

Understanding power dynamics between
intervening and host military forces:
The case of the G5 Sahel Joint Force and
external actors in the Sahel

Marie Sandnes

Dissertation submitted for the degree of PhD in Political Science

Department of Political Science

Faculty of Social Sciences

University of Oslo

2023

© Marie Sandnes, 2023

*Series of dissertations submitted to the
Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Oslo
No. 968*

ISSN 1504-3991

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without permission.

Cover: UiO.

Print production: Graphic center, University of Oslo.

CONTENTS

List of figures	5
Abbreviations	6
Summary	7
Acknowledgements	9
Part I - Narrative	13
1 Introduction	15
Why study the G5 Sahel Joint Force?	17
Aim and approach	18
Contributions of the dissertation	22
Structure and outline	24
2 Prevailing narratives	25
External interventions	25
Security force assistance	29
‘Local’ ownership and donor-dependency	31
3 Conceptual and theoretical framework	33
Power and power relations	34
4 The Sahel and the G5 Sahel Joint Force	41
The security context of the Sahel	41
The G5 Sahel Joint Force and external actors	43
5 Studying the cooperation between the G5 Sahel Joint Force and external actors	47
Philosophical standing within political science	47
An abductive case study	48
Methods for gathering data	50
Methods for analysing the data	56
Ethical reflections	59
Reflections on generalisability	63

6	Summary of articles	64
	Article 1	64
	Article 2	65
	Article 3	66
	Article 4	67
7	Main findings and implications.....	69
	7.1 Empirical findings.....	69
	7.2 Theoretical development of asymmetric interdependence.....	72
8	Future research.....	76
	References.....	78
 Part II - Articles		87
	Article 1: The relationship between the G5 Sahel Joint Force and external actors: A discursive interpretation.....	88
	Article 2: The impact of external support on coalition efficiency: The case of the G5 Sahel Joint Force.	112
	Article 3: Bilateral donations to a multilateral coalition: The case of the G5 Sahel Joint Force.	140
	Article 4: The effect of asymmetric interdependence on the outcomes of military cooperation in the Sahel.....	174

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Main external support to the G5S-JF.....	16
Figure 2: The relationship between research questions and articles.	21
Figure 3: The difference between relational and relative understandings of power dynamics.	36
Figure 4: The relationship between theoretical aspects of power and the articles.	39
Figure 5: Key external political influence on the power relations between the G5S-JF and Barkhane and EUTM.	40
Figure 6: Map of North Africa and the Sahel, with the G5 Sahel member states highlighted. Made by Georgina Berry.....	41
Figure 7: A map of the G5S-JF area of operations. Made by Georgina Berry.	43
Figure 8: Key external assistance to the G5S-JF and its development since 2017.	45
Figure 9: Categorisation of interviews.....	52
Figure 10: A combination of Figure 2 and Figure 4, connections between research questions, articles and aspects of power.....	70
Figure 11: Overview of articles and status of publication	71
Figure 12: The relational power dynamic between the G5S-JF and external actors.....	73

ABBREVIATIONS

African Union	AU
African Union Mission in Somalia	AMISOM
Al Qaeda in the Maghreb	AQIM
Civilian Incident Tracking and Analysis Cell (Mécanisme d'identification, de suivi et d'analyse des dommages causés aux civils)	CITAC (MISAD)
Economic Community of West African States	ECOWAS
European Union	EU
European Union Capacity Building Mission	EUCAP
European Union Training Mission	EUTM
Forces Armées Maliennes/Malian armed forces	FAMa
G5 Sahel Joint Force	G5S-JF
Islamic State of the Greater Sahara	ISGS
Islamic State of the West African Province	ISWAP
Jama'at Nusrat al Islam wal Muslimeen	JNIM
Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali	MINUSMA
Multinational Joint Task Force	MNJTF
North Atlantic Treaty Organisation	NATO
Norwegian Centre for Research Data	NSD
Research question	RQ
Security Force Assistance	SFA
Sub-question	SQ
United Nations	UN
United States of America	US/USA

SUMMARY

The G5 Sahel Joint Force was established in 2017 to combat terrorism, illicit trafficking and transnational crime in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. To fulfil its mandate, it was quickly determined that the joint force should receive assistance from external military actors already operating in the Sahel. Despite significant support from external actors in the form of finances, equipment, training and mentoring, provided with the aim of building a strong and autonomous G5 Sahel Joint Force, the joint force never developed into an efficient coalition, and the security situation in the region has continued to deteriorate.

This dissertation examines the military cooperation between the G5 Sahel Joint Force and external actors in the Sahel through the theoretical lens of relational power. It reveals that these actors have found themselves in a relationship of asymmetric interdependence. This type of relational dynamic did not allow for the G5 Sahel Joint Force to develop ownership nor responsibility for the security theatre it has operated in. In essence, this dissertation furthers our understanding of the relationships between intervening and host military forces and encourages future research on such military cooperation through the lens of relational power.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Looking back at this journey, I can undoubtedly confirm that it takes a village... There are so many wonderful people who have walked beside me on this journey and supported me along the way. I would not have been able to do this without any of you.

To my supervisors, Karin Dokken and Pinar Tank, thank you for always having faith in me and my project and for your endless support and encouragements. For every draft you have read, given feedback on, and helped me improve, I am eternally grateful. Thank you for challenging me and for always inspiring me to have confidence in myself and my research. Karin, your care for me and excitement for my research journey has been fundamental to my process. Pinar, your way of building my self-confidence and helping me to reflect in order to understand my own thoughts I could not have done without at any stage.

To everyone I have interviewed, everyone who has shared with me their time, experience and knowledge: I will be forever grateful to every single one of you. Your openness and honesty helped me navigate the Sahel security theatre, and your excitement and curiosity about my research motivated and inspired me throughout this process. Without you there would be no research.

Thank you to everyone who has made me feel welcome and safe in Bamako. To the Norwegian embassy, thank you for following up with me and for taking care of me when needed. To Phil and the Sleeping Camel, thank you for always providing me with a relaxing yet upbeat place to work, sleep and have fun. Thank you for always filling the Camel with laughter, joy and quiz-nights, which allowed me to take some proper breaks in between work. A special thank you to Youssouf for being my number one person in Bamako, for being so reliable and supportive, for taking care of me, and for being patient with me when I speak French. Mes plus vifs remerciements à toi, Youssouf. A special thank you also to Holger, for continuously enlightening me in our conversations, for challenging me on my assumptions, for your critical eye on most things, and for encouraging me and my research.

