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Contrary to popular conception, many don't join primarily for religious reasons or money. We have identified more than 16 categories of factors leading to youth involvement. Some of the factors are linked to a need for protection (of oneself, one's family or community) or to economic reasons, including the need to protect an income-generating activity (cattle herding, drug trafficking, etc.). There are also individual, psychological, historical and political reasons. Others are linked to coercion or the environment. The report that summarises these findings is titled 'Mali's young jihadists: fuelled by faith or circumstance?'. The results of this project challenge preconceived ideas about the reasons why young people join extremist groups.

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FACTORS COULD LEAD TO YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN JIHADIST GROUPS

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## Is there sufficient recognition of these root causes?

Not only are there multiple factors and dynamics but they usually also overlap and vary from one person, group, locality and time to another. Moreover, the reasons why an individual joins a group are not necessarily the same as those that make him decide to remain in or leave the group. There needs to be a more complex understanding of the multiplicity of factors that underlie youth involvement, instead of labelling all of them as unemployed and fanatical. Not just a theoretical understanding, but an understanding that informs policymaking, impacts strategy development and feeds into programme design.

There needs to be a more complex understanding of the multiplicity of factors that underlie youth involvement

## Are the strategies and initiatives adopted by organisations such as the AU Mission in Mali and the Sahel (MISAHEL) on the right track?

Policy responses to 'violent extremism' tend to look for a global or regional strategy in the short to medium term. Meanwhile, depending on the opportunities available, the leadership of jihadist groups rely on immediate local realities to recruit while rooting their ultimate goals in a long-term logic. They also wield a global rhetoric that places their actions at an international level. Such differences in approach and scale are a challenge to the national, regional and international strategies and initiatives of all actors, including AU MISAHEL.

It appears, however, that there is a growing understanding of the importance of local and even micro-local contexts in preventing and countering recruitment by violent extremist groups, in addition to the need for action – and not only military action – that targets the leadership of these groups. One example is the series of colloquiums that MISAHEL organises, in collaboration with the G5 Sahel, across Sahelian countries and which aims at developing a reference framework to guide countries that are developing their PCVE [preventing and countering violent extremism] national strategies or action

plans. Identifying lessons learned from different countries is an important step in defining best practices.

## How do you think the new G5 Sahel Joint Force will be received on the ground in countries like Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger?

The situation in these three countries, and lately especially at their common borders, remains a matter of concern. It is characterised by a climate of insecurity exacerbated by armed groups linked (in some cases) to AQIM. As a result, many schools are closed and development actions are suspended in several areas. There is no doubt that the population is looking forward to an improvement in the security situation.

But there are also legitimate apprehensions about the deployment of the G5 Sahel force, such as the risk of being wrongly accused of being a terrorist, and the reality is that many communities also benefit from the illicit activities that this force is trying to curb. We have documented cases in which perceived abuses by state actors, including their defence and security forces, are the very reason for certain individuals' engagement with violent extremist groups.

The reality is that many communities also benefit from the illicit activities that this force is trying to curb

This is an important challenge to the force. Hence the need to place respect for human rights at the heart of military involvement. Not just on paper in the concept of operations, but also in the daily operations to be conducted by this force.

## You have also embarked on research about women in jihadist movements in the Sahel. Are there any preliminary findings?

We are still in the mobilisation phase for this new follow-up project to the research referred to previously, which was funded by the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada and the government of the Netherlands. It's important to obtain the necessary authorisation and put in place proper ethics protocols

and psychological support for both the researchers and the interlocutors of the research team.

Women and girls are mainly perceived as victims of the armed jihadist groups. Nevertheless, discussions with previously involved male youths in last year's research about their presence, role and factors of engagement in armed jihadist groups confirm that, while women can be victims, they also act as informants, cooks or laundresses. The discussions also pointed to a variety of potential roles for women (as mother, sisters, spouses) in both supporting engagement and creating the conditions for disengagement.

### Women and girls are mainly perceived as victims of the armed jihadist groups

Such preliminary data stresses the importance of taking gender into account in psycho-socio-economic reintegration programmes, so that the specific needs of these women and girls are considered. It also points to the necessity of understanding women's and girls' roles better, especially when designing preventive measures against violent extremism. These are some of the issues that we will explore in this new 3-year project that will also be supported by IDRC.



# Addis Insight

## New partners court the African Union



As the AU discussed crucial reforms at its 29<sup>th</sup> summit in Addis Ababa, global power shifts continue to affect the organisation's partnerships with the international community.

Because the AU is still largely funded by outside institutions such as the European Union (EU), global partnerships are crucial. But money is tight. The EU has, for example, cut back on its financial support of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and could withdraw its funding altogether from 2018.

The impact of Brexit on EU-AU relations is still largely unknown, even if there is some optimism in EU circles that collaboration between the EU and the United Kingdom on peace and security – including in Africa – will continue.

There is also great uncertainty in Africa over what United States (US) policy under President Donald Trump means for the continent. Recent statements by the US representative in the UN about making peacekeeping operations 'more effective' – code for cutting down on the number of peacekeepers – have been cause for concern. The US is the largest funder of peacekeeping operations.

## Recent statements by the US representative in the UN have been cause for concern

Diplomats insist that the US is still supporting initiatives like transitional justice in South Sudan, for example – and that 'America first doesn't come at the expense of others'; but going forward, relations with the Trump administration are largely uncertain.

