Prospects For The G5 SAHEL

NSD-S HUB

2023 | JUNE
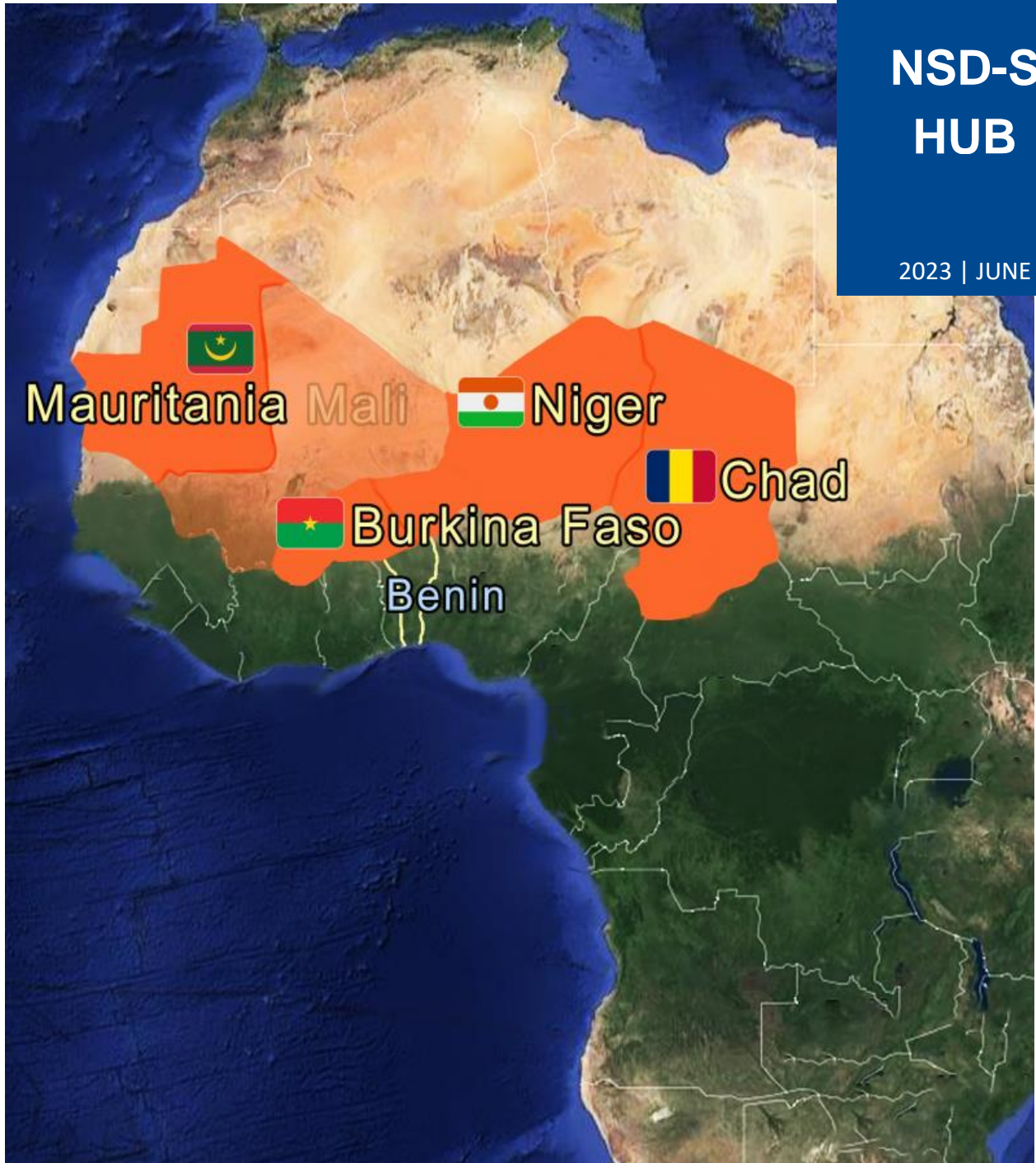
The NATO STRATEGIC DIRECTION-SOUTH HUB (NSD-S HUB) was established at Allied Joint Force Command Naples in order to improve NATO awareness and understanding of common global challenges in the area of interest and to identify opportunities for cooperation with selected Partners, while contributing to the overall coordination of NATO activities and efforts.

NSD-S HUB products are developed with the direct engagement of regional experts, open-source information from governmental organisations, non-governmental organisations, international organisations, academic institutions, media sources and military organisations. By design, NSD-S HUB products or links to open-sourced and independently produced articles do not necessarily represent the opinions, views or official positions of any other organisation.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

The G5 Sahel organisation's goals were set with the clear intention of creating the conditions for security and development of its members. It is now in crisis, since its ineffectiveness has led to it not being able to achieve its goals and Mali, one of its five founding members, has already left. Another, Burkina Faso, may be going down the same path. Its destiny is, therefore, highly unpredictable. It is far from clear if there is sufficient will among its members to continue to invest and, although a strategic review has been brought up, its official approval and effective implementation are not guaranteed.

For the G5 Sahel to achieve its original goals, the following would be necessary: better coordination between its members; a more independent executive body; more tools to achieve the goals; perhaps the expansion of its tasks, and finally; better coordination with other regional security and developmental initiatives. It would have to come up with a strategic review to permit the tackling of the challenges it is now facing and be effective in dealing with instability, potentially by taking inspiration from similar networks or stakeholders whose approaches could profit the G5 Sahel. It would have to quickly adapt to there now being just four countries instead of five.

The end of the G5 Sahel, on the other hand, would create a security and developmental gap and potentially damage the relevant military activities and political coordination, both regional and international. Human development, resilience, governance and infrastructure might all suffer, too. For some critics, this could provide the right opportunity to reduce the 'security traffic jam' that negatively affects the Sahel, whether it involves there being one less organisation or even the merging of it with another. It is possible for countries which have recently undergone unconstitutional changes of governments to create a new security alliance. Finally, the end of the G5 Sahel would undeniably be an opportunity for some non-western stakeholders to gain more influence in the region and to implement their agendas, not necessary aligned with the regional needs.

In the meantime, since fighting instability is one of the core goals for the region, and the G5 Sahel was created specifically to deal with this and has almost a decade of experience, both its members and the international community should invest more in ensuring its existence and the stability of the state institutions of its members. Removing a tool simply because it is not effective, possibly creating a new one with the hope that it does, might very well prove to be a waste of resources, time and expertise, and even push a solution to the problem further from view.

INTRODUCTION

Pan-Africanism and independence from exogenous shocks and external powers are currently amongst the strongest drivers shaping African countries' policies and African continental and regional organizations' agendas. This approach is echoed at a global level, with some significant changes in the field of international relations and partnerships.

The Sahel is still one of the most vulnerable and volatile areas in Africa, due to both internal and external shocks. Peace, security and development are still amongst the essential conditions for long-lasting stability and human and economic growth. Religious radicalism, violent extremist organisations (VEOs), terrorism, ethnic and social grievances, climate change, the indirect effects of the Russia (RUS)-Ukraine (UKR) war and the strategic interests of non-African stakeholders are amongst the most significant and urgent challenges affecting the area.

Created in 2014, the G5 Sahel Organisation (hereinafter referred to as "G5S") was considered by its founding members (Burkina Faso (BFA), Chad (TCD), Mali (MLI), Mauritania (MRT) and Niger (NER), to be the most appropriate approach to face instability, peace and security and developmental issues. In the past few years, and notwithstanding some initially positive outcomes with reference to security, the organization has been struggling to adapt to the political and security dynamics in the area in a timely manner. Moreover, the MLI withdrawal in May 2022 raised concerns about the G5S capability to effectively tackle the security and developmental challenges ahead. Some Sahel experts argue that, if not urgently and adequately addressed, 2023 could witness the end of the organization.

What are the challenges to peace, security and development that the G5 Sahel members and the organization itself are dealing with? What could be done for the organization to survive? And what can be done for it to be more effective?

The deliverable attempts to explore solutions to these questions. Analysing the prospects for each country individually, in particular in connection with the recent developments regarding MLI, was considered necessary in order to subsequently analyse the prospects for the G5S. Although not always specifically mentioned in the paper, the invaluable collaboration with subject matter experts from the region (SMEs) has been directly incorporated into this paper and is an integral part of the overall analysis. Nevertheless, there is also a brief chapter in which the SMEs analysis of the G5S prospects is referred to separately.

A variety of structured, qualitative analysis techniques were blended with data gathered from interaction with the SMEs during two field missions, one of which involved a highly productive Workshop. The key drivers affecting the efficiency of the G5S were investigated, subsequently used to generate alternative future scenarios, examining the extent to which "pervasive instability" affects the Sahel. The paper includes a chapter referring to how Benin's society and governance policies could potentially represent a role model for Sahel countries with a view to increasing their resilience against VEOs and improving internal and regional stability.

G5 SAHEL COUNTRIES SO FAR

Prior to directly addressing the G5S, the paper begins with a description of each of the G5 Sahel countries' geopolitical developments up to and including 2022. In particular, the focus is on: the most significant political, security/military, economic, social and information features (PMESI); the countries' approaches to international relations; the impact of the war in UKR; the influence of RUS and; the level of resilience of each country to the VEO threat.

The team's choice to go country-by-country in this chapter, rather than focusing on the G5S or the Sahel geographic area as a whole, was designed to provide greater background information which was subsequently used in the analytical techniques. Ultimately, the question remains whether countries and their governments are the ones to talk to in order to make sure that the suggested strategies will prove appropriate and achieve the desired results.

Burkina Faso (BFA)[1]

Since 2015, three VEOs have been active in BFA - a local group, Ansarul Islam, and two groups from MLI (the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) and The Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM), a subsidiary of AQIM (Al Qaeda in Islamic Magreb)). JNIM and ISWAP are joining forces against France (FRA) and its allies,[2] not only in BFA but also in the wider Sahel region.

Like neighbouring MLI and Guinea (GUI), BFA's democracy is severely challenged. Over the past few years, the fighting between VEOs and the army, together with state-backed militias, has killed thousands and displaced between 1.5 and 1.9 million people,[3] making BFA the site of the fastest-growing displacement crisis in recent times. More broadly, one-fifth of the country's population (3.5 million) require humanitarian assistance. In January 2022, a military coup ousted President Kaboré, dissolved the government and suspended the country's constitution. Lieutenant Colonel Paul-Henri Damiba, the coup leader, promised to address burgeoning violence across BFA. The coup led to the creation of the Transitional Government (T.Gov). Damiba subsequently survived two coups in May and June 2022.[4]

However, in September 2022, Capt. Ibrahim Traoré, echoing the security forces frustration at President Damiba's inability to restore security, despite his promises, led a new military coup and removed Damiba, who fled to Togo (TGO). The plotters of the new coup, who claim to belong to the Patriotic Movement for Safeguarding and Restoration (MPSR), announced several measures such as the suspension of the Constitution and the Transitional Charter, for "not corresponding" to the country's current needs. Traoré was appointed BFA's transitional

---

[1]Please consult also annex A.

[2]https://www.crisisgroup.org/fr/africa/sahel/burkina-faso/287-burkina-faso-sortir-de-la-spirale-des-violences, accessed on 31/10/22

[3]https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/burkina-faso/another-coup-africa-burkina-faso-military-seizes-power, accessed on 31/10/22   [3]https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/russian-role-in-burkina-faso-crisis-comes-under-scrutiny/2022/10/18/ed67f64a-4eae-11ed-ada8-04e6e6bf8b19_story.html The number of people killed between JAN and SEP 22, with Damiba in power, increased more than 100% from the same period last year, from 1,545 to 3,244 people killed, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED).

[4]https://minute.bf/burkina-du-mois-de-mai-a-juin-damiba-a-echappe-a-deux-coups-detat-pascal-zaida/ , accessed on 31/10/22

President and adopted another Transitional Charter, largely similar to the previous one endorsed by Damiba.

The military transition in BFA is highly important, since any failure to improve stability and security could compound political problems in the Sahel and other coastal states in a region already facing growing insecurity.[5] The new T.Gov is looking to restore internal stability. The situation in BFA is worsening, especially in the northern part, bordering MLI and NER, where AQIM and JNIM remain more active. President Traoré acknowledges that his country does not have adequate means to tackle the growing security threats and has appealed for international support.