I am lucky to call PRIO my academic home; it is a place that truly feels like a home. There are many people at PRIO who have always encouraged me and cheered for me along the way – thank you to all of you. Thank you, Øystein H. Rolandsen, for giving me a chance at PRIO and in

academia and for encouraging me to take the step to do a PhD. A particular shoutout to Indigo Trigg-Hauger, Gee Berry, Trude Stapnes, Ilaria Carrozza, Júlia Palik, Julie Marie Hansen, Bård Drange, Eirin Haugseth, Bruno Oliveira Martins, Samar Abbas Nawaz, Ida Rudolfson, Johanne Rokke Elvebakken, Elisabeth Lio Rosvold, Jenny Lorentzen, Ebba Tellander, Rahmat Hashemi, Pinar Tank, Torunn L. Tryggestad, Nic Marsh, Louise Olsson, Marta Bivand Erdal, Kristian Berg Harpviken, Agnete Schjønsby, and Lynn P. Nygaard. To Cathrine Bye, Lars Even Andersen, Pål Torjus Halsne, and Lorna Quilario Sandberg, thank you for helping me with absolutely everything and for cheering for me from day one. Thank you to everyone in the PhD-forum at PRIO: thank you for creating a safe space for any silly questions and every little thought that has gone through my head over the past few years. Especially to Nic, thank you for always believing in me and for guiding me and supporting me from the early stages of applying to this PhD position to the very end of the process. Bruno, thank you for being my mentor in all ways of its meaning: for guiding me, being my friend and a motivator, and for always being excited on my behalf. Júlia, thank you for our morning coffees, runs, fresh-air-breaks, and for our conversations about everything important and everything silly. Thank you for wanting to celebrate for every accomplishment, no matter how small. Jenny, Júlia, Ida and Ilaria, thank you for being my role models.

Several people have provided me with exceptional feedback and comments on this dissertation. Thank you to Nic, Júlia and Ida for your invaluable and important inputs at a critical stage of finalising the dissertation. A special thank you to Gee, because without you, no part of this dissertation would ever see the light of day. Thank you for your encouragement, excitement and enthusiasm throughout this process. Your feedback on my written work is irreplaceable, and your faith in me means beyond what I could express in words. You are a star.

Thank you to the Norwegian Ministry of Defence for funding my research and for showing a keen interest in my findings. You have helped me appreciate the value of my research beyond academic life.

Les Gazelles – you know who you are – thank you for providing me with a wonderful community of young female researchers sharing a love for the Sahel. Thank you for sharing experiences, perspectives, frustrations and laughter and for always cheering each other on. To the SUAW-crew

on Teams, thank you for helping me stay sane during lockdown and for always providing a happy and open place to talk. I appreciate every single one of you.

Finally, my nears and dears. Melissa, Elisabeth and Merete, thank you for bringing me out of the PhD-bubble, for being dear friends, and for being my cohort before, during and after (touch wood) Covid. Thank you to Malene for never being more than a phone call away, for your love and support in everything.

To Bestefar Kjell Sandnes for communicating your love for Africa with me since I was a child, for sharing stories from your years in Cameroon, and for still being with me in my heart. To Mormor Anny Solberg for always being generous, for giving me bravery and faith in myself, and for still being with me in my heart. To Mum and Dad, Eva and Dag Sandnes, for always encouraging me to follow my dreams, explore the world, and delve into my curiosity, and for supporting and caring for me on my way. You two will always be my biggest role models. Eirik, Kristian and Sverre, thank you for being engaging and supportive brothers in everything I do. You inspire me every day. To my love, Marc, thank you for everything you are. Thank you for moving to Norway to give me the opportunity to grow in this role, for giving me courage to explore my curiosity, and for your support and encouragement throughout the process. I am eternally grateful for your patience, especially when going through a pandemic, two house moves, refurbishments, wedding planning and bringing up a puppy with an at-times overwhelmed PhD student. Thank you for being my rock in everything I do.

I am grateful that my younger self dared to embark on this educational journey of excitement, confusion, frustration and enjoyment, all in a beautiful blend. It has been simply wonderful.

Part I - Narrative

1 INTRODUCTION

On 15 May 2022, Mali announced that it was withdrawing from the G5 Sahel organisation and the G5 Sahel Joint Force (G5S-JF) (RFI 2022). This announcement came after months of tensions between Mali and France, amplified by the postponing of democratic elections initially planned for February 2022 by the interim military government in Mali, the deployment of mercenaries from the Russian private security company Wagner Group in Mali, and the subsequent withdrawal of the French counter-terrorism operation Barkhane from Mali (Wilén and Williams 2022).

This dissertation has been finalised at a time when the security situation in the Sahel is more unpredictable than ever, where national and regional dynamics are changing in line with some of the region's military interim regimes, and where Sahelian partnerships and alliances with actors of the international community are transforming. Considering the turmoil of the relationship between the Sahel and especially European actors, this dissertation provides an important perspective of what the relationship between the G5S-JF and its external partners looked like from 2017 to 2021.¹ The dissertation provides valuable insights into what power dynamics have been at stake regarding the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors. Indeed, understanding present developments requires a look backwards to the founding of the G5S-JF and its relations with external actors.

In February 2017, the G5 Sahel organisation – with its member states Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger – announced the establishment of a military coalition, the G5S-JF. The aim of the joint force has been to combat terrorism, illicit trafficking and transnational crime in the G5 Sahel region (AU Peace and Security Council 2017), which has seen an increase in violence, especially in the last decade. This violence is for instance caused by inter-communal tensions, local militias, and groups associated with al Qaeda or the Islamic State who are often linked to organised crime. Violence against civilians is also perpetrated by the national militaries. To fulfil its mandate, it was quickly determined that the G5S-JF should receive assistance from external actors already operating in the Sahel. Amongst others, these have included the French counter-terrorism operation Barkhane, the European Union (EU) Training Mission in Mali

¹ At time of writing, the G5S-JF has not officially dissolved. While Mali's withdrawal could spell the end of the G5S-JF – whether it operates as a G4 or collapses entirely remains to be seen – this dissertation focuses on a time period (2017–2021) when all five members were present.

(EUTM), the EU Capacity Building Mission (EUCAP), the United Nations' (UN) Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Through these external actors, the G5S-JF has received military training, police training, mentoring, administrative assistance, logistical support, humanitarian framework support and, in addition, the joint force has received the majority of its funding from external donors.

Despite the extent of external support to the G5S-JF, the joint force never developed into a strong self-functioning military coalition. This dissertation seeks to examine the relationship between the G5S-JF and these external actors. I refer to the G5S-JF as a host because its troops have operated in the G5 Sahel member states' own territory. I refer to external actors as intervening forces because they are actors who have also been placed in the territory of the G5 Sahel member states, but the territory they are operating in has constituted a different place geographically than their own state(s). The actors examined in this dissertation are those with direct involvement or contributions to the military operational side of the G5S-JF. The main external actors and the nature of their contributions are depicted in Figure 1.

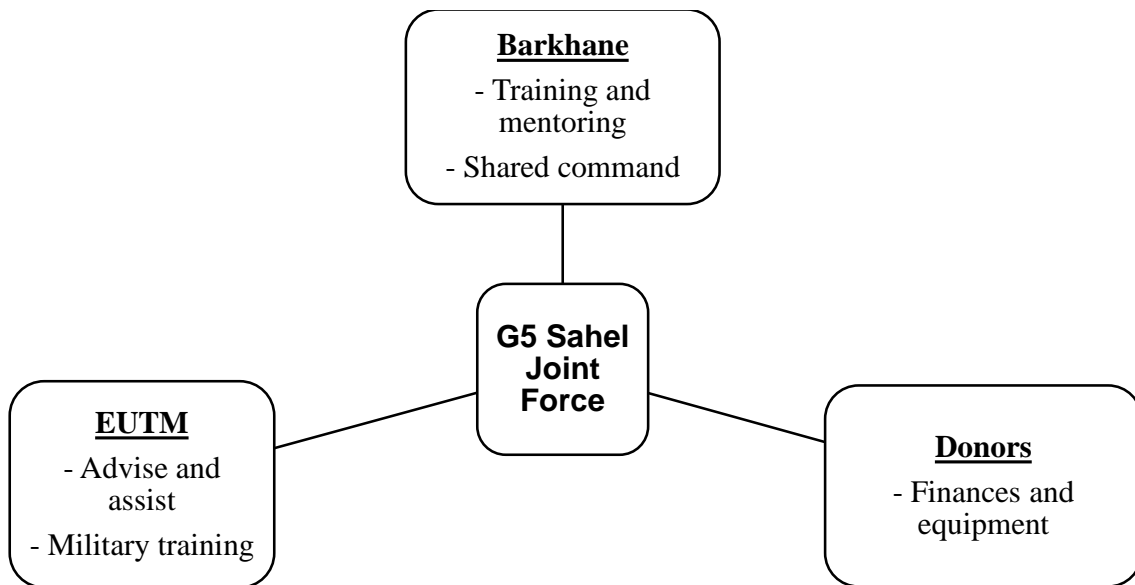


Figure 1: Main external support to the G5S-JF.