### **New actors getting involved**

In this unsure global environment, with shifting allegiances where, for example, Western nations are no longer systematically supporting one another in multilateral forums like the UN Security Council, other actors are stepping up to the plate.

Germany, which played only a marginal role during the colonial era, is spearheading a new Compact with Africa, which it says will stimulate growth on the continent. It hopes this will also discourage Africans to embark on perilous migrations to Europe.

With France, Germany has over the past few years been one of the main funders of the European Development Fund – the main financier of the AU. It

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2018

FUNDING FOR AMISOM TO END

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has also long supported development through the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

Pull quote: With France, Germany has over the past few years been one of the main funders of the European Development Fund

Germany's new plans for Africa are part of its presidency of the G20 this year. German chancellor Angela Merkel met with some African leaders, including Rwanda's President Paul Kagame, Kenya's Uhuru Kenyatta and Guinea's President Alpha Condé, current AU chairperson, at meetings in the run-up to the G20 summit that took place in Hamburg.

### Criticism of the Compact with Africa

The German plans, however, have been criticised for being too narrowly focused on stemming migration and not coming up with new ideas. In a policy paper the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, a German think-tank, says the Compact with Africa focuses too much on macro-economic policies that are not adapted to African countries, especially the least developed ones.

Some critics even say the compact is a similar move to carving up the continent at the Berlin Conference in 1885, since it focuses on infrastructure to ensure extraction of natural resources to benefit outsiders and because of the lack of consultation.

The AU must look at how these many meetings and summits with outside partners are structured

Also, how sustainable are these initiatives that are so clearly linked to specific countries or world leaders? More than a decade ago former British prime minister Tony Blair launched his ambitious Commission for Africa, which was destined to 'make poverty history'. This initiative was too strongly linked to Blair – not a popular figure in many circles.

The AU must also look at how these many meetings and summits with outside partners are structured. After Turkey, Brazil, Japan and others have come with invitations for summit meetings with AU leaders, Israel has now also jumped on the bandwagon and is holding an Israel-Africa summit in Togo later this year.

### Israel plans its own Africa summit

Israel has applied for observer status at the AU and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was in Liberia last month to attend the summit of the Economic Community of West African States. Israel is no stranger to African countries. Israeli military expertise is sought after by heads of state, especially when it comes to their personal protection.

Israel also considers itself a 'neighbour' to Africa and has strong links with many African countries, notably on helping with agricultural projects and

Turkey

Brazil

Japan

COUNTRIES THAT HAVE ORGANISED AFRICA SUMMITS

knowledge transfer, according to an Israeli diplomat. African countries are 'reaching out to us for development models', he says.

Some African heads of state resent this multiplicity of actors and initiatives. Kagame, for example, has emphasised the need to close AU summits to outsiders and for AU partners to be invited to attend only when there are agenda items that directly concern them.

Some outside organisations and partners have suggested setting aside a regular session at every AU summit for interaction between their own high-level delegations and African heads of state, but this hasn't been agreed to.

### **A review of partnership meetings**

The latest draft of the AU's reform plans, adopted at the January AU summit, calls for a review of partnership meetings.

Relations between the AU and the international community will always be tricky while the organisation remains dependent on outside aid

The plan is that when a given state wants to invite Africa as a whole, the continent will be represented by the AU Commission chairperson, the current rotating AU chairperson, his or her immediate predecessor and successor and those leaders heading up the five Regional Economic Communities at the time.

The AU delegation should also include the chairperson of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the plan suggests. Clearly this is not yet being implemented.

Relations between the AU and the rest of the international community will always be tricky while the organisation remains so dependent on outside aid for its functioning, programmes and peace operations. It will have to find a way, meanwhile, to better structure partnerships and to focus on financial self-reliance – now more than ever.



## About the ISS

The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) partners to build knowledge and skills that secure Africa's future. Our goal is to enhance human security as a means to achieve sustainable peace and prosperity. ISS' work covers transnational crimes, migration, maritime security, peacekeeping, crime prevention and criminal justice, peacebuilding, and the analysis of conflict and governance.

Using its networks and influence, the ISS provides timely and credible analysis, practical training and technical assistance to governments and civil society. This promotes better policy and practice, because senior officials can make informed decisions about how to deal with Africa's human security challenges.

## Contributors to this issue

Yann Bedzigui, ISS Addis Ababa researcher

Liesl Louw-Vaudran, ISS senior research consultant

Ndubuisi Christian Ani, ISS Addis Ababa researcher

Ibrahim Maiga, ISS Dakar researcher

## Contact

### Liesl Louw-Vaudran

Consultant to the *PSC Report*

ISS Pretoria

Email: [llouw@issafrica.org](mailto:llouw@issafrica.org)

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## ISS Pretoria

Block C, Brooklyn Court  
361 Veale Street  
New Muckleneuk  
Pretoria, South Africa  
Tel: +27 12 346 9500  
Fax: +27 12 460 0998

## ISS Addis Ababa

5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Get House Building  
Africa Avenue,  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
Tel: +251 11 515 6320  
Fax: +251 11 515 6449

## ISS Dakar

4th Floor, Immeuble Atryum  
Route de Ouakam  
Dakar, Senegal  
Tel: +221 33 860 3304/42  
Fax: +221 33 860 3343

## ISS Nairobi

3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Elysee Plaza  
Kilimani Road  
off Elgeyo Marakwet Road  
Nairobi  
Tel: +254 72 860 7642  
Tel: +254 73 565 0300