International relations

BFA's international relations are generally good. Nevertheless, since it is threatened by internal collapse, BFA is at the crossroads between its old alliances with western countries and a new one with Russia, including the involvement of the Wagner Private Military Group (PMC). The latter could obtain benefits from gold mining as a payment for its operations in BFA.[6] Probably because of similarities between the two governments, BFA is on very good terms with MLI.

BFA's international trade and exports suffer from the presence of non-state armed groups (NSAGs) which control many of its gold mines and regional economic trade routes connecting it with other landlocked Sahel countries in West Africa.[7]

The impact of the UKR war on BFA

During the ECOWAS summit in July 22, the economic toll caused by high inflation and product shortages, which have been driven by the RUS invasion of UKR and have disproportionately affected Africa was discussed.[8]

The RUS-UKR conflict also comes at a time when the pressure due to the drought in South America and the rising demand for grains and oilseeds from India and China has led to an increase in agricultural products' prices in Africa and this is likely to persist. RUS and UKR are major contributors to global grain supplies. The impact of the war on prices in BFA cannot be understated.[9]

BFA did not take part in the United Nations resolution vote condemning RUS's invasion of UKR.

Resilience

At present, BFA resilience is very low, due to a mix of factors amongst which are: very poor governance, endemic corruption, poor social services and the lack of infrastructure, such as schools and health centres.

---

[5]https://issafrica.org/iss-today/what-caused-the-coup-in-burkina-faso , accessed on 31/10/22
[6]https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/burkina-faso-contracts-russian-mercenaries-alleges-ghana/2022/12/15/079950aa-7ca8-11ed-bb97-f47d47466b9a_story.html
[7]https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2022/3/11/how-burkina-faso-became-the-new-epicentre-of-sahelian, accessed on 31/10/22.
[8]https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/7/3/sahel-insecurity-post-coup-sanctions-loom-large-at-ecowas-summit , accessed on 03/11/22
[9]https://www.iol.co.za/news/africa/this-is-how-the-russian-ukraine-conflict-affects-africa-be622b07-316c-4ee7-8fd4-4ca992e89a1b , accessed on 03/11/22

Violence continues throughout BFA because of conflict between the T. Gov, citizens, militias and the VEOs. This generated a flow of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) that reached almost 10% of the population and caused 40% of BFA's territory to be under VEO control. To face it, the Traoré junta sought volunteers through massive recruitment to reinforce the Army to fight VEOs, a step which further increased local violence and caused greater social division.[10] The violence is compounded by distrust in the government. In the centre-north, there is a longstanding conflict between farming communities and herders because of limited available land. The north has the highest poverty rate in BFA, with 7 out of 10 people living below the poverty line and suffering from food insecurity. Violence has erupted in the area, targeting state institutions, as well as minority communities and Christians. In the east, residents have felt abandoned by the government because of limited access to water and electricity, heightening tensions and reinforcing mistrust in the ability of the T-Gov to redirect and stabilize the weak situation of the population.

To tackle the above mentioned problems, the T.Gov has begun several initiatives, including the Inclusive Governance for Resilience Program, which will be different for each region, depending on the needs, unique challenges, social and power dynamics and openness to private sector investment. Since it began (prior to the most recent two coups), the program conducted a political economic analysis, gathering citizens' insights, and assessed the capacity of local administrations and civil society organizations to address factors that could lead to peace and reform and applied that data to create a roadmap towards cohesion and resilience.[11]

Mali (MLI)

Since the most recent coup in May 2021, Col. Assimi Goita, one of the former "putschists", is the current President[12] of the Transitional Government (T.Gov.). The junta strategically surfed the wave of anti-international (mostly anti-western) sentiment[13] and the growing pan-Africanism movement in French speaking countries[14] and, thanks to the efficient use of the media,[15] won popular support.[16] The population living in the main cities and towns is apparently dissatisfied/disillusioned with the western international community's support to provide security and stability.[17] Over the last few months, the T.Gov authority has been challenged by a number of stakeholders. The Azawad Movement Coordination board (AMC) threatened to pull out from the 2015 Peace Agreement because of the worsening security situation[18] and asked for the

---

[10]https://www.africanews.com/2022/10/26/burkina-faso-recruits-50000-civilians-as-army-auxiliaries-to-fight-jihadists/ , accessed on 03/11/22

[11]https://www.creativeassociatesinternational.com/stories/a-new-governance-program-to-build-resilience-in-burking-faso-copy/ , accessed on 03/11/22

[12]https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/dossiers-pays/mali/presentation-du-mali/article/composition-du-gouvernement#:~:text=La%20composition%20du%20gouvernement%20a,Mamadou%20KASSOGUE

[13]https://www.institutmontaigne.org/en/blog/sahels-security-crisis-fragile-imbalance

[14]https://qz.com/africa/2173650/new-wave-of-anti-colonial-populism-sweeps-francophone-africa/

[15]https://medialandscapes.org/country/mali/media/opinion-makers

[16]https://mali.fes.de/e/mali-metre-xiii Mali_Metre March/April 2022.

[17]https://mali.fes.de/e/mali-metre-xiii. March/April 2022.

[18]https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20220717-mali-les-ex-rebelles-de-la-cma-d%C3%A9plorent-l-abandon-de-l-accord-d-alger-par-la-transition

peace deal to be reviewed.[19] The T.Gov, pressured by the international community, agreed to find a way out of the stalemate. In June 2022, President Goita promoted dialogue with the political parties aimed at listening to some ideas to improve democracy and governance. He is also behind the project to review the 1992 MLI Constitution,[20] considered too obsolete to deal with the current MLI society and needs.[21] Nevertheless, the risk of an authoritarian shift remains high and the political opposition has recently started vigorously raising its concerns. The religious/traditional authorities and the civil society network that deals with politics, peace, security and good governance have always been particularly dynamic in promoting stability and peace in the country,[22] and in contributing to the security sector and governance reform process.[23]

According to data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED),[24] insecurity and instability increased during 2022, specifically in central and eastern MLI. The humanitarian situation in the country, and in the cross-border area between BFA, MLI and NER, has been deteriorating rapidly,[25] leading to a critical increase of IDPs and the flux of refugees.[26] Security in MLI is provided by the coordination between the National Police,[27] the Gendarmerie, the National Guard and the Malian Armed forces (MAFs/FAMA). MLI military strategy, to ensure internal security and to fight against VEOs, relies heavily on external support and international cooperation, which has noticeably changed since the beginning of 2022.

MLI economic performance has decreased compared to two years ago. It is still one of the poorest countries in the World.[28] The combined effects of the ECOWAS sanctions, the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, insecurity, the socio-political crisis and ethnic/tribal tensions contributed to a progressive deterioration of livelihoods in the country and pushed the MLI economy into a recession in 2020/2021.[29] Nevertheless, there is a positive medium-term economic outlook, despite the country's fragility, due to MLI resilience and its leadership's ability to seize economic opportunities.[30]

International Relations

Throughout 2022, MLI leadership asserted its independence and challenged the international and regional traditional balance. It questioned the FRA military support to deal with the security

[19] https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20221211-mali-les-ex-rebelles-de-la-cma-veulent-une-r%C3%A9union-d-urgence-sur-l-accord-de-paix-d-alger

[20] https://www.maliweb.net/politique/refondation-lavant-projet-de-constitution-remis-au-president-de-la-transition-2994673.html

[21] https://www.maliweb.net/politique/nouvelle-constitution-ce-qui-pourrait-changer-2994930.html

[22] https://pscc.fes.de/e/regional-civil-society-forum-on-the-national-security-sector-reform-process-ssr-in-mali https://observatoire-gouvernance.org/; https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc/content/civil-society-perspectives-isil-africa-key-trends-and-developments

[23] https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20221121-mali-des-politiques-et-personnalit%C3%A9s-demandent-de-suspendre-la-r%C3%A9vision-de-la-constitution

[24] https://acleddata.com/2022/07/21/regional-overview-africa-9-15-july-2022/

[25] https://reports.unocha.org/fr/country/mali/

[26] https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/96998 Accessed December 2022.

[27] https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20221020-mali-le-cnt-adopte-le-projet-de-loi-sur-la-militarisation-de-la-police

[28] https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/country-insights#/ranks; https://www.wfp.org/countries/mali ; https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data#/countries/MLI.

[29] https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/mali/overview. Accessed Sept 2022.

[30] https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/MLI

threat. This attitude negatively affected relationships with its traditional western partners. In 2022, the UN peacekeeping mission to MLI (MINUSMA), the EU training and advisory missions (EUTM and EUCAP Sahel MLI) and some western countries, with FRA at the forefront, underwent a strategic review of their presence in MLI.[31] So far, the relations with MINUSMA are strained.[32] Some amongst the contributing countries withdrew their contingents, due to unresolved diplomatic tensions[33] and diverging political/military/strategic views with the host nation. To fill the security gap, MLI turned to RUS[34] and favoured bilateral cooperation with some other African[35] and non-African countries.[36]

At the regional level, in May 2022, MLI announced its withdrawal from both the G5S and the G5 Joint Force with effect from June. This was a big strategic loss for the G5S. In the same months, the relationship it had with ECOWAS[37] deteriorated as a response to the economic sanctions imposed by the organization subsequent to the T.Gov's decision to delay the power handover to a democratically elected government. From July 2022 to January 2023, MLI's assertiveness contributed to the deterioration of its relationships with the Ivory Coast (CIV), although these seem to have been subsequently appeased.[38]

With regards to its neighbouring countries, MLI has good relationships with TCD and BFA, possibly because of the similarities between the three countries' governments and their authoritarian shift, and because of the military cooperation MLI enjoys with both TCD and BFA in fighting VEOs.[39] Notwithstanding a few border issues,[40] MLI and MRT international relations are fair, thanks to converging economic interests that helped MLI to face the ECOWAS sanctions.[41] Relations have recently become strained between MLI and NER.[42] Beginning in

---

[31] https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/4/12/eu-winds-down-military-training-operations-in-mali
[32] https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20221017-une-r%C3%A9union-potentiellement-explosive-sur-le-mali-au-conseil-de-s%C3%A9curit%C3%A9-de-l-onu ;
https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2022-10/mali-20.php
[33] https://www.africanews.com/2022/11/15/ivory-coast-authorities-to-pull-peacekeepers-out-of-mali-by-august-2023/
[34] https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2022/06/mali-briefing-and-consultations-9.php
[35] https://maliactu.net/cooperation-mali-algerie-le-directeur-des-fabrications-militaires-algeriennes-en-visite-au-mali/
[36] https://maliactu.net/le-ministre-des-affaires-etrangeres-et-de-la-cooperation-internationale-son-excellence-monsieur-abdoulaye-diop-a-recu-en-audience-le-mercredi-30-novembre-2022-le-charge-daffaires-a-i-de-l-3/   ;
https://maliactu.net/vers-le-renforcement-de-la-cooperation-entre-le-mali-et-le-maroc/   ;
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JylcOFdLOiw
[37] https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/31/ecowas-suspends-mali-over-second-coup-in-nine-months   ;
https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/7/west-africa-bloc-ecowas-imposes-sanctions-on-mali-leaders ;
[38] https://www.africanews.com/2022/07/12/mali-authories-49-ivory-coast-soldiers-arrested/   ;
https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-64202367
[39] Burkina Faso, Mali and Chad were united in fighting the terrorist groups in the G5 Sahel joint task force. Moreover, Chad keeps nourishing good relations with Mali both through diplomatic channels and military cooperation.
[40] https://www.commonspace.eu/news/problems-between-mali-and-mauritania-are-spoiling-relations
[41] https://african.business/2022/02/trade-investment/mali-bristles-under-ecowas-sanctions/
[42] https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2022-05/group-of-five-for-the-sahel-joint-force-6.php

July 2022, relations with Algeria (DZA) became very fragile[43] But by the end of 2022, the two countries leaderships had started working on improving their relationship.[44]

The impact of the UKR war on MLI

The February 2022 RUS aggression in UKR is severely impacting MLI and its economy and has effects on its resilience.[45] The war seriously damaged the good market between MLI and the two countries.[46] The biggest short-term impact is visible in the raising of food, fertilizers, commodities and fuel prices.[47] The war has forced MLI to use more of its already limited financial resources.[48]

In 2022, MLI abstained from the UN resolution condemning RUS's invasion of UKR.