Ultimately, the findings of this research reveal that examining the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors can explain why the G5S-JF did not develop into a strong, autonomous force

and that the power dynamics of this relationship have implications for the joint force's regional ownership. This research also suggests that examining the relational dynamics between intervening and host forces more generally provides a new, fruitful lens through which to examine the discrepancy between the intent and the outcome of such security relations.

WHY STUDY THE G5 SAHEL JOINT FORCE?

The G5 Sahel member states – Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger – are generally considered rather fragile and have had limited roles in the international community individually. However, when the G5S-JF was established, the region gained substantial international attention. Following an escalation of conflict in the Sahel region and the subsequent establishment of the joint force, the area of the Sahel was put higher on the agenda in many states – such as with the creation of several Sahel Strategies from European states. Regional insecurity in the Sahel led to fears of the consequences for Europe in terms of spill-overs of both security threats and potential waves of refugees and migrants. As a result, the international community began to streamline significant resources to the Sahel and the G5S-JF. Despite the high external engagement with the G5S-JF, it was also clear from early on that the nature of the joint force was rather ambiguous: actors engaging with the G5S-JF were not fully sure what the joint force was, what it could do, or how to best support it. Put plainly: there was a lot of hype surrounding the G5S-JF, but little knowledge about it. This conundrum sparked my wish to carry out this research in order to unpack the inner workings between external actors and the G5S-JF.

When the G5S-JF was established, it was presented as a sub-regional initiative with a sub-regional focus. Ad hoc in nature, it distanced itself from already existing regional initiatives in Africa, such as the standby force of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Despite the initial sub-regional focus, nature and mandate of the G5S-JF, we have seen a strong level of external engagement with the joint force, which has called into question the joint force's regional ownership and agency. France, as the previous colonial power of the G5 Sahel member states, has remained an important partner in political, military and economic matters. Due to the colonial legacy of France, there are thus strong ties between the G5 Sahel member states and France, but also significant tension. With France playing key roles in both the UN and the EU,

these multilateral actors' engagement with the G5S-JF should also be seen in light of the colonial past between France and the Sahel region. However, G5 Sahel member states have also managed and to a certain extent controlled the role external actors have played in the region, and have held significant leverage towards European actors especially. This was demonstrated by Mali's recent agreement with the Russian private security company Wagner Group, whose deployment of mercenaries in Mali put significant pressure on European actors' involvement in the Sahel. Ultimately, these factors have laid the foundation for interesting power dynamics between the G5S-JF and external actors, with an interplay between regional ownership of the G5S-JF and external influence on it. This dissertation examines this interplay through asking what explains the power dynamics between the G5S-JF and external actors.

AIM AND APPROACH

The Sahel security situation continues to deteriorate, and few efforts appear to have a significant positive effect on the situation, including the G5S-JF. There is a need to understand what the G5S-JF has actually been, how it has operated, and why this regional military coalition has not comprehensively assumed its responsibility to provide security in and for the region. To do this, this dissertation examines and analyses the relationship between the G5S-JF and external military actors from 2017 to 2021.² By external military actors, this dissertation refers to actors which are in direct cooperation with and support-functions for the military aspects of G5S-JF: the French counter-terror operation Barkhane through training, mentoring, joint operations and joint command structure; the EUTM through training and administrative support at the joint force's headquarters; and donors who have provided material resources or finances to the joint force.

This means that certain actors and associated perspectives remain outside the scope of this research. The UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) has provided logistical support to the joint force through its battalions in Mali and is therefore reflected upon in this dissertation, but it does not constitute a key actor of analysis as there has not been military or operational cooperation between MINUSMA and the joint force. The United States

² 2017 is the starting point because this is when the G5S-JF was established, and 2021 is the end point because of the rapidly changing security environment in the region, particularly following Mali's deployment of mercenaries from the Russian Wagner Group, and Barkhane's withdrawal from Mali, in spring 2022. I reflect on these changes in the final article, but the core of this research and the subsequent findings are from within the timeframe of the case-study from 2017 to 2021.

(US) is an important bilateral partner to several of the G5 Sahel member states and has pledged and provided financial support to the G5S-JF. However, as there is no direct military operational cooperation between the US and the G5S-JF, the role of the US also remains outside the scope of this dissertation. By leaving other larger external actors, like the US, outside the scope of this dissertation, I cannot make claims regarding how external actors have engaged bilaterally with the G5 Sahel member states individually, nor how this has impacted the internal dynamics of the G5S-JF, nor whether or how this might also have impacted the joint force's relations with external actors. Excluding actors like the US and MINUSMA therefore does not facilitate a complete picture of the dynamics of the Sahel security theatre. However, through the 'external actors', as used in this dissertation, reflecting a more European lens, the thesis focuses specifically on those external actors that are directly involved in the operational military aspect of the G5S-JF, as well as donors.

Although the power relationships amongst the G5 Sahel member states are somewhat reflected in some of the articles of this dissertation, a thorough analysis of the internal power dynamics of the G5S-JF remains outside the scope of this study. This means that this dissertation does not examine whether some G5 Sahel member states hold more power or influence than others within the G5S-JF, nor does it reflect on how the individual G5 Sahel member states' bilateral relationship with external actors may impact the leverage they hold within the G5S-JF.

While some of the various aspects above are reflected upon in different parts of this dissertation, this dissertation holds *a focused analysis on the dynamic between the regional G5S-JF as a unit and external actors*. The main research question (RQ) of this dissertation is therefore:

RQ: What explains the power relationship between the G5S-JF and external military actors in the Sahel?

This question calls for further clarification. In order to study the power relationship between the G5S-JF and external military actors in the Sahel, there has been a need to understand how this relationship came about in the first place. It was further also necessary to examine what this relationship has actually consisted of and looked like: what type of relationship it has been and in what manner cooperation has taken place. Once this has been outlined, it will be possible to

understand the power dynamics of the relationship. Power is here studied in relational terms through the domains of autonomy, capacity, and influence on decision-making. Therefore, the primary RQ has called for two more sub-questions (SQs) that this research seeks to answer:

SQ1: How did the relationship between the G5S-JF and external military actors in the Sahel come about, and what does this mean for the power dynamics between these actors?

SQ2: What does the relationship look like, and who holds more autonomy, capacity and influence on decision-making in this relationship?

The first SQ directly addresses the roots and foundation of the relationship between the G5S-JF and external military actors in the Sahel. Understanding how the relationship between these actors came about is essential for also understanding the roots of the power dynamics between these actors and therefore relates directly to the main research question. The second SQ asks how the various aspects of power regarding autonomy, capacity and influence on decision-making³ play out, and what this looks like. Both sub-questions are therefore necessary to answer in order to explain the power relationship between the G5S-JF and external military actors in the Sahel. To answer these questions, I have written four articles, and the way the articles address the questions can be seen in Figure 2. The findings in each article sparked research for the following articles, and the final article is very much a result of the findings from the first three articles. The final article therefore develops a more theoretical understanding of the case, based on the first three articles. The first SQ is addressed in the first article, and the second SQ is addressed in the second, third and fourth articles. The main RQ is indirectly addressed in the first three articles and directly addressed in the final article.

³ For more on aspects of power, see page 33-40.

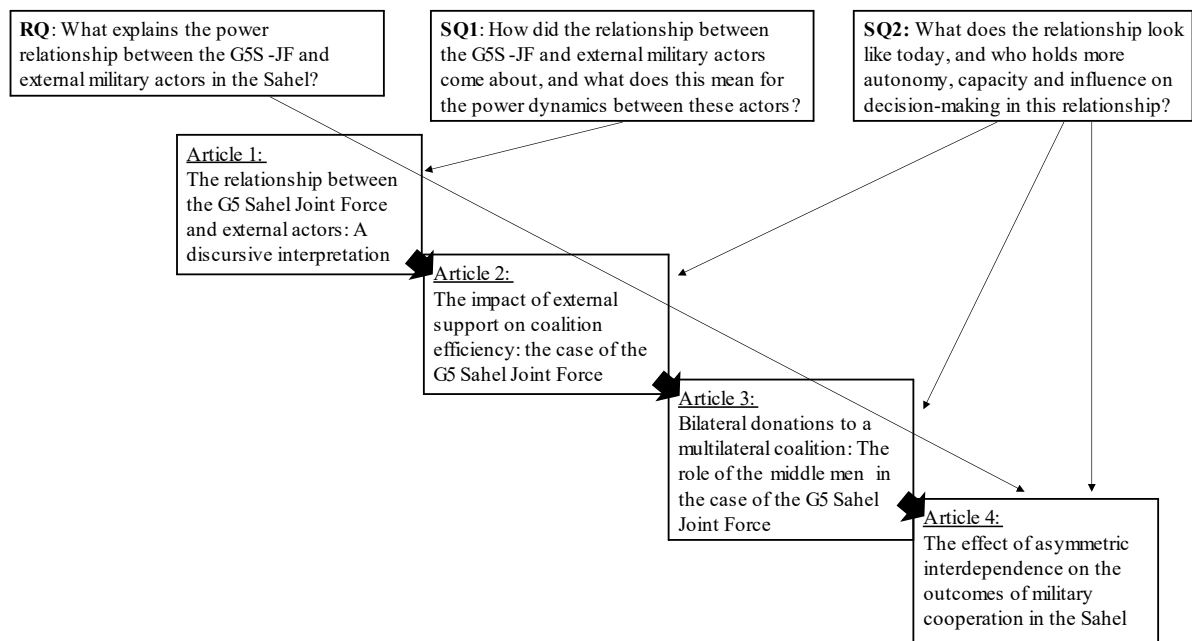


Figure 2: The relationship between research questions and articles.

Due to the recent establishment of the G5S-JF at the time of commencing this research (in 2019), my approach to this study has been exploratory. This means that I decided early on to study the case of the G5S-JF, and my research began largely by trying to understand what the G5S-JF is a case of. Working in this exploratory manner meant that after my first fieldtrip to Bamako, Mali, it became clear that research was needed on the relationship between the G5S-JF and its military partners, and from this point on my research focused on unpacking the military cooperation between these actors. The theoretical framework of power relations became more apparent as time passed and research was conducted. Therefore, to answer the research questions, I have emphasised the empirical data in the first three articles, while the latter article holds a stronger theoretical contribution. Ultimately in this dissertation, I argue that the G5S-JF and external actors have found themselves in a relationship of asymmetric interdependence. That means that the interactions between the G5S-JF and external actors have been characterised by mutual dependency, which both sides have benefitted from and been challenged by: the G5S-JF has depended on external actors for resources, training and operational capacity; external actors have relied on the presence and ‘recipient’ of the G5S-JF to exert influence in the region and prevent a potential spread and spill-over of the security threats to, for instance, Europe; and the external

influence has further been largely managed and controlled by the G5S-JF. This interdependence has however also been asymmetric, where external actors have held more leverage towards the G5S-JF than vice versa.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation draws on literature on military intervention, security force assistance (SFA) and donor-dependency, which all contribute to understanding the relationships between intervening and host military forces, but the dissertation brings the literature further by explicitly addressing the power relations between these forces. I find that the power dynamic between the G5S-JF and external actors can be explained as a relationship of asymmetric interdependence. I thus bring together the concept of asymmetry from international relations with the concept of interdependence from international political economy in order to shed light on military relationships between intervening and host forces. This approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of power in a military field often dominated by other forms of understanding power, such as resources and physical force. By demonstrating the asymmetric interdependence in the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors, this dissertation speaks directly to theories of power and to literature on military cooperation, interventions, SFA and donor-dependency, and indirectly also to literature on post-colonial relationships,⁴ proxy wars and regional security cooperation.

This dissertation further contributes with novel empirical knowledge on two matters in particular: the G5S-JF and military dynamics in the Sahel region. Due to the G5S-JF's recent establishment, there has not to date been significant research on the joint force. Some academic contributions have over the past few years highlighted the limitations of capacity-building counterterrorism in relation to the joint force (Dieng 2019), its limited capacity overall (Dieng, Onguny, and Mfondi 2020) and how the UN can best support the G5S-JF (Karlsrud and de Coning

⁴ The large literature on power and power dynamics in post-colonial relationships may speak to the case of the G5S-JF's relations with external actors in the Sahel due to the role of France. However, going into this literature would require a more historical approach to my research, and furthermore, research on post-colonial aspects of Sahelian dynamics constitutes a rather rich literature already (see for instance: Charbonneau and Chafer 2014; Gegout 2019; Mann 2021; Langan 2020). This dissertation thus aims to provide a different perspective on this relationship, which indeed can speak to the post-colonial literature on how the power dynamics play out in these relationships.

2021). However, a qualitative study on the joint force over an extended period has to my knowledge not been conducted before. Having conducted such research, this dissertation provides insight into the joint force in real-time. Examining changes and developments for the G5S-JF in these formative years of the coalition has provided this dissertation with empirical details that may not have been accessible should this study have been conducted at a later stage. For instance, this dissertation has created the first – to my knowledge – systematic overview of financial and material donations to the G5S-JF that is publicly available.

This dissertation also contributes empirically with a better understanding of the military dynamics in the Sahel. Empirical academic studies on the Sahel region have previously focused predominantly on one actor at a time, such as MINUSMA, EUTM or Barkhane (Lyammouri 2018; Shurkin 2014; Tull 2020). This dissertation also gives focus to one actor – the G5S-JF – but does so by examining its relationship with external actors. In this sense, the dissertation contributes also to empirical knowledge on the relationship between several of the military actors in the Sahel region.