Resilience

MLI's resilience was negatively affected by the two military coups, described by the African Union as major drivers[49] of instability.[50] In the short and near term, VEOs are still the most dangerous threat for the country.[51] In the past decade, MLI has enjoyed multilateral international and regional support that, in 2022, recorded limited efficiency due to the MLI T.Gov's change of attitude towards its traditional partners. Peace and security, though, are not possible without sustainable development and good governance. To this end, the UN system, the EU programs, the Sahel Alliance and the Coalition for the Sahel are MLI's main contributors to face its security and human and economic developmental challenges.

At the regional and continental levels, MLI is one of the recipients of the African Union's efforts to face terrorist and VEO threats. Moreover, the African countries willingness to invest in security led to the creation of regional organizations which can sometimes have overlapping tasks.[52] MLI is currently a member of five (5) regional organizations and sits as an observer in two (2) others that promote peace, stability and regional security.[53]

---

[43] https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20220801-alger-durcit-le-ton-contre-bamako

[44]https://www.aps.dz/en/algeria/44794-lamamra-received-by-highest-malian-authorities-in-bamako   ; https://maliactu.net/cooperation-mali-algerie-le-directeur-des-fabrications-militaires-algeriennes-en-visite-au-mali/

[45]https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2022/05/24/mali-economic-update-resilience-in-uncertain-times-renewing-the-social-contract

[46]https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-country/ukr/partner/mli;https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-country/rus/partner/mli

[47]https://www.ifpri.org/blog/west-africa-faces-mixed-food-security-impacts-russia-ukraine-conflict

[48] https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/06/russias-war-ukraine-taking-toll-africa

[49]"…Drivers are the forces and factors most likely to influence how a situation develops…" (Structured Analytic Techniques for Intelligence Analysis by Randolph H. Person, Richards J. Heuer Jr.

[50]https://au.int/en/newsevents/20220527/african-union-extraordinary-summit-onterrorism

[51] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PtYlKmOSHlY Dakar International forum on Peace and Security, October 24-26, 2022.

[52] https://issafrica.org/iss-today/africas-security-depends-on-action-not-just-commitment

[53] Mali sits as a Member: the Economic Community of Wester-Africa States (ECOWAS) ; the Community of Sahel-Saharan states (CEC-SAD ; the Nouakchott process ; The West Africa Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) ; The Liptako Gourma Authority. Mali sits as an Observer in the "Conseil de l'entente" (Council of understanding) and the The Accra Initiative. https://ecfr.eu/special/african-cooperation/

Mauritania (MRT)[54]

The MRT political system is hyper-Presidentialist, which grants the President enormous powers. The President holds the most sensitive government positions and benefits extensively from the informal support of the state apparatus, statesmen working at regional level and local social, tribal and religious brokers. The last presidential election in MRT was held in June 2019 when, for the first time since gaining independence in 1960, the country experienced a peaceful and institutionalized transition from one President to the next. Following ex-President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz's decision not to seek a change in the constitution that would allow him to rule beyond his second term, the presidential election was won by Mohamed Ould Ghazouani. At the same time, the fact that the new President is a retired general and close partner of the former president and has also held the most powerful positions in the security apparatus and played a major role in the 2005 and 2008 coup d'états, shows that the military continues to maintain firm control within the country's authoritarian regime. Democratic institutions exist in MRT, but they do not operate according to common democratic norms. On the security front, the government is seen as a very credible partner.

Despite the fact that MRT is divided into three distinct ethno-cultural groups, it seems to be more solid than the rest of the G5 Sahel countries.[55] Nevertheless, tensions exist, and VEOs could take advantage of divisions in the region.[56] The combination of potentially aggravated economic hardship and intensified tensions between these ethno-cultural groups could easily lead to an increase in the recruitment of disenfranchised MRT youths into VEOs.

MRT has the highest Gross National Income (GNI) per capita of the G5 Sahel countries. It is mainly based on its own mineral resources (iron ore, gold and copper) and the respective extraction industry, the backbone of the economy, and its offshore gas and fish stocks. Generally, MRT's economic performance is highly dependent on the fluctuation of commodities, international prices and on yearly climatic oscillations. The medium-term MRT economic outlook is broadly favourable. However it could be subject to several risks including an emergence of new COVID variants, sustained inflationary pressures, climatic hazards, delayed structural reforms and regional insecurity.

International Relations

MRT is actively cooperating with its neighbours, mainly on security issues, despite the fact that the drivers of insecurity are largely social, political and economic. MRT must maintain a precarious balance between the two rival powerhouses to the north, Morocco (MAR) and DZA. In a context where both of these try to weaken one another, each is likely to interpret a friendly move by Mauritania towards one country as a move against the other.

---

[54] Please, consult also Annex A.

[55] The dominant group, both politically and economically, is made up of the Arab-Berber or Moorish groups/tribes (the 'Bidhan') that historically pursued a nomadic lifestyle in the northern, central and eastern parts of the country. The Bidhan make up less than a third of the country's population. The Haratin are probably the largest group in the country, made up of freed (or still enslaved) descendants of black Africans enslaved by the Bidhan. The relationship between the Haratin and the Bidhan is complicated. The third group in the country are the West Africans or black Mauritanians.

[56] Groups like AQIM and Mokhtar Belmokhtar's al-Mourabitoun have Mauritanians among their ranks and even if MRT so far has not been a target for major attacks by these groups, they are present in peripheral areas of the country, where they rest, get supplies, regroup and carry out sporadic attacks.

Despite a few border incidents,[57] MLI and MRT international relations remain fair because of their good economic relations and the fact that the two countries are members of Sahel international organizations created to deal with instability and terrorist challenges. The main reason for this increase in of cooperation between the two countries relates to the sanctions imposed on MLI by ECOWAS in response to the military government delaying elections. MRT is not a member of ECOWAS and does not support the sanctions.

Notwithstanding the competitive authoritarian nature of the MRT regime, its western partners tend to collaborate with the government, which is seen as a credible actor. In terms of military cooperation, MRT actively cooperated with the USA in 2021 when a team of special operations experts were deployed to train alongside the Le Groupement des Fusiliers Marins.[58] The US has recently concluded a multi-year program for the MRT Battalion supporting the G5 Defence Force. They have also conducted training with the MRT Air Force. Recently, MRT sent 66 law enforcement officers to American military institutions, mainly through the Anti-Terrorism Assistance program.[59]

MRT is a NATO partner country within the framework of the Mediterranean Dialogue. The priorities of this existing cooperation are focused on strengthening MRT capabilities in counter-terrorism, maritime and border security, crisis management and peacekeeping operations. In recent years, the Alliance has supported MRT by constructing safe munition depots, destroying obsolete munitions and training military personnel. NATO also helped to set up four crisis management centres in the country and has supported the development of Mauritania's operational capabilities and crisis management in the fields of public health and civil protection through the establishment of two civil protection units. The aim of this strengthened cooperation is also to limit its rapprochement with RUS. Given the current situation, the Alliance is prepared to increase the degree of its involvement with the MRT government and broaden the scope of its activities with its reduced military forces (circa 15,000 troops) on the ground, at sea and in the air. In particular this could involve the training of command cadres, the training of units and the development of capabilities to strengthen national security and defence structures and institutions.

The impact of the UKR war on MRT

The RUS aggression against UKR is severely impacting MRT and its economy and has effects on its resilience. High dependence on wheat imports from RUS poses an immediate concern for MRT authorities. The biggest short-term impact is visible in the increase in food prices, as in 2022 prices in MRT for basic food staples have jumped 40 percent above the five-year average.

In 2022, MRT voted in favour of the resolution condemning RUS's invasion of UKR.

---

[57]　https://www.commonspace.eu/news/problems-between-mali-and-mauritania-are-spoiling-relations ; In mid-January 2022, the bodies of seven Mauritanian herders were found near the town of Nara in Mali, and on Saturday (5 March), two Mauritanian merchants were shot and injured on their way back to Abel Bagrou. In March 2022 the tensions between the two neighbouring Sahel countries renewed after the disappearance of several Mauritanian livestock breeders in Malian territory. https://www.voanews.com/a/malian-army-accused-of-killing-mauritanian-citizens/6480961.html, , accessed on 24 October 2022

[58] https://mr.usembassy.gov/ambassador-kierschts-independence-day-remarks/

[59] Mauritania is also a member of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) and receives security assistance to support its counterterrorism efforts.

MRT could be one of the beneficiaries of the EU and US sanctions against RUS and the consequent oil and gas market reshuffling. MRT, together with other oil-producing African countries, e.g. Senegal (SEN), could seize on the opportunity, circumvent the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) pressures and increase their production, which would increase state revenues.

Resilience

There is barely any VEO activity in MRT, the lowest level in the Sahel, and a sporadic spillover of VEO members entering MRT from MLI has been under control so far thanks to MRT's efficient border security system. Nevertheless, its resilience would be tested if the threat were to rise.

The security situation in MRT reveals that fragile states can be resilient and adaptive when facing VEOs. The MRT government made strategic investments to improve border infrastructure and prioritized the government's ability to secure a presence in areas long considered remote and inaccessible. Additional reforms to the MRT security services effectively reorganized the armed forces, providing modernized equipment, strategic training and better pay and living conditions for Mauritanian soldiers.

Despite MRT's overall success, the security gain remains fragile and reversible. In order to sustain it further, political, economic, and security governance, as well as strengthening regional cooperation (i.e. with MAR) will be needed. The continuation of the efforts under the current administration to improve military cohesion, security governance and management of the military's human and financial resources will remain crucial to MRT's continued success against VEO threats.

Niger (NER)[60]

In 2020, NER was identified in an NSD-S HUB publication as a role model for the G5S in terms of stability, resilience and democracy. This statement is still valid. NER is a team player in the international community - its governance and completed nation-building grant internal stability. NER is a democracy with a rather developed political system and civil society network, though freedom of speech might be limited. The political system is so strong and influences the day-to-day life of the country such that any contradictory thought will be opposed. In particular, intellectuals who now do not agree with NER's pro-Western policy prefer to host their websites outside NER and they do not always publish their articles signed clearly to avoid marginalization.[61] Even preachers in NER's mosques are under state surveillance.

Another pillar of NER's stability is its security architecture, which relies on a holistic construction involving armed forces and forces under the umbrella of the Ministry of the Interior (MoI). By regional standards, these have high level of skills and adequate equipment to fulfil their missions. The level of governance is considered to be good and it ensures the support of the

---

[60] Please, consult also Annex A.

[61] Gobandy (2022) Coopération militaire française / Visite de ministres français au Niger : la vaine offensive de charme de la France au Niger.July 24th 2022.*Nigerdiaspora* (online) Available from:http://opr.news/659a14ed220724fr_ml?link=1&client=news Accessed July 25th 2022.
Mody B. (2022) FRANÇAFRIQUE / La France au Sahel : on n'en veut pas, mais elle tient à y rester.July 15th 2022.*Nigerdiaspora* (online) Available from Nigerdiaspora - FRANÇAFRIQUE / La France au Sahel : on n'en veut pas, mais elle tient à y rester Accessed July 25th 2022.

population for the country's institutions. As the following section will show, western assistance has a decisive role in NER's security architecture.

Poverty in NER is aggravated by over 280,000 Displaced Persons (DP) and approximately 300,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDP). The Diffa region shelters 75% of those coming from neighbouring Nigeria (NGA)[62]. 20% of DP come from MLI[63] and the western regions Tilabery and Tahoua add IDP whose numbers doubled from 2021 to 2022.[64] DP camps in NER have been infiltrated by VEOs.[65] The problem of IDP and DP fosters both poverty and the degradation of the security situation: "forced displacement severely impacts both displaced and host communities' living conditions, which might create frustrations, grievances and potentially exacerbate resource-driven conflicts".[66]

Dramatic poverty can always exacerbate existing grievances and create new unrest. As with neighbouring MLI and BFA, NER has a huge portion of citizens that lack food security (9.7 million people in these three countries).[67] According to the World Bank, NER is among the top seven most vulnerable countries to climate change worldwide.[68] Climate change has an exacerbating impact as it lowers agricultural capacities. NER tried to counter this phenomenon in August 2022 by the use of artificial rain.[69]

International Relations

The efficiency of NER's security apparatus is the fruit of diligent and steady training, with instruction provided by Western partners. The fruit of the efficiency is border security above the regional average and, in contrast to MLI and BFA, the presence of the state throughout the territory.