Due to the novelty of the empirical research, the content of this dissertation has been of high relevance to actors engaged both militarily and politically in the Sahel region. Not only have France, the EU and the UN cooperated directly with the G5S-JF, but many other states have also contributed to the joint force through resources, finances and human rights training and in other ways. For these stakeholders, this dissertation can contribute with important knowledge of the G5S-JF. In addition, with the current potential of another ad hoc sub-regional coalition in West Africa,⁵ this dissertation provides important lessons learned, especially when it comes to the mode of external support. Having been asked to share my research with European ministries of defence and ministries of foreign affairs, as well as with practitioners that have operated in the Sahel, has confirmed the relevance of this dissertation for practitioners.⁶

⁵ The Accra initiative consists of Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, with Mali and Niger and observer states. The initiative announced the launch of the Multinational Joint Task Force – Accra Initiative in November 2022 with the aim of preventing the spread of terrorism and transnational crime in the member states.

⁶ I have for instance presented my findings for the Norwegian Ministry of Defence (spring 2022 and winter 2023), shared findings and publications with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (both autumn 2021), and presented findings to a US AFRICOM special forces unit deploying in the Sahel (spring 2023).

Given the exploratory nature of the dissertation, I relied on qualitative case study methodology and gathered data from interviews and primary written sources (in English and French). These methods not only enabled me to study the military actors and power relations beyond the quantifiable aspects of such relations, they also enabled me to reflect on the gendered dimensions of conducting research in this arena. Through being a young female researcher, I bring a marginalised voice to the research on military matters, which is largely dominated by men. Without claiming that female and male voices necessarily differ, there are aspects of the methods, such as the power dynamics of interview settings, that are influenced by this, which I reflect on in the positionality section on page 60-62. Furthermore, the study of power and power relations is often rooted in strong and conflicting theoretical standpoints within political science (see for instance: Walt 1985; Adler 1997; Krasner 1976). However, with a critical constructivist baseline, whilst acknowledging reality as the interaction between subjective and objective meanings, this dissertation advances the methodology of studying power in political science through examining the interaction between subjective and objective meanings of power.

STRUCTURE AND OUTLINE

The following sections will detail the *what*, the *how* and the *so-what* of this dissertation. I start by outlining the prevailing narratives of the dissertation, which include a debate on external interventions, SFA, and donor-dependency, and I follow with this dissertation's approach to the concept of power and power relations. I then proceed by giving some background information on the Sahel, the G5S-JF and external actors in the Sahel. Following this, I go on to explain how I have gone about studying the power relations between the G5S-JF and external military actors in the Sahel region. Here, I give context to my methodology, methods, reflections on positionality, ethics and the generalisability of my research. After presenting a summary of the four articles, I proceed with discussing their relevance to each other, the empirical findings and a reflection on theoretical development regarding the finding of asymmetric interdependence. I conclude by encouraging further research on the G5S-JF and other contexts of relationships between intervening and host forces.

2 PREVAILING NARRATIVES

This dissertation examines the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors, which means that it deals with various forms of military relations. Specifically, this dissertation engages with literature on external interventions, SFA, and donor-dependency because these literatures speak to different aspects of the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors. First, I will address the concepts of external interventions and alliances. This is due to the nature of the G5S-JF, which has been a military coalition, and its relations with external or intervening forces. Second, I address the topic of SFA, which constitutes a form of military partnership between states where one side typically provides assistance to another. This is due to the nature of the relationship between Barkhane, the EUTM, donors and the G5S-JF, where the joint force has received a lot of military assistance from these actors. I link the topics of external interventions and SFA also to the issue of donations and donor-dependency.

EXTERNAL INTERVENTIONS

One or multiple states intervening in another state for the purpose of peace is nothing new. Since the end of the Cold War, external intervention has been a primary response to rising levels of conflict in states that appear to lack the strength to deal with insecurity on their own (Bellamy, Williams, and Griffin 2010). A key intervener has been the UN, such as through peacekeeping missions which aim to contain violent conflict; peacebuilding missions to prevent relapse into conflict in a post-conflict setting; or stabilisation missions, which focus on supporting “the transfer of territorial control from spoilers to legitimate authorities” (Gorur 2016). Some of these programmes are also in part for the purpose of statebuilding, which refers to support to the strengthening of state institutions – missions that are often directed towards what are often labelled ‘fragile states’ (Berdal and Zaum 2017). In addition to interventions by the UN that are officially neutral towards the conflicting parties, there are other interventions that become more directly involved in the conflict theatre.

Academic debates on military interventions – here taken to mean a foreign military deploying in another state in the context of political or security issues – have experienced many waves. In the past two decades, the topic of military intervention has become particularly

characterised by the context of the war on terror. The attack on the US on 11 September 2001 resulted in a significant military response not only by the US, but also more globally. This is due to the characteristics of the threat: terrorism⁷ has been understood as a global threat and therefore has required a global response. The post-9/11 security theatre has thus been characterised by the global war on terror. Areas such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria in particular have been subject to the military response in this fight against terror. The military interventions in these areas have added new dimensions to the academic debate on military interventions, such as the characteristics of the intervening side's foreign policy (Dyson and Preston 2006), whether one should study the phenomenon or the actor (Findley and Teo 2006), the use of scapegoating (Gent 2009), the role of public opinion (Wolfe 2008), critique of military interventions and their consequences (Kilcullen 2011; Suhrke 2012), or the role of discourse to justify intervention (Alkopher 2016; Jarvis 2009). The latter is particularly emphasised in the first article of this dissertation, where I make a case for how literature on discourse and intervention can also speak to military cooperation and partnership between intervening and host forces in the post-9/11 era. These military interventions have also sparked new forms of military cooperation, namely multilateral response mechanisms such as coalitions and alliances.

Literature on coalitions and alliances has often focused on the reasons for their establishment (Henke 2019; 2017; Walt 1990), or their durability, including studies that examine the importance of power dynamics between member states (D. S. Bennett 1997; Leeds and Savun 2007). More recently, there has also been a growing literature on how these alliances operate, both organisationally and in the battlefield. Auerswald and Saideman (2014) particularly draw out, from the case of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's (NATO) military intervention in Afghanistan, that member states differ in what they are willing and allowed to do, particularly when it comes to offensive missions. Dijkstra (2010) shows how alliances can cause political hazard between states if the coalition seems to follow simply one state's objectives and goals, and Saideman (2016)

⁷ I am highly cautious when using the word terrorism due to the subjective and politicised understandings of it and the consequences thereof. In this dissertation and in my articles, I do not refrain from using the term terrorism, but I attempt to use it only when it has been referred to as such in official documents or mandates, or when I am simply writing about the 'war or terror' and 'counter-terrorism' as well-known concepts. However, when referring to violent groups that the G5S-JF is fighting, I try to refer to them by name or as violent Salafist groups. This latter term is not free of biases either, but it is more accurate to many groups operating in the Sahel region than terrorism.

argues that varying political objectives internal to a coalition may cause obstacles to efficient cooperation, but also that there might be some overarching goals that can function as key drivers for the coalition, such as in the fight against the Islamic State in Syria.

A rather consistent challenge for military coalitions is therefore the efficiency of command. There are different perspectives that explain why efficient command may be challenging in a coalition. First, the member states that make up the coalition may often have different strategic priorities. This can make it difficult to achieve unity and clarity at the strategic level, which also trickles down to the operational and tactical levels. Second, the officers and troops in a coalition operate under two chains of command: their national line and the coalition line. These lines might give different and contradicting instructions, which may impact a coalition's efficiency. To overcome the inefficiency of a coalition – or of multilateral cooperation in general – Marston (2021), Layne (2000) and Nilsson (2008) demonstrate that a hegemonic coalition structure can create unity and clarity, and that this therefore can overcome the challenge of coalition (in)efficiency. These dynamics within the G5S-JF's chain of command are discussed in the second article. Here, I argue that although external actors have taken leading roles within the G5S-JF's chain of command, which has improved the force's efficiency, there are limitations to understanding this relationship as hegemonic as this perspective does not take into account the agency of the joint force and its member states.

Although Afghanistan, Iraq and later Syria have been well-known areas in the war on terror, military interventions in the name of countering terrorism have also found their way to Africa. The rise of Boko Haram in the Lake Chad district led to the engagement of the Multilateral Joint Task Force (MNJTF), spearheaded by Nigeria with support from the US. Al Shabaab in Somalia led to the African Union (AU) mission in Somalia (AMISOM), spearheaded by Ethiopia and also with support from the US. And the expansion of al Qaeda and Islamic State-affiliated groups in the Sahel encouraged the establishment of the coalition of the G5S-JF, with particular support from France.

These ad hoc coalitions have been established to address specific threats in their respective regions. However, their establishments and their presence come in addition to other actors which have held responsibilities in these regions. Specific to this are the African Standby Force and the

ECOWAS Standby Force. These standby forces have been active since the 2010s and are the cornerstones of the African Peace and Security Architecture, centred on the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa. Their mandates are to intervene in insecure and violent situations in their respective member states' regions. This means that the ad hoc coalitions – or regional rapid response mechanisms – and the standby forces have overlapping mandates, functions, memberships and geographical areas, and Karlsrud and Reykers (2018) argue that “the increasing prevalence of ad hoc coalitions may undermine the long-term commitment to the African Standby Force” (Karlsrud and Reykers 2018, 12). It is not only regional actors which cause overlap in the Sahel region. In Africa, there is an increasing challenge of overlapping mandates between regional military actors.

However, it is far from only regional actors that have created crowded spaces in conflict settings. For instance, in the Sahel, in addition to the G5S-JF, the MNJTF, the African Standby Force and the ECOWAS Standby Force, there are multiple external actors with mandates to operate militarily in this region: the stabilisation mission of MINUSMA is in Mali, the French counter-terrorism operation Barkhane has been in Mali, Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso, there have been multiple and overlapping EU missions focusing on security forces and border control, and the EU initiative Task Force Takuba has consisted of special operation forces fighting terrorism, to mention a few. Following the Russian private security company Wagner Group's deployment in Mali in 2022, the Sahel region has also become a ground of external actors' competition. In other words, there are multilateral, regional, national, and bilateral crisis responses operating simultaneously in the Sahel, and this has caused – as Cold-Ravnkilde and Jacobsen (2020) accurately put it – a security traffic jam. This security traffic jam has resulted in multiple questions around cooperation, coordination, overlapping mandates or complementary mandates, which boils down to the interplay and interaction between various actors.

With the growing role of ad hoc coalitions on the African continent, the sphere of interaction between external and host therefore increasingly includes a regional host as opposed to a national host. This dissertation focuses on this sphere of cooperation between regional initiatives and external involvement. In this sphere, the interveners are to an increasing degree engaging with the host military through SFA.

SECURITY FORCE ASSISTANCE

SFA has been a prevalent type of foreign policy exerted by states as a means by which to create or strengthen partnerships with other states' security actors. SFA relates to proxy wars, in that both are ways of strengthening a partner for the recipient to fight against a common enemy. The main difference is that SFA is most often provided to security actors of the state, whereas proxy wars may include interactions with non-state actors. My research thus focuses on state-state interactions, but my findings are also relevant for such interactions with non-state actors.

SFA is one of many terms that are used to conceptualise externally provided support to a security unit. Other concepts such as security assistance or military capacity building are often used to explain similar dynamics. Without going into conceptual differences between these terms, this dissertation relies on and utilises the term SFA, which consists of “training and equipping military and civilian security forces” (Marsh et al. 2020, 6). The aim of providing SFA is to “strengthen the recipients’ operational capacity and professionalism” (Rolandsen, Dwyer, and Reno 2021, 566), “to improve a local ally’s ability to defend itself” (Biddle, Macdonald, and Baker 2018, 91) and for the provider to “pursue certain objectives without large-scale commitments” (Bartels et al. 2019, vii). The provision of SFA is thus intended to improve a partner military’s capacity and capability to fight a particular security threat that the respective security forces have not been able to combat on their own. This means that SFA has become a typical type of support to regimes and militaries often labelled as fragile or weak (Knowles and Matisek 2019).

Broadly speaking, SFA can be divided into two camps: one of training and mentoring security forces, and the other of providing equipment and resources to these security forces. The training side often takes the form of advice and assistance, which is about training the top-level personnel who then further train their own troops, or mentoring, which entails more partner-based efforts in the field, where the trainers accompany the security forces in combat (Hammes 2016), which the second article in this dissertation also addresses. The resources side often takes the form of donations, but can also involve arms trade and trade agreements between states, an issue which I address in the third article in relation to the G5S-JF.

SFA has received its fair share of studies and criticism. For instance, Shurkin et al. (2017) argue that a military-focused SFA remains inefficient due to a lack of appreciation for the need to

nation-build and for the formation of legitimacy as part of providing SFA in Mali. They thus demonstrate that, in states where the recipient of SFA does not have a unified nationality or identity, SFA will often not work. Whereas Harkness (2015) points to the potential of positive outcomes of SFA, such as support for democratic tendencies and military reform should the recipient side want to move in this direction, Larsdotter (2015) argues that military assistance may have negative consequences through the recipients of the support using the support to conduct violence against civilians, or further sell its resources to insurgencies, which may ultimately restrict democratic processes. Both Harkness and Larsdotter therefore point to the characteristics of the recipient side as to whether or not the SFA may have a positive or negative effect.

Biddle, Macdonald, and Baker (2018) suggest that SFA is too light a footprint of external actors to assure a long-term impact of their assistance, pointing out that the assistance may be positive, but that it is not sufficient to develop a well-functioning partner-force. Karlin (2017) argues that SFA missions should not only focus on training and equipping, but also get involved in more sensitive military affairs of the recipient state. Matisek and Reno (2019) also make a case for the need to enhance and deepen the SFA providers' knowledge of the political context of the recipient state, because for SFA to have a positive impact, it needs to be welcomed and prioritised politically in the recipient state. Knowles and Matisek (2019) additionally argue that the providers of SFA would benefit from taking a peacebuilding approach to SFA because it addresses the political, social and economic aspects of the recipient side alongside the military considerations. These scholars therefore point more to the provider side of SFA to explain and analyse the outcomes of such missions.