The amount of western military and policing assistance to NER is astonishing! But unlike in other countries, the efforts and money used are fruitful and lead to continuous improvement of efficiency of NER's security apparatus. This is the result of a decision of NER's authorities and security personnel to accept the offer of assistance and to follow the programmes, to follow the instructions within the programmes. Different to other countries, NER does not show misguided form of "national pride" that often prevents other countries from accepting assistance.

---

[62] Demuynck,M. (2022) Mass Displacement and Violent Extremism in the Sahel: A Vicious Circle? Policy Brief. *International Centre of Counter-Terrorism*. August 2022. p. 6

[63] Demuynck,M. (2022) Mass Displacement and Violent Extremism in the Sahel: A Vicious Circle? Policy Brief. *International Centre of Counter-Terrorism*. August 2022. p. 6

[64] Demuynck,M. (2022) Mass Displacement and Violent Extremism in the Sahel: A Vicious Circle? Policy Brief. *International Centre of Counter-Terrorism*. August 2022. p. 6

[65] Kaka,M. (2021) Le Niger ferme un camp de réfugiés infiltré par des jihadistes à la frontière malienne. *RFI*. June 18th 2021.(online) Available from:Le Niger ferme un camp de réfugiés infiltré par des jihadistes à la frontière malienne (rfi.fr) Accessed August 18th 2022.

[66] Demuynck,M. (2022) Mass Displacement and Violent Extremism in the Sahel: A Vicious Circle? Policy Brief. *International Centre of Counter-Terrorism*. August 2022. p. 10

[67] Maiga,A. (2022) Sahel : 9,7 millions de personnes en situation d'insécurité alimentaire (ONG). *mali-web* July 23th 2022 (online) Available from http://opr.news/4779b4df220723fr_ml?link=1&client=news Accessed July 25th 2022.

[68] Paul,M. (2022)Climate shocks to drive 13.5 million people in Africa's Sahel into poverty by 2050.*Down to Earth*. September 21th 2022. (online). Available from: Climate shocks to drive 13.5 million people in Africa's Sahel into poverty by 2050 (downtoearth.org.in) Accessed September 23th 2022.

[69] The Star (2022) Niger begins making artificial rain to curb drought. *The Star*. August 26th 2022. (online). Available from:Niger begins making artificial rain to curb drought (the-star.co.ke) Accessed August 29th 2022.

The most effective programme in NER is EUCAP SAHEL. It seems to be the backbone of the enhancement of NER's security forces efficiency. The provider is the European Union with its competent forces (e.g. gendarmerie). Different to the less effective EU programme EUTM in neighbouring MLI, the focus of EUCAP SAHEL NER is on gendarmerie and police.

Furthermore, also in contrast to other countries in the G5 SAHEL, NER made a firm decision to partner with western countries: FRA, USA, ITA, DEU and the EU.

Since the end of Operation Barkhane, NER has an even more decisive role in the security architecture of the region, especially as a partner of FRA.[70] FRA withdrew its Barkhane forces from MLI but strengthened its bilateral military partnership with NER. 2e REP (FRA) forces recently deployed in NER were immediately tasked to secure a 300 km line from Labbazenfga to Ekrafane along NER's border with MLI. NER's armed forces set up the centre of their border security mission at Ouallam in the Tilabery region. The mission is called Operation Almahou[71] which has active support from FRA forces. Four years ago, similar joint FRA/NER operations took place along the MLI/NER border, then countering ISGS activities.

At the regional level, on 11 July, 2022 NER and Benin (BEN) signed a military cooperation agreement including the exchange of intelligence data, air support and joint operations of both armies against VEOs and BEN's MoD highlighted NER's fight against VEOs to be a model for his country.[72] With this approach, both countries emerge as role models for the region: NER as a country that holds valid expertise in fighting VEOs, worth sharing with others, and BEN with its quick reaction on the VEO threat in BEN, rather more recent compared to the threat in NER.

It seems that NER's political choice for a clear commitment to western partners makes its security architecture more effective. The positive impact consists in having a clear line and not mixing different efforts without clear direction. For example, TCD, a USA and FRA partner, also sends officers for training to the PRC. BFA is not clearly committed to a partnership with the USA and or the EU. And it seems that MLI has made its choice against European assistance.

A clear choice that a country makes for a system of partnership can end the notorious 'security traffic jam' as it enables the country to set up a holistic security architecture. NER has demonstrated that its clear choice brings higher efficiency to its security apparatus.

The impact of the UKR war on NER

NER condemned RUS's aggression against UKR which is having an impact on food security in West Africa. Western solidarity for UKR has had a shrinking effect on western aid for Africa.[73]

---

[70] Terzian.J. (2022) La France prépare sa nouvelle stratégie au Sahel, *maliweb* July 13th 2022 (online) Available from: http://opr.news/43d23208220713fr_ml?link=1&client=news . Accessed: July 14th 2022.

[71] Châtelot,C. (2022) Le Niger, laboratoire du nouveau « Barkhane » .*Le Monde* July 2nd 2022. (online). Available from:https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2022/07/02/le-niger-laboratoire-de-barkhane_6133067_3212.html Accessed: July 19th 2022.

[72] Kaka, M. (2022) Le Bénin et le Niger signent un accord de coopération militaire. Radio France International. July 12th 2022. (online). Available from:Le Bénin et le Niger signent un accord de coopération militaire (rfi.fr) Accessed: July 19th 2022.

[73] Masoliver, A. (2022) Análisis: cómo está afectando en África la guerra de Ucrania.*La Razon.* July 10th 2022. (online). Available from: Análisis: cómo está afectando en África la guerra de Ucrania (larazon.es) . Accessed: July 20th 2022.

This is a challenge for NER due to the huge share of its population living in poverty, a decisive factor for VEO recruiting.

Resilience

Although NER is one of the G5 Sahel countries with the highest exposure to VEO activities, it also has the highest resilience against the threat of VEOs. But it seems that since 2020 neighbouring countries have not taken the opportunity to learn from NER's success. NER's good resilience is founded on two elements:

- First, NER's authorities and civil society conduct activities of prevention of radicalization such as the "Caravan of Peace" where Islamic clergymen communicate with young people in order to prevent their radicalization.
- Second, NER's security apparatus is more effective than those of neighbouring countries, including TCD. The latter is "famous" for its brave infantry, but in the 21st century an effective security apparatus cannot be limited to this.

However, NER's security architecture could not survive without massive foreign assistance. With all its strengths the role model of NER has some minor shortfalls. The first weakness is its very effective tool to counter the threat of VEO activities - the anti-radicalization early warning system. It is based on webs of informants in the population that report suspect activities to the authorities. Although effective for state security, based on citizens spying on fellow citizens, it does not correspond to a western understanding of governance.

In the mid-term, NER's stability is put in doubt by the dramatic poverty of its population, a challenge that is exacerbated by the youth bulge. With 7.0 children per woman, NER, one of the poorest countries in the world, has the highest fertility rate in the world.

Besides poverty, more grievances were caused when, in early 2018, NER broke its unwritten law that the state, and nothing but the state, controls the state's territory. A 2020 HUB study demonstrated that religious radicalization in the Sahel is directly related to and founded in underlying economic and social grievances.[74] In a joint operation of Malian and Operation Barkhane forces which involved Malian Non-State Armed Groups (pro Malian government militias Gatia and MSA Dushak) NER allowed the operation against the Islamic State In The Greater Sahara (ISGS) to be extended into NER's territory. The local Fulani population blames MSA militiamen for crimes against NER civilians. Huge portions of NER's citizens in the affected Tilabery region lost faith in their state which left them alone when they were being attacked by the Tuareg militia, MSA. A significant share of Tilabery's Fulani, NER nationals, have since then become ISGS supporters because it paints itself as protectors of the Fulani.

Chad (TCD)[75]

TCD is a republic with a democratic constitution, where a military junta rules the country with an iron fist, and where there is no real space for opposition forces to operate. The junta dictates the political agenda and the focus is not on respecting democratic principles and governance. TCD's armed forces, considered one of the most effective in the Sahel, also have a decisive

---

[74] NSD-S HUB (2020) Drivers of religious radicalization and extremism in the Sahel. (online) Available from: NSD-S HUB | Drivers of Radicalisation in the Sahel & Counter-Terrorism Practices (thesouthernhub.org) Accessed July 19th 2022.
[75] Please, consult also Annex A.

role in the country's politics. Between 1990 and 2021 General Idris Deby was TCD's President, killed in action while fighting the rebel group *Front Pour L' Alternance Et La Concorde Au Tchad* (FACT). Since his death, TCD has a formal military government (led by his son, Mahamad Deby). Although VEOs are present in the Lake Chad region, unlike in other G5 Sahel countries, VEOs are not the main threat to TCD's government and State.

TCD's military government started a national dialogue with the aim of a transition to democracy,[76] after peace talks with 44 armed rebel and opposition groups started in Doha in March, 2022.[77] Although TCD's government achieved agreement with the 42 rebel groups, the agreement does not include the FACT, the most relevant rebel group.[78]

TCD is rich in natural resources, but it is still highly underdeveloped. TCD's attempt to set up a profitable state-owned oil industry has not been successful thus far. International raw material extracting companies compete over TCD's natural resources.

Agriculture is highly affected by climate change.[79] According to the World Bank, TCD is among the seven most vulnerable countries to climate change worldwide.[80] All across West Africa the "farmer-herder conflict" is a rising challenge which is linked with more and more limited pastures due to climate change. In TCD, the shrinking pastures exacerbate herder-herder instead of farmer-herder conflicts (there are no farmers in the two thirds of TCD which are not suitable for farming). Small Arms Fire (SAF) clashes are very common, occurring between herders, often of the same ethnic group. Farmer-herder conflicts are often labelled as ethnic or even religious.

International Relations

TCD is politically an ally of western countries such as the United States and FRA (700 to 900 FRA soldiers are permanently deployed in TCD[81]).

Relations with RUS

RUS is playing the long game, waiting for its opportunity. RUS "sandwiches" TCD with Wagner Group mercenaries present in the countries north and south of TCD, Libya (LBY) and Central African Republic (CAR). Wagner activities are a rising threat in the region.[82] RUS uses a twofold strategy - hard power with ruthless use of Wagner personnel, and soft power using social media

---

[76] Al Jazeera (2022) Chad sets August for national dialogue including armed groups. *Aljazeera.* (online) Available from: Chad sets August for national dialogue including armed groups | News | Al Jazeera Accessed July 15th 2022.
[77] Al Jazeera (2022) Chad military gov't, opposition groups hold peace talks in Qatar. *Aljazeera.* March 13the 2022. (online) Available from:Chad military gov't, opposition groups hold peace talks in Qatar | News | Al Jazeera Accessed July 15th 2022.
[78] Atcha, M. (2022) Tchad: Mahamat Idris Deby signe un accord avec des groups rebelles a Doha. *Actu Cameroun.* August 8th 2022. (online). Available from: Tchad: Mahamat Idriss Déby signe un accord avec des groupes rebelles à Doha (actucameroun.com) Accessed: August 8th 2022.
[79] Ross, W. (2018) Lake Chad: Can the vanishing lake be saved? *BBC news.* March 31st 2018.(online). Available from:Lake Chad: Can the vanishing lake be saved? - BBC News Accessed July 13th 2022.
[80] Paul,M. (2022)Climate shocks to drive 13.5 million people in Africa's Sahel into poverty by 2050.*Down to Earth.* September 21th 2022. (online). Available from: Climate shocks to drive 13.5 million people in Africa's Sahel into poverty by 2050 (downtoearth.org.in) Accessed September 23th 2022.
[81] Terzian.J. (2022) La France prépare sa nouvelle stratégie au Sahel, maliweb July 13th 2022 (online). Available from: http://opr.news/43d23208220713fr_ml?link=1&client=news . Accessed: July 14th 2022.
[82] Petrila,J. and Wasielewski,P. (2022) It's Time to Designate Wagner Group as a Foreign Terrorist Organization, *Lawfare ,* Thursday, June 30, 2022. (online) Available from: It's Time to Designate Wagner Group as a Foreign Terrorist Organization - Lawfare (lawfareblog.com) Accessed July 14th 2022.

for propaganda. The example of MLI shows how dangerous this RUS strategy can be for the whole region.

The impact of the UKR war on TCD

TCD condemned RUS's aggression against UKR which has an impact on food security in West Africa. Western solidarity with UKR limits western aid for Africa.[83] For TCD this heightens the risk of famine.

Resilience

TCD has an important role in the G5S and in the security architecture of the region. As an important force provider and with its skills and efficiency in combat against VEOs, TCD's forces are the backbone of G5S's military structure. 1,200 TCD soldiers, based in Tera, NER, have been effective in the fight against VEOs but in April 2022 they were withdrawn to TCD[84] to deal with the country's internal security threats. It is hard to see how a country can remain a security provider for others when its own security and stability is in question.

Lack of discipline is another issue in TCD's armed forces. In 2017 TCD MINUSMA soldiers killed their Btl Cdr in Kidal (MLI). TCD is an important troop provider for MINUSMA, where TCD's contingent is deployed in the dangerous northern MLI with many TCD soldiers killed.[85] It is not unusual that young men join TCD's army with existing combat skills acquired from local community clashes where the use of firearms is widespread.

Different to BFA, NER and MLI, TCD does not suffer high exposure to VEO activities. The latter are rather limited to the Lake Chad area. TCD's main threat are armed rebels and the constant threat of a coup.

Summary

With a view to preparing for the analysis to be conducted in the next chapter, below is a summary of: the most significant current political, security, economic and social factors; the countries' international relations; relations with RUS; the impact of the Ukraine war and; their resilience.

Of the five countries in the Sahel area, TCD is the most authoritarian, ruled with an iron fist by its self-imposed military leader. MLI and BFA governments are at high risk to shift from democratic to authoritarian regimes. NER's leadership is not currently at risk, despite some internal protests, and MRT is by far the most stable. MLI is still the epicentre of instability and the country from which insecurity spreads. MLI is fragile due to political, security, economic and social issues. Its Transitional Government came to power after military coups. It announced its withdrawal from the G5S causing an internal security vacuum and severely affecting the

---

[83] Masoliver, A. (2022) Análisis: cómo está afectando en África la guerra de Ucrania. *La Razon.* July 10th 2022. (online). Available from: Análisis: cómo está afectando en África la guerra de Ucrania (larazon.es) . Accessed: July 20th 2022.

[84] L' Expression (2022) Malgré les efforts de la France, du Tchad et du Niger. La mort annoncée du G5 Sahel. *L' Expression.* July 21th 2022. (online) Available from: L'Expression: Internationale - La mort annoncée du G5 Sahel (lexpressiondz.com) Accessed: July 26th 2022.

[85] Toulemonde, M.(2021) Minusma : combien de soldats africains morts pour le Mali ? *Jeune Afrique* December 16th 2021. (online) Available from: Minusma : combiendesoldats africains morts pour le Mali ? – Jeune Afrique Accessed July 13th 2022.

efficiency of the intergovernmental network. As a consequence, VEOs are still using MLI as their main base from which to carry out their operations in the Sahel. To fight the VEOs, the T.Gov opted to use the services provided by the Wagner Group. This increased internal instability and insecurity has also negatively affected the wider region. Due to some similarities with MLI, BFA follows closely behind in terms of level of insecurity. The chances are high for BFA to overtake it and soon become the region's epicentre of instability. BFA leadership's inability to tackle the rapid increase of insecurity, due to VEO attacks against the military forces and the population, led to two consequent military coups in 2022. Its government is still struggling to deal with the security threat and it is now considering Russia's offer to make a deal in order to use Wagner to fight the VEOs. Furthermore, BFA is now facing additional issues that contribute to increasing fragility in the country: skyrocketing IDP, low economic development and the negative effects of climate change, such as famine. Similar to its western neighbours, TCD is concerned about volatility in the regional security situation but it is not as at risk as Mali and BFA. Its political and military power are strong enough to effectively tackle the VEO threat from the north and the west (Lake Chad basin). Nevertheless, ethnic and tribal conflicts and underdevelopment are significant key drivers of its vulnerability. Niger's national stability is negatively affected due to a mix of security, socio, economic and climatic factors. Its leadership still shares international and western values. Amongst the five countries, Mauritania is the least fragile, even though it is experiencing challenges to stability at the political and social levels. The economy is Mauritania's main driver of stability and it is strong enough for the outlook to be favourable.

International relations

The attitude of Mali's leadership shook its traditional international relations framework with western countries and some bilateral relations (e.g. Niger and Ivory Coast). This risky manoeuvre almost left the country isolated and forced it to adapt its diplomatic skills in order to create new international consensus and support. Bilateral relations with BFA, Guinea, MRT and TCD are particularly good. BFA is in very good relations with Mali, Niger and Ivory Coast and it is open to any multilateral or bilateral cooperation aiming at helping the country to deal with increasing security, stability and boosting its economic development. The unconstitutional change of government BFA experienced represents an obstacle to some former partners' (e.g. ECOWAS) ability to keep giving technical and financial support. TCD, NER and MRT international relations are generally good. The three countries are still reliable western countries' partners. In particular, TCD and NER are on very good terms with FRA and the United States. MRT is also a partner of the 5+5 defence initiative and of the NATO Mediterranean dialogue.

Impact of RUS-UKR war

The RUS-UKR war impact on the Sahel countries was not homogeneous since NER and TCD were less affected than the others. The day the UN General Assembly voted on Resolution ES-11/1 to condemn the RUS aggression in UKR, the vote did not reflect this impact, but only the political interests binding the concerned leaderships. NER, TCD and MRT condemned the invasion by voting in favour. MLI abstained and BFA did not take part in the vote.

The MLI and MRT economies were severely affected to the point that MLI had to make use of its internal stocks and MRT was pressed to increase natural gas exploitation, thus reducing its national stock. BFA's economy is still struggling with the high increase of oilseed prices.

In NER and TCD, food security is not guaranteed for the entire population. Therefore, in the mid- or long-term, the RUS aggression might have an impact on these countries due to their reliance on the trade of grain. For the moment, however, there is no significant impact of this conflict on NER and TCD.

Resilience

Each county has its own approach to improving resilience. BFA and MLI almost entirely rely on international support, since their societal and tribal links are particularly affected by, or they are one of the reasons for, the worsening of the security situation. TCD's military and security forces are the backbone of its resilience, as is the case in NER. NER, can also rely on the civil society network, activism and strength. MRT's resilience is good thanks to the undergoing structural reforms covering the military, security and procurement services and to its population-centric approach.

G5 SAHEL – ALTERNATIVE FUTURE ANALYSIS

The overriding objective of the project was to investigate the question of what could possibly happen to the G5 Sahel Organisation (G5S) in the short to near term and to come up with future scenarios in order to provide relevant decision makers with a useful tool to deal with the increasing insecurity in the Sahel region, particularly in light of the reduced efficiency of what is considered the Sahel's most important security network. It was decided that the use of an Alternative Futures Analysis (AFA) technique was the most appropriate.

Methodology

In order to perform an AFA, the team had to first identify the key drivers for use as the axes to generate the future scenarios. To do so, two different analytical techniques were employed: Brainstorming and a Cross Impact Matrix (CIM) (the results of both are contained in Annex 1).

During the brainstorming sessions, the team listed a number of drivers that may influence the efficiency and operability of the G5S and, in parallel, the G5 Sahel countries defence capabilities. Nine key drivers were identified: the G5S budget; State institution stability; western cooperation; demographic trends; economic trends; military capability; socio-political equity; the influence of RUS.

The CIM allowed the team to check how and at what intensity each key driver was influencing the other. This step led to the identification of the two key drivers that would likely influence the others most significantly: State Institution Stability and Western Cooperation. Subsequently, they were used to create future scenarios for the following reasons:
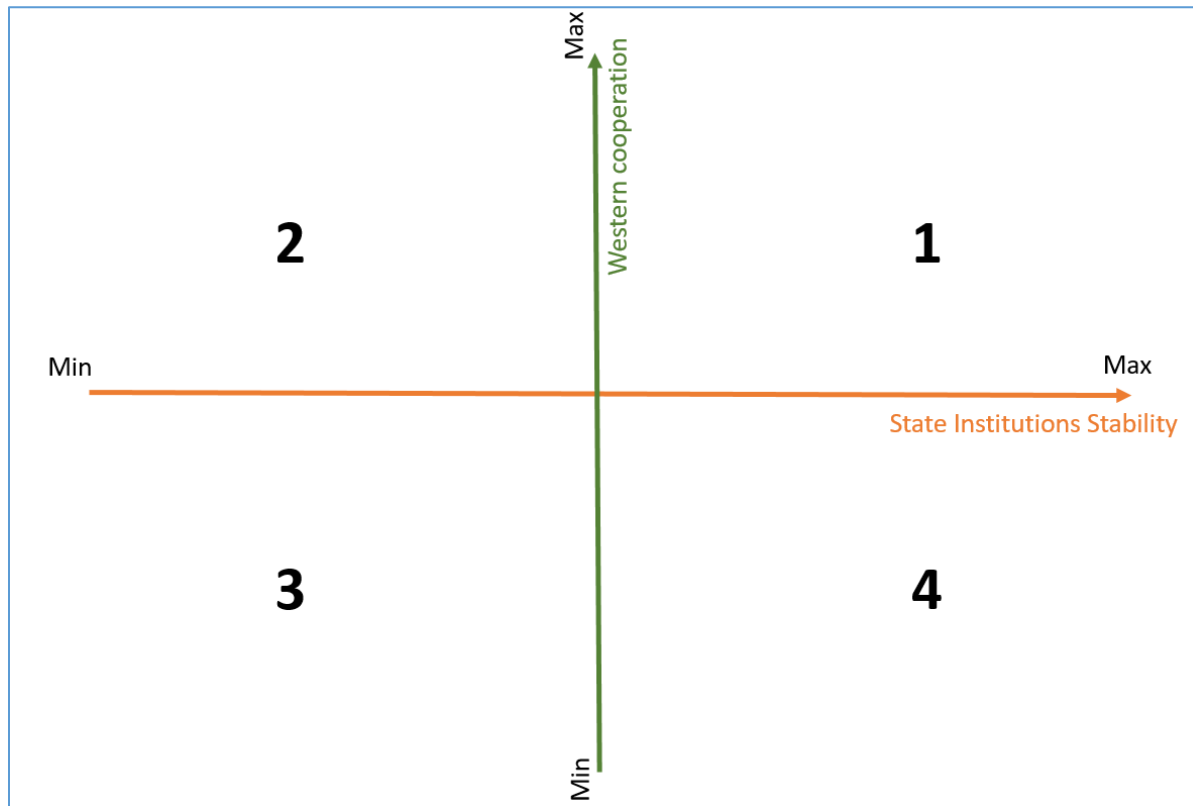
State institution Stability-

- It is conducive to more general stability in the Sahel, thus mitigating one of the challenges highlighted in the NATO 2022 Strategic Concept and contributing to enhancing the security of NATO partners in North Africa and the Sahel.
- It has a very positive influence on budget and military capacity.
- It has a strong influence on the military capacity variable, this being pillar number one of the G5S.

Western Cooperation-

- It strongly influences the G5S military capacity.
- It is the only key driver that demonstrates both positive and negative influences.
- Western cooperation is important in the Sahel since it counterbalances the RUS influence. In the 2022 NATO strategic concept, RUS is described as "… the most significant and direct threat to Allies' security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area…"

Scenario generation

The intersection of "State Institution Stability" and "Western Cooperation" generated four scenarios:

Scenario descriptions

In Scenario 1, the state institutions are stable enough to efficiently channel western cooperation, which possibly reaches its peak thanks to shared values and goals. The programs aiming at improving stability, peace and development are implemented with satisfying outcomes. The cooperation and coordination amongst the security network members is efficient and operations are planned and carried out with no or minor delay. As a consequence, additional opportunities to counter VEOs arise. Security, stability and development increase.