Much of the literature on SFA has a tendency to treat the recipient as one entity. Indeed, the principal-agent theory is often adopted when examining SFA, based on the logic that "one actor (the principal) delegates authority to another (the agent) to carry out actions on its behalf" (Biddle, Macdonald, and Baker 2018). Rolandsen, Dwyer, and Reno (2021) argue that the principal-agent logic falls short in grasping "the heterogeneity of programmes; the varying contexts in which they are implemented; and the lack of cohesiveness of providers (principal) and recipients (agent)". Moreover, the principal-agent logic assumes that SFA is provided from one actor directly to the recipient actor, which is a highly simplified understanding of the interactions between the actors involved in the SFA. Recent research demonstrates the imperfect understanding

of SFA relations as one provider and one recipient (Wilén 2021), but only limited studies (eg. Iwuoha 2019; Karssen 2019) have focused on when the recipient constitutes multiple states' militaries, such as a coalition like the G5S-JF. In the third article, I contribute theoretically to the SFA literature by expanding on the traditional provider-recipient lens of SFA. Donations to the G5S-JF have been given bilaterally to the G5 Sahel member states, which means that the G5 Sahel member states have become middle-men in the chain of provisions to the joint force and therefore have constituted both recipients and providers of support.

Through the dominant provider-recipient lens in SFA literature, there is also a tendency to point to either the characteristics of the recipient side or the providing side when examining why the outcome of SFA is often not identified as successful. This dissertation builds on the understanding that the interplay between the provider and the recipient provides new insights to the SFA literature. Although multiple objectives can be identified from both the provider and the recipient side in most SFA encounters, a core aspect of external actors' objectives towards the G5S-JF has been to build the capacity of the joint force to the extent where it can assume responsibility and ownership of the security responses in the region (Macron 2017; Fardel and Pichon 2020; Ministère des Armées (France) 2019). To assume such ownership and responsibility has required the G5S-JF to develop a certain level of autonomy and independence. The concepts of autonomy and independence are relational at heart. This dissertation therefore makes a case for not only studying the characteristics of the provider and the recipient of SFA in order to understand the outcome, but also examining the interactions and relationship between the providers and the recipients.

'LOCAL' OWNERSHIP AND DONOR-DEPENDENCY

Within studies of peacebuilding, particularly focused on peacebuilding missions that involve an external actor intervening in a host state or host community, there has been a growing emphasis on the importance of local ownership (see for instance Narten 2008; Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013; Donais 2009). This is rooted in the assumption that in order for peace interventions to have a sustainable effect, the process needs to be embedded in the local culture and the hosts' needs to have ownership and control of the process so that they can maintain stability even should the external actors withdraw.

Due to this, there has been a ‘localisation’ of peacebuilding, where local agency has been put higher on the agenda than was previously the case. This has included a stronger focus on building local capacities as part of the process of external interventions, where local ownership has become an end goal of the intervention. The interveners’ use of the terms ‘local’ and ‘local ownership’ has however faced critical questions, pointing for instance to who the ‘locals’ are (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013; Ignatieff 2004), or whether ownership should be an end goal or part of the process (Edomwonyi 2003; Reich 2006). Others have also pointed to how interveners may use the term ‘local ownership’ as part of their justification for intervening, or for continuing an ongoing intervention (Paris 1997; Lee 2011; Richmond 2006). The peacebuilding literature has therefore paid significant attention to the challenges that occur in the meeting of – and relationship between – the external and the host, raising issues of power imbalance (Donais 2009), the non-binary conceptualisation of external and internal (Paffenholz 2015), and the subsequent hybridity and friction that characterises these encounters (Björkdahl and Höglund 2013; Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013). A key complication in gaining local ownership over these processes has been the dependence that might develop for the host towards the external support.

Donor-dependency occurs when a recipient of aid or assistance provided by an external becomes reliant on this to assume and maintain the role or responsibility this recipient has. The ones providing assistance or resources often do so with the intention of gaining a certain degree of influence in the respective state or security situation (Lefebvre 1987, 485). Donor-dependency is often discussed from two camps: the first where both the provider and the recipient benefit from this relationship, suggesting a mutual exchange approach (Packenham 1973); and the second where the provider benefits from the relationship, whereas the recipient becomes a pawn of the provider (Jeffrey A. Lefebvre 1987; Kabonga 2016). Though often discussed in relation to humanitarian and developmental aid,⁸ donor-dependency is also a highly relevant issue when discussing military assistance and SFA. Weinstein (1975) argues that the provider of military support and in military trade is more powerful than the recipient in the relationship, and both Lefebvre (1986) and Hagelin (1988) show how the recipient of military trade or donations often ends up in a dependency position. Although donor-dependency is therefore a highly relevant issue

⁸ See for instance: Moss, Pettersson Gelande, and van de Walle 2006; Lentz, Barrett, and Hoddinott 2005; Cunningham 2012; Collier 1999.

when it comes to military assistance, there is nevertheless a strain of literature also arguing that one ought not to neglect the agency of the recipient when discussing donor-dependency.

Bayart and Ellis (2000) introduced the extraversion theory, stating that many African states express their own sovereignty through managing and controlling their dependence on external actors. This provides an interesting perspective on the relations between the G5S-JF and external actors, particularly regarding the interplay between regional ownership and external influence. Bayart and Ellis' point of view does not remove the recipient's dependency, but at the same time, it brings out the agency of the recipient state to a greater extent than has been recognised before. Peiffer and Englebert (2012) recognise this when they argue that many African regimes seek to “conver[t] their dependent relations with the external world into domestic resources and authority”. Furthermore, de Oliveira and Verhoeven (2018) argue that African elites in fact often seek out external actors' support to the region as a way of gaining resources, political legitimacy and some form of stability. They argue that African elites “have been taming intervention: they have adopted interventionist tropes and practices so as to put them at the service of the (re-)enforcement of political order” (de Oliveira and Verhoeven 2018, 8). This suggests that the relationships between external actors and host may be more interdependent than simply having dependency go one way. Recent examples of this are the work by Cold-Ravnkilde (2021) and Frowd (2021), who show how Mali and Niger, respectively, manage their relations with the EU and how they use these relationships to express sovereignty domestically, and not least benefit financially and politically from the EU's support. Drawing on the interplay of donor-dependency and extraversion theory, parallel to the literature on interactions between external and host military actors, this dissertation bases its theoretical approach on how power is leveraged and negotiated through relationships.

3 CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Through asking what explains the power relations between the G5S-JF and external military actors in the Sahel region, this dissertation directly engages with the concept of power and power relations. My approach has been abductive in nature. The study has not been designed as a theory-testing exercise where the theoretical framework has been present from the beginning of the research process. Indeed, my abductive approach to the research data gave me impetus to focus upon the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors, and the topic of power dynamics

emerged from the data. Therefore, the following section will outline varying concepts of, and literature on, power and power relations that I have engaged with at different points throughout the evolving research process. This section thereby focuses on how I have approached power as a relational phenomenon. As a result, my theoretical conclusions on the nature of asymmetric interdependence emerged as an outcome of my findings, and are thus presented later in the dissertation.

POWER AND POWER RELATIONS

The concept of power underlies many studies in political science: power of institutions, power relations between states, between the population and political rule, between actors in conflict, or within a political system, *inter alia*. Yet, power is a concept that wears many hats depending on the scholarly tradition. The realist branch has traditionally taken ownership over the concept of power through its understanding of power as A getting B to do something that B would not otherwise do, often through referring to hard power and domination of materials, resources, and capability (Walt 1985). Liberalists and constructivists have provided alternative ways of understanding power, either through international cooperation (Keohane and Nye 1977), or through knowledge creation or persuasion, respectively (Adler 1997). Structuralist Krasner (1976) argues that the US as a global power cannot achieve its interests purely through coercion, as a traditional realist perspective would argue, and rather suggests contractual agreements through cooperation and relationships. In other words, Krasner demonstrates how power is exercised through systems, and especially the ability to create, manoeuvre, and benefit from relationships. However, power is neither purely one thing nor the other. Rather, power works in various ways, and can be studied from several angles. This thesis addresses power directly and provides a description of power below, but it does not claim to provide an ultimate and universal definition of it. What I have set out to do, however, is to study power in relational terms.