In Scenario 2, the Sahel countries' governments are experiencing very weak institutions. This is probably going to be reflected in the G5S decision-making body's inefficiency. Nevertheless, they are still going in the right direction and are committed to strengthening themselves by embracing democratic values and by asking western countries for support to design and implement security sector, justice and governance reforms and developmental programs. In the short term, weak institutions are possibly the issue to deal with. If institutions are not timely and democratically strengthened, stability and security in the area will be critically affected.

In Scenario 3, western cooperation is at its lowest, coupled with high instability and very fragile and inefficient state institutions. This will likely negatively affect the fight against VEOs who will become more organized, aggressive and efficient. It is possible that the VEOs will expand their areas of control to the point that the state institutions will be incapable of restoring their authority. This scenario is not ideal for RUS, since it will represent an obstacle to its influence.

Nevertheless, RUS could offer its support and plausibly succeed due to the fragile countries' desperate needs for new partners in order to counter the VEOs.

In Scenario 4, western cooperation shrinks due to unsuccessful, unimplemented or cancelled programs and/or because of diverging interests, priorities and goals between the Sahel countries and the "traditional partners". RUS profits from the gap left by the former international partners and takes over the partnership covering several domains (e.g. security, development). The Sahel countries take the "wrong direction" and they will likely go straight into the opponent's arms. The state institutions are strong enough to bring stability in the Sahel, likely due to the authoritarian attitude of their leadership. A new security network supported by one of the new strategic partners could be presented as an alternative to the G5S. In the short-term, the region will see an apparent rebirth. Because of the "mirage of stability", people trust the governments in place who will enjoy legitimacy even if they came to power illegally. The dream of a bright future (peace, development, economic growth, increased human security and public, social and health services) mixed with the wind of pan-Africanism throughout Africa are enough to blind peoples' eyes. Indeed, this is just the facade of a collapsing building. In the mid to long-term the countries in which scenario 4 takes place will likely face negative repercussions, due to the economic and social unbearable situation and the inability of its new international partners to offer significant help to cope with the security, political, economic and social challenges. Disillusioned, the populations will eventually manifest their dissatisfaction, perhaps leading to protests and, eventually, bringing the authoritarian governments to an end, more or less violently.

Evaluation of the Scenarios

The best scenario for the G5 Sahel would be scenario 1.
Implications for the G5S: With reference to its four pillars, the G5S financial resources are allocated and used properly. For the team, this is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the sub-regional security network to be effective and operational. In this scenario, the G5S will also be able to adequately update its strategy according to a periodical evaluation of the challenges/threats it has to face.
Scenario 2 would possibly be negative for the G5S.
Implications for the G5S: The G5S efficiency is severely affected by its members' inability to agree on strategies and carry out programs and/or operations. The members' governments are unable to make decisions or respect the framework of any international commitment, in particular in the security field. Other existing regional or sub-regional security networks will possibly fill the security gap.
Scenario 3 would most likely be the worst scenario for G5S.
Implications for the G5S: The G5 Sahel countries are unable to agree, respect and contribute (diplomatically, financially and strategically) to the security organization's agenda and strategy. The organisation will possibly collapse.
Scenario 4 would possibly prove to be a negative scenario for G5S.
Implications for the G5S: The G5S likely becomes paralyzed due to the lack of western support and possible diverging interests amongst its members.

Findings – The most likely outcome

Based on the data set out in the first chapter of this paper, the team looked to forecast into which quadrant each G5 Sahel member would possibly position itself in the short term. As

highlighted by the graph below, its members will possibly be positioned in scenario 1. Therefore, it is likely that the G5S, now composed of only four countries, will possibly find a way to improve its efficiency thanks to the review and/or the update of its strategy.

BFA will likely record an initial delay because of its current uncertain security situation and due to the fact that western cooperation is still low compared to the other countries. Thus, it will need some external (regional or international) help to make additional improvements that will allow it to profit from the increased western cooperation support. Nevertheless, BFA and RUS allegedly increased cooperation, as recorded since the latest military coup, and the presence of Wagner on the ground is undermining this scenario.

MLI will possibly stay out of the security network and try to build its own, so as to improve its bilateral agreements with regional and international stakeholders to secure the current leadership's agenda and to cope with internal core political, security, economic, social and infrastructural challenges.
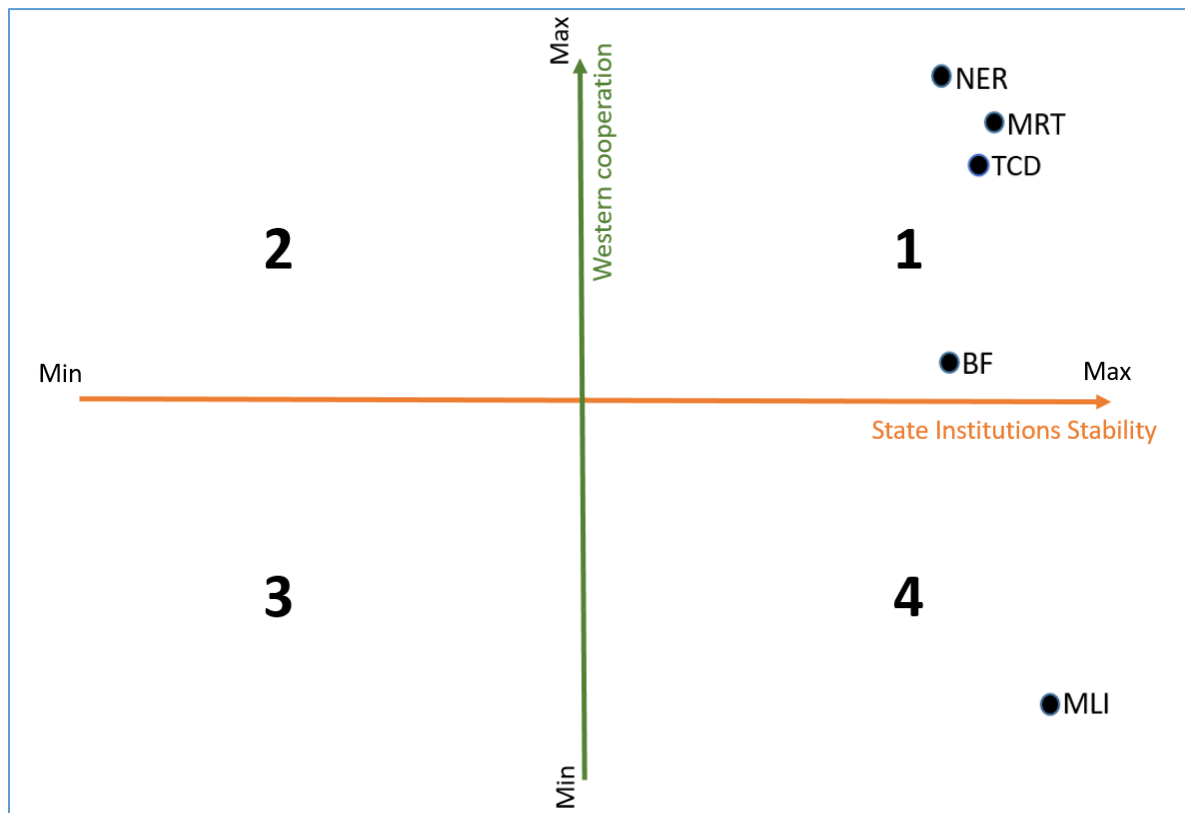
Observation

In the short term, BFA plays a very important role, since it remaining is the decisive condition for the G5S to keep existing and, possibly, to reframe its structure in order to increase its operability and provide satisfactory results.

WORKSHOP ANALYSIS

In order to discuss the latest G5S developments with a view to assessing its possible prospects, and security in the Sahel in general, with regional SMEs, the NSD-S HUB and the Organization

for the Strategic Intelligence (C.S.I. Paix) co-chaired the "G5 Sahel Prospects" Workshop from 22 to 24 November 2022. The exchange with the SMEs confirmed the validity of the alternative scenarios findings.

The workshop participants began by making some baseline statements. Currently, the G5S performance is poor and ineffective. The SMEs were pessimistic regarding the outlook for G5S – it is seen as an organization in agony or, worse, about to end. It is imperative for the G5S to come up with a strategic review as soon as possible. Some of the participants believed that the only chance the G5S might have is to boost its civilian branches and operations (e.g. development, education, governance) rather than focusing merely on the military pillar. On the other hand, others said that for the G5S to survive, it should narrow its focus to the core tasks of military operations and some developmental activities exclusively linked to security goals.

The workshop involved highly fruitful discussions and resulted in 6 potential futures being identified for the short to near term, taking into account the most relevant political, military, economic, social and diplomatic factors.

1. The G5S ceases to exist within one to two years,
2. The G5S carries out, and is boosted by, its planned 2023 strategic review. Such review would be the result of the November 2022 G5S Heads of State meeting[86] combined with the UN high-level independent panel on Security and Development in the Sahel's findings, to be presented in February 2023 during the 36th Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government.[87] The two most likely results of such a review would hypothetically be either:
   (a) The strategic review shrinks the organizations' tasks, focusing only on security, governance and training. The development and infrastructure pillars would be handed over to other organizations, such as the UNDP, FAO, World Bank, AU, ECOWAS…OR
   (b) The G5S member states agree to:
      - Increase their financial commitments to ensure the organization's operating costs are fully covered.
      - Look for improvements to the organization's fund management
      - Start a Transparency and Accountability Policy
      - Plan periodical G5S audits, run by independent agencies
      - Adopt and apply a new Good Governance Policy within the G5S
      - Updating and boost their national Good Governance Programs
3. The G5 Sahel members decide to admit new members (e.g. the Gulf of Guinea countries)
4. Another African security network (e.g. the AU, ECOWAS or the Accra Initiative) absorbs the G5S.
5. The G5S merges with one or more regional security networks and gives birth to a new entity.

---

[86] The G5 Sahel heads of state are schedule to meet before the end of the 2022 in order to discuss on and approve the new G5 Sahel Strategy for Development and Security (SDS) and the new Priority Investment Plan (PIP). See page 11 of the G5 Sahel executive secretary declaration to the UN Security Council (16 Novemberr 2022). https://www.g5sahel.org/declaration-du-secretaire-executif-du-g5-sahel-au-conseil-de-securite-de-lonu/
[87] https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/09/1127931

6. Benin becomes the reference for the G5 Sahel members to improve their resilience and face the peace and security challenges more effectively (see next chapter).

POSSIBLE WAYS FORWARD – The Benin (BEN) Approach

The purpose of this chapter is to consider BEN's resilience as a potential role model for the G5 Sahel countries. Since G5S was set up, scholars have insisted that the mere military approach cannot be successful against the VEO threat.[88] The spill over of VEO activities to the coastal states was feared as a result of the deterioration of the security situation in the SAHEL.[89] It took place especially between 2021 and 2022.[90] BEN was affected as well.[91]

In this study, BEN was looked at since its circumstances are highly similar to those in the 5 countries. For BEN, as well as for the other Gulf of Guinea (GoG) states, the VEO threat is rather new. Within a short time, BEN found better answers to the threat than the other GoG and SAHEL countries. BEN could possibly be a reference for the G5 Sahel members to improve their resilience and to more effectively face the challenges to security and peace for the reasons detailed in this chapter.

With its well-developed and resilient civil society network, BEN focuses on women empowerment and gives women a significant role to play in security and development. BEN takes very good care of the education of its youth and it relies on high cohesion amongst the members of the local communities. Furthermore, BEN enjoys a high national sentiment amongst its citizens. The Sahel countries should plan national programs looking at achieving similar or higher national sentiment to balance with the JNIM/Al-Qaida ability to attract local communities. BEN's security architecture now includes a new efficient tool that increases interoperability between security forces.

BEN's "Secret Ingredient"

Violent conflicts in Africa tend to originate due to the lack of adequate governance.[92] There were 28 organized political violence events in northern BEN attributed to VEOs between November 1, 2021 and September 14, 2022.[93] Unlike in BFA, MLI and NER, VEOs do not win the sympathy of relevant portions of the locals in Northern BEN.[94]

---

[88] Cooke, J. (2017) Understanding the G5 Sahel Joint Force: Fighting Terror, Building Regional Security? *Center for Strategic and International Studies.* November 15th 2017. (online) Available from: Understanding the G5 Sahel Joint Force: Fighting Terror, Building Regional Security? | Center for Strategic and International Studies (csis.org) Accessed July 27th 2022

[89] International Crisis Group (2019) L'Afrique de l'Ouest face au risque de contagion jihadiste. *Briefing Afrique de Crisis Group* N°149 Dakar/Brussels. December 20th 2019. Available from: L'Afrique de l'Ouest face au risque de contagion jihadiste (d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net) Accessed February 10th 2022

[90] Assanvo,W. (2021) Terrorism in Cote d' Ivoire is no longer just an external threat. *Institute for Security Studies.* June 15th 2021. Available from:Terrorism in Côte d'Ivoire is no longer just an external threat - ISS Africa Accessed February 2nd 2022

[91] Ross.A. (2022) Five rangers, soldier killed in attack in Benin, park management says. *Reuters.* February 9th 2022 (online). Available from: Five rangers, soldier killed in attack in Benin, park management says | Reuters. Accessed February 10th 2022

[92] Onanga-Anyanga,P. (2019) La majorite des conflits nait des problemes de gouvernance. . *iD4D. Le media du developpement durable.* September 12th 2019. (online) Available from:« La majorité des conflits naît des problèmes de gouvernance » (ideas4development.org) Accessed July 18th 2022.

[93] Brottem,L. (2022). Jihad Takes Root in Northern Benin. *ACLED* September 23th 2022. (online) Available from: Jihad Takes Root in Northern Benin (acleddata.com) Accessed October 17th 2022.

[94] Brottem,L. (2022). Jihad Takes Root in Northern Benin. *ACLED* September 23th 2022. (online) Available from: Jihad Takes Root in Northern Benin (acleddata.com) Accessed October 17th 2022.
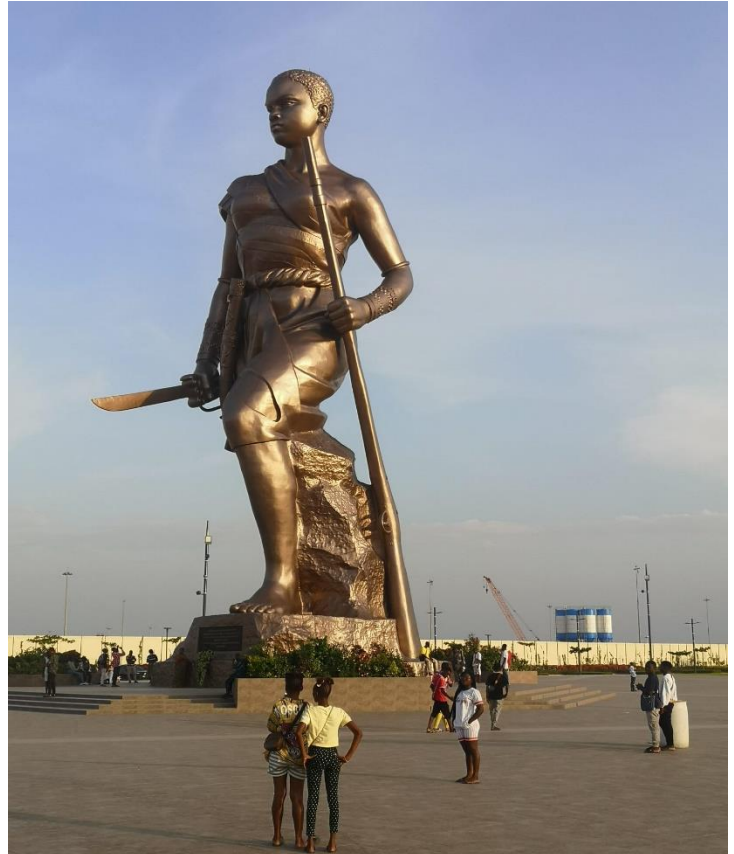
BEN is a difficult place for VEOs. The locals in the north, where VEOs are active, seem to be impermeable to radical preaching and BEN's army does not accept its role as a victim. BEN's army repels VEO attacks with VEO fighters KIA.[95] BEN's existing resilience is based on satisfying levels of governance and its resilience building efforts focus on building even better governance. Building resilience against VEOs needs a population-centric approach.

BEN's resilience against VEO is based on governance and a vibrant civil society. Both foster the spreading and the implementation of the two mighty antidotes against radical preaching: education and the strong role of women in BEN's society. BEN nationals have a high sense of community which is fostered by education. Differently from other countries where people feel they first belong to a tribe or a group before pledging loyalty to their country, BEN citizens do believe in their country and they do believe in the strength of multiculturalism and in the coexistence of different religions under the same flag. The patriotism feeling is deep rooted. Their resilience to VEOs activities will likely come from this. This is an excellent basement upon which to build an effective barrier against the VEOs threat.

Like few African states (MAR, Egypt (EGY), Ethiopia (ETH), Eswatini and Lesotho), BEN is the continuation of a historic nation, DAHOMEY. That makes it easier for BEN's people to feel as a family. Other countries however can follow BEN's example the more they complete their nation building process.

The monument for Dahomey's female warriors (from the Middle Age until the French conquest in 1896) was erected in 2022 at the capital Cotonou to honour the contribution of BEN's women in society.
Source: The NSD-S HUB

BEN security architecture's holistic approach strengthens its resilience.

Literature suggests that solutions to the security challenge in the SAHEL must be holistic, mere military solutions do not bring the desired outcome.**[96]**

---

[95] AFP (2022) Benin Foils 'Terrorist' Attack, Kills 8 Gunmen, Army Says. *Voanews*. October 13th 2022. (online) Available from:Benin Foils 'Terrorist' Attack, Kills 8 Gunmen, Army Says (voanews.com) Accessed October 18th 2022

[96] Englebert,P.and Lyammouri,R. (2022) Sahel:Moving Beyond Military Containment. *Policy Report.* Atlantic Council,Policy Center for the New South.February 2022.
Lebovich,A. (2020)Disorder from Chaos: Why Europeans fail to promote stability in the Sahel. *Policy Brief.* European Council on Foreign Relations. August 2020. London

In their effort to follow this paradigm to counter the VEOs threat, BEN authorities looked at improving the performances of the security architecture with a new efficient tool that increases interoperability between security forces: the National Agency for Integrate border management, that brings natural park ranger, border police, military and local police to coordinate in order to ensure security in the North.

BEN took immediate measures to address the challenge and build resilience such as the setup of a direct communication line between National Park Rangers and Armed Forces in early 2022. Rangers inform Armed Forces on suspect activities which enables armed forces to hinder VEO FOM.[97] This measure highlights BEN's firm decision not to remain passive until more suitable measures, military or not, are available. While exploiting the existing chance to use the ranger's expertise in the area of VEO activities without abusing them for combat against VEO which is not their task, BEN struggles to make available broader military solutions.

Besides mere soldiering and policing skills BEN's security forces grew up with a commitment to democratic values and values of a modern civil society. This educational value is integrated in the military training and it seems to be unique in the region.[98]

Parts of BEN's security forces have some minor flaws in mere practical skills. However their professional ethic commitment is very high with the result of a high sense of responsibility and fulfilling their duty as it was lately the case during their contribution to the MINUSMA forces.[99]

BEN's answer to the VEO threat in its northernmost territories seems to strengthen the trust of the local population in BEN's state authority. In neighbouring TOGO (TGO) the northern region SAVANES has to face huge movements of IDP threatened by VEO activities.[100]

BEN is also a role model concerning the trust of its citizens in the members of the armed forces. Michael Shurkin highlights: "Effective African security forces must enjoy the acceptance and trust of the people they protect and serve".[101]

At regional level, in mid-2022 NER and BEN signed a military collaboration including exchange of Intelligence data, air support and joint operations of both armies against VEOs and BEN's

---

[97] Toulemonde,M. and Millecamps, M. (2022) African Parks: In Benin, we don't define the military strategy against jihadists. *Africa Report* June 26th 2022. (online). Available from:African Parks: "In Benin, we don't define the military strategy against jihadists" (theafricareport.com) Accessed: July 19th 2022

[98] It reminds the concept of DEU's armed forces known as INNERE FUEHRUNG ("internal leadership"). It can be a mere coincidence but it might also be a result of a huge portion of BEN officers trained in DEU for longer periods (up to two years). Schulz, B. F.(2022) Entschlossen fuer Recht und Freiheit kaempfen. Auf Grundlage des gesellschaftlichen Vertrauens*, I F Zeitschrift fuer Innere Fuehrung*. 3/22 Vol. 66 Issue #3 .July 2022.p. 8f.
Hitschler, T. .(2022) Wofuer kaempfst Du? Moral und Verantwortung im Krieg, *I F Zeitschrift fuer Innere Fuehrung*. 3/22 Vol. 66 Issue #3 .July 2022.p. 10- 15.

[99] In March 2016 TUAREG Extremists devastated KIDAL Airport in Northern MALI. The rioters used women and children as human shields. The UN POLICE Contingent from BEN in charge at KIDAL airport in these two days of riots was sober-minded and earned high respect in the UN community and beyond.

[100] Togo Times (2022) Après l'attaque terroriste dans les Savanes: Le Départ massif des populations se poursuit. *Togo Times* .July 18th 2022.(online). Available from Après l'attaque terroriste dans les Savanes: Le Départ massif des populations se poursuit (Photos) – Togotimes Accessed: July 19th 2022.

[101] Shurkin,M. (2022) Strengthening Sahelian Counterinsurgency Capacity. *Africa Security Brief* No. 41. August 2022. Africa Center for Strategic Studies. Washington D.C. p. 2

MoD highlighted NER's fight against VEOs to be a model for his country[102]. With this approach both countries emerge as role models for the region: NER as a country that holds valid expertise in fighting VEOs, worth to be shared with others, and BEN with its quick reaction on the VEOs threat in BEN, rather recent compared to the threat in NER. BEN does not wait, immediate measures against VEOs are taken. NER has no own ISR capacities (it benefits from FRA and USA ISR capacities). Therefore cooperation and exchange of intelligence data with NER does not help BEN's current intelligence. Intelligence data from NER available to BEN however allow BEN to know who are the VEO active in BEN, which profile of movement brought them from BFA or even MLI (crossing BFA) to BEN, and allow BEN's authorities to have information on the Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTP) of VEOs active on their territory.

At international level, BEN and FRA are working to strengthen their military cooperation.[103] This shows the rising prominence of BEN as an ally of the International Community to fight VEOs. BEN actively aims to exchange experiences with other countries that face the threat of terrorism such as BURKINA FASO (BFA) and RWANDA (RWA).[104]

---

[102] Kaka, M. (2022) Le Bénin et le Niger signent un accord de coopération militaire. *Radio France International*. July 12th 2022. (online). Available from:Le Bénin et le Niger signent un accord de coopération militaire (rfi.fr) Accessed: July 19th 2022.

[103] Ricard.P. (2022) Au Bénin, Emmanuel Macron promet une aide militaire renforcée. *Le Monde*. July 28th 2022. (online) Available from: Au Bénin, Emmanuel Macron promet une aide militaire renforcée (lemonde.fr) Accessed July 28th 2022.

[104] North Africa Post (2022) Benin in talks with Rwanda for logistical, expertise support to curtail terrorism. *North Africa Post*. September 12th 2022. (online). Available from: Benin in talks with Rwanda for logistical, expertise support to curtail terrorism – The North Africa Post Accessed: September 13th 2022

CONCLUSIONS

The peace and security situation in the Sahel region is still highly volatile and there is currently no single security framework that is able to tackle the terrorist threat with efficiency. The study analyses the current situation of G5 Sahel's member countries to achieve realistic prospects and options for G5S to increase its efficiency and capability.

In the short-near term, G5S will probably continue to exist and contribute to stability in the Sahel. Its efficiency, though, relies on how much it can implement and apply conditions for success, some of which were identified by the study as key drivers: Budget, State institutions stability, western cooperation, demographic trends, RUS influence, Economic trends, Socio-political equity and military capacity.

Two stark conclusions emerge from the study:

Clear commitment to partnership with western partners and state institution stability are necessary conditions for a capable and effective G5S and for a successful security architecture in the Sahel region.

In the near term, the most likely scenario for the G5S is where clear commitment to western partnership and state institution stability are the key drivers for success. It is unlikely that G5S will experience the situation of low western cooperation and high stability of State institutions. For NATO the most desired scenario is the former, whereas the most dangerous is the latter. It is favourable for NATO that the most desired one is the most likely and the least desired one is the least likely.

Two further important findings:

BFA is the critical state in G5S. It is at a crossroads - only if it converts its cooperation with western partners into clear and unequivocal commitment can it reach sustainable stability. With more than 900,000 IDPs in a population of circa 20 million and 40% of its territory under VEO control, BFA risks collapse if it is not able to foster stability. BFA finds itself with three options. Firstly, clear commitment with western partners, which is a necessary condition for sustainable stability. Secondly, commitment for partnership with non-western partners (following the example of MLI and GUI) which may foster short-term stability. Finally, continue the current ambiguous policy, risking national collapse.

ANNEX 1 – ANALYTICAL TECHNIQUES

Brainstorming
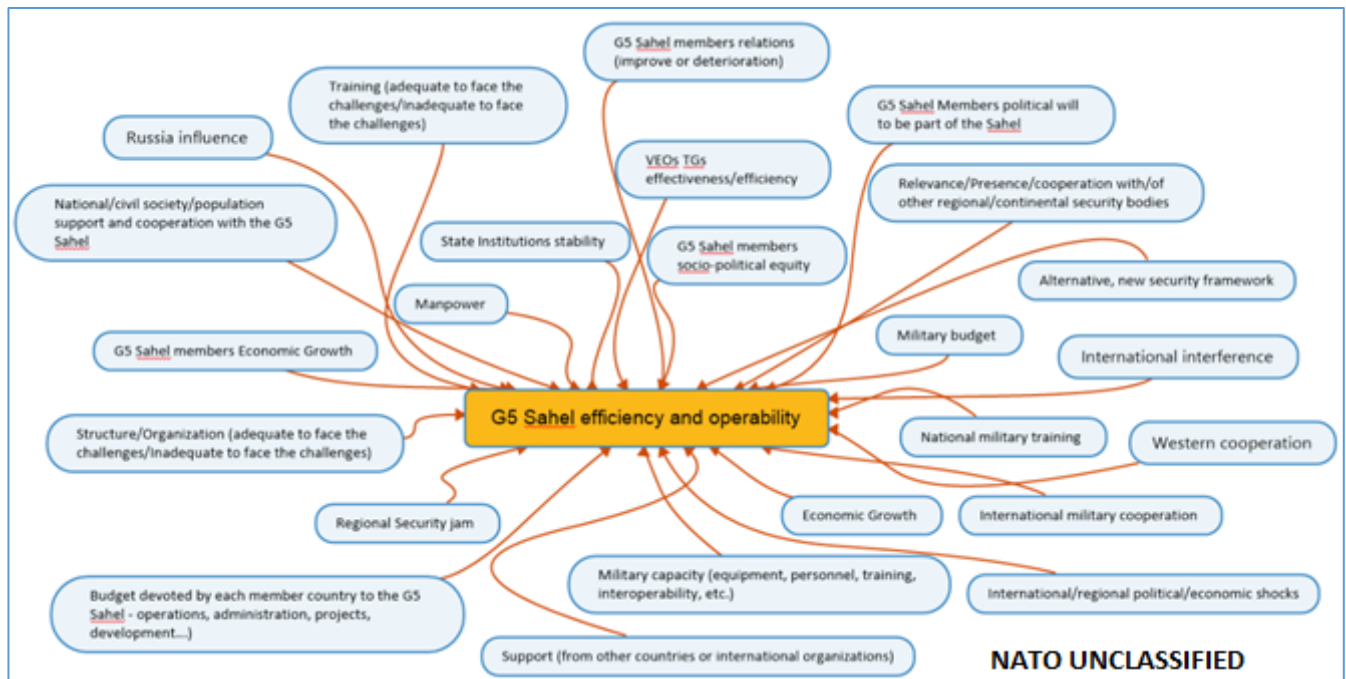
Key Drivers Brainstorming - results

Key Driver Selection and Justification

G5S Budget. The budget is the critical driver not only for the efficiency and the capability of the G5S, but for its survival. This will reduce the risk of distortion linked to a more generic or bigger key-driver such as the Defence-budget of a country.

State Institution Stability. The team agreed this has few or no links with democratic principles. It refers to a situation where the leadership is fully in control of the country and is able to implement its political agenda, thus to pursue its goals. In this case, stability is a synonym for strength or solidity of leadership. It could be the result of a fully representative and democratic country or an authoritarian one that governs with an iron fist. The key driver includes all the indicators that in some way could change this condition.

Western Cooperation. This key driver covers the full spectrum of the PMESII domains. The team agreed on the importance of including this indicator in the matrix since it directly refers to the influence western countries have on the G5 Sahel countries.

Demographic Trends. These are a critical key driver for the G5S's efficiency and operability. The increasing population could potentially be a threat as well as an opportunity for the four pillars of G5S (security, governance, infrastructure, resilience). E.g. Young people are a prime target for terrorist recruiters. A disaffected youth is certainly a time bomb for a developing country. If correctly managed, the youth bulge will likely increase the number of applicants willing to join the security forces, thus increasing the work force available for the G5S to fight VEOs. If badly managed, the youth could radicalize and be a threat to the G5 Sahel countries.

Economic Trends. These affect the G5 Sahel capabilities by increasing or decreasing resources to allocate to the security network. It also affects the capability of the population to resist the financial temptations used as a recruitment tool by terrorist groups. It is easier to attract an idle population with no future and no health and social care prospects into a VEO's web than a population whose country is economically expanding, developing and offering access to food, health care, education and human security.

Military Capability. Since its creation, the military aspect has been the short-term means to measure G5S efficiency. It is rightfully one of the key drivers. A military win against VEOs means an effective G5S.

Socio-Political Equity. The Socio-political equity key driver refers to the indicators that guarantee the stability of a country in the short-, mid- and long-term. Socio-political equity involves the application of people's rights and obligations in a way that is considered fair and equitable, regardless of the group or social class to which each person belongs. It is possible that the G5 Sahel countries are still experiencing great differences in the attention they have for people of different ethnicities, even though they belong to the same nation. This causes tensions. Those that feel marginalized can arm themselves and turn to terrorist groups looking for security. The lack of equal opportunities often results in situations that perpetuate from generation to generation. Social equity is not about eliminating differences, but about valuing them and giving them equal treatment in order to overcome the conditions that maintain social inequalities. But this is only possible with strong political will. Sound governance of the socio-political equity factor can balance some differences and appease grievances that lead to instability.

The G5 Sahel can not only contribute to the socio-political equity via its governance, resilience and infrastructure pillars and dedicated programs, it can also profit from it in order to be effective and operational.
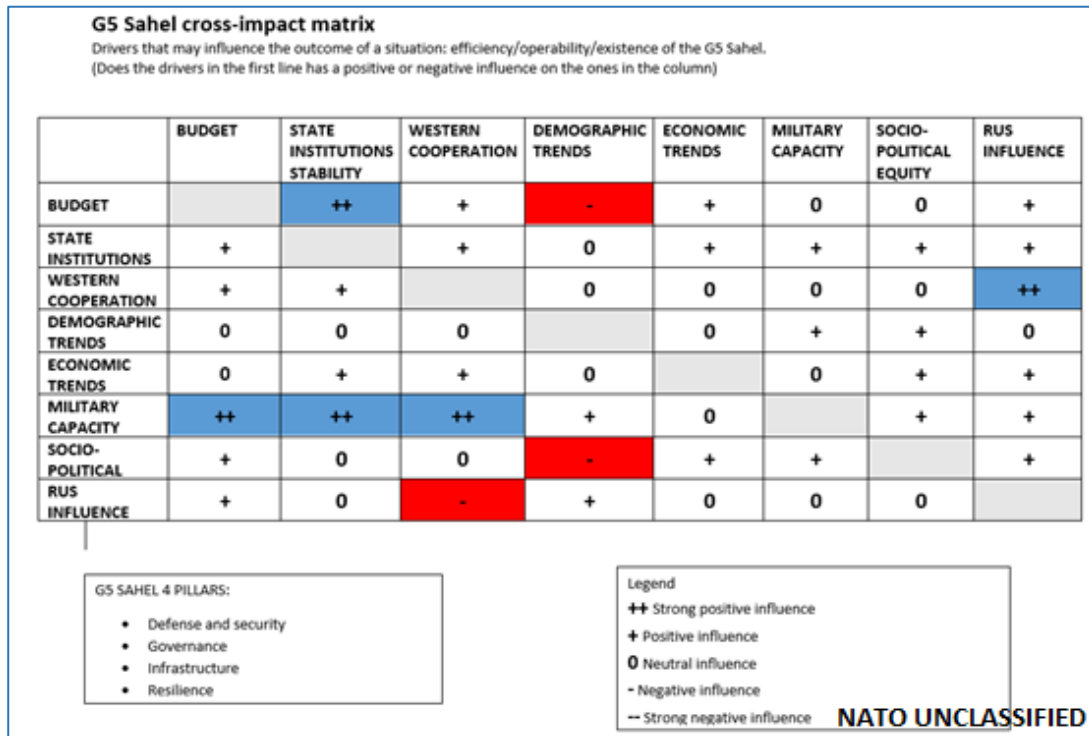
RUS Influence. The G5S currently enjoys support and cooperation from western countries. The increase or decrease of RUS influence in the Sahel will inevitably affect the performance and efficiency of the African sub-regional security network and challenge its western cooperation. E.g. RUS and its African partners could design a G5S alternative security network. Moreover, RUS is identified as a threat in the 2022 NATO Strategic Concept.

Cross-impact Matrix

The team used the cross-impact matrix in order to explore the links between pairs of what they chose as key drivers. The technique was particularly useful since some significant events that could impact the efficiency and the operability of the G5S occurred between 2021 and 2022 (Coups d'état in Mali and Burkina Faso and Mali withdrew from the G5S). Consequently, a flux situation generated where the G5S was no longer effective. This will likely force its members to think about how to react following the Malian withdrawal.

The analysts were interested in deciding what drivers could influence the outcome the most, in the short and near term. They created the matrix below.

The matrix highlights that six significant drivers out of nine have either a strong positive influence or negative influence when paired to other drivers:

G5 Sahel cross-impact matrix

Drivers that may influence the outcome of a situation: efficiency/operability/existence of the G5 Sahel.
(Does the drivers in the first line has a positive or negative influence on the ones in the column)

	BUDGET	STATE INSTITUTIONS STABILITY	WESTERN COOPERATION	DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS	ECONOMIC TRENDS	MILITARY CAPACITY	SOCIO-POLITICAL EQUITY	RUS INFLUENCE
BUDGET		++	+	-	+	0	0	+
STATE INSTITUTIONS	+		+	0	+	+	+	+
WESTERN COOPERATION	+	+		0	0	0	0	++
DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS	0	0	0		0	+	+	0
ECONOMIC TRENDS	0	+	+	0		0	+	+
MILITARY CAPACITY	++	++	++	+	0		+	+
SOCIO-POLITICAL	+	0	0	-	+	+		+
RUS INFLUENCE	+	0	-	+	0	0	0	

G5 SAHEL 4 PILLARS:
- Defense and security
- Governance
- Infrastructure
- Resilience

Legend
++ Strong positive influence
+ Positive influence
0 Neutral influence
- Negative influence
-- Strong negative influence   **NATO UNCLASSIFIED**

The most significant key drivers are:

a) Budget
b) State institution stability
c) Western cooperation
d) Demographic trends
e) RUS influence

Among the six key drivers listed above, three were the most influential on the system: (b) State institution stability; (c) Western cooperation and (d) Demographic trends.

The most influenced key drivers were:

- Military capacity is influenced by (a)++; (b)++; (c)++)
- Budget is influenced by (b)++; (d)-

In particular, Military capacity is very positively influenced by the drivers (a), (b) and (c). Budget is very positively influenced by driver (b) and negatively influenced by driver (d).

WWW.SOUTHERNHUB.ORG   NSD-SHUB@JFCNP.NATO.INT   NATO STRATEGIC DIRECTION-SOUTH HUB