Power is here treated as a relational phenomenon. As Baldwin (2016, 50) puts it: “it is impossible to describe actor A’s power or potential power without implying something about actor B”. Baldwin goes on by explaining that power holds multiple dimensions, thereby moving away from the clear-cut distinctions of power that are seen in realism, liberalism, structuralism, or constructivism. Indeed, Baldwin argues that power holds different dimensions, namely scope,

domain, weight, base, means, cost, time, and place. In this manner, various actors can have higher power in some dimensions and lower power in others, which can also vary at different times. This means it is too simplistic to speak of one strong actor and one weak actor in a relationship.

Barnett and Duvall (2005) also hold that power is a social and relational phenomenon. They, as with Baldwin, advocate the perspective that power is found in multiple spheres and that scholars should pay attention to the different forms power may take. Specifically, they point to four typologies of power. The first is *compulsory power*, which refers to a relationship where one actor holds direct control over another. The second is *institutional power*, which refers to “the control actors exercise indirectly over others through diffuse relations of interaction” (Barnett and Duvall 2005, 43). The third is *structural power*, which constitutes the actors’ “capacities in direct structural relation to one another” (Barnett and Duvall 2005, 43). The final is *productive power*, which refers to the production of subjectivity in meaning and systems of knowledge. Barnett and Duvall make an explicit point of the fact that these different forms of power rarely operate individually in a vacuum; rather, they are intertwined and tend to work together. These will therefore also vary in dimension, as Baldwin has pointed out, where for instance an actor might have a strong base, means and weight for compulsory power, but that this might also have a high cost – hence, that compulsory power might have some strong dimensions and other weak ones. Barnett and Duvall’s focus on typologies and Baldwin’s perspectives on dimensions are here thus viewed as complementary.

Guzzini (2013) also views power as a relational phenomenon and argues that to study power, one must study relationships. Power is not merely the possession of an agent, nor a sheer product of effect, because the power of an agent’s intentions also depends on the intentions of the agent(s) it is facing. Therefore, power exists both within and through a relation between agents. This understanding rises from a post-Weberian take on power. Weber defines power as any chance “within a social relation to impose one’s will also against the resistance of others, regardless of what gives rise to this chance” (Weber 1980, cf. Guzzini 2013, 4). This means that, in this dissertation, I do not aim to examine the level of power that the individual actors hold in a vacuum. Rather, I aim to study how these actors express and exert power within their relationships with each other.

To study power as a relational phenomenon means that I do not examine power through looking only at the characteristics that each agent holds. Studying the characteristics and possessions of each agent would speak to the relative power of the agents – meaning their possessive power, which might be stronger facing certain agents than others – and it would automatically speak to an asymmetric power dynamic. However, whilst the possessions and characteristics of agents may influence the interaction between them, it is the *interactions* and not the possessions that a relational approach to power studies. Figure 3 demonstrates a simplified separation of relative and relational power. This dissertation relies on a relational understanding of power dynamics.

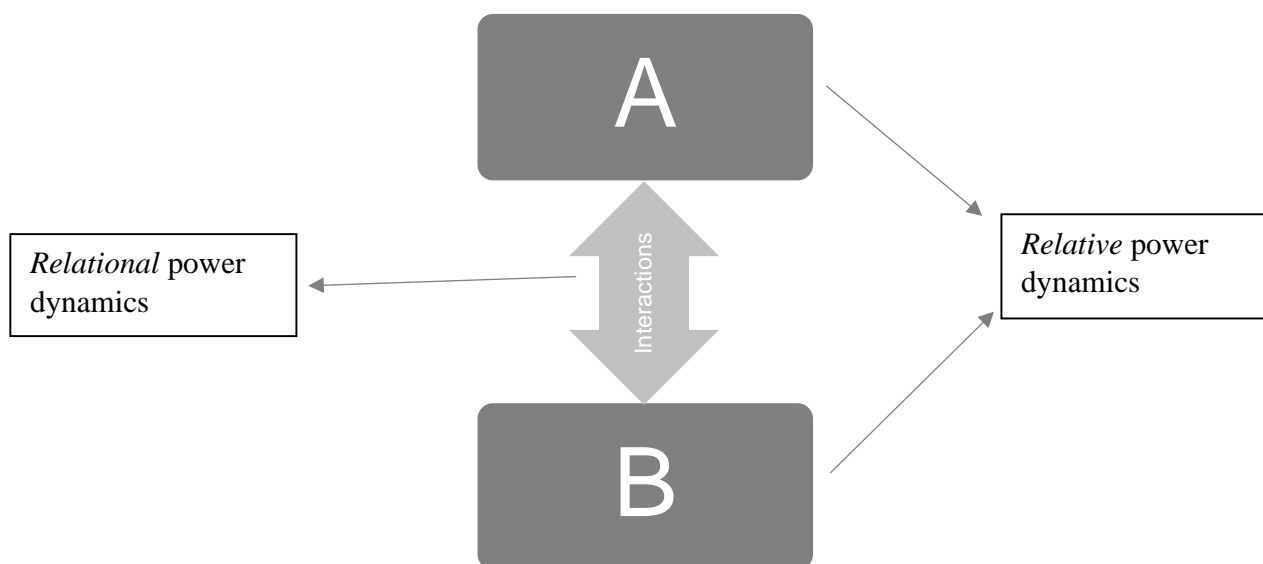


Figure 3: The difference between relational and relative understandings of power dynamics.

Because power is located within a relationship, it cannot be measured in the manner in which possessions can. This does not, however, mean that power cannot be studied. One way of studying power is therefore to examine the interactions between actors as Figure 3 suggests, both in terms of subjectivity and in terms of agency.

Within the domain of subjectivity, Guzzini particularly identifies autonomy and independence as critical elements to examine in order to understand power dynamics between two or more agents. Within the domain of agency, he identifies ability and capacity. Related to both these domains, governance, rule and influence on decision-making are also elements of power in

interactions. This dissertation draws from this and examines how the G5S-JF and external actors exert *autonomy*, *capacity*, and *influence on decision-making* in their relations with each other. Indeed, each of these concepts are an aspect of power, emphasised according to theoretical tradition. Further, each of these concepts, though individually useful, speak to each other. This means that identifying and examining these domains collectively will provide a broad understanding of the power dynamics occurring between agents.

Autonomy relates to independence and having the ability to self-govern. This can for instance relate to dimensions of political autonomy, financial or legal autonomy, or level of legitimacy (Pollitt et al. 2004; Verhoest et al. 2004). In this dissertation, I treat autonomy in opposition to dependency (Wessel and Blockmans 2013), which I directly address in the fourth article. This means that I acknowledge that the level of dependency the various actors have on each other also speaks to the level of autonomy these actors exert in their relationship. Autonomy as a concept relates to Barnett and Duvall's typologies of power in the sense that it speaks to an agent's ability to resist or avoid another agent's compulsory power, a system's institutional power, structural power and productive power. In this manner, by studying the agents' autonomy in their relationships, this research speaks to multiple typologies of power. It also speaks to Baldwin's dimensions of power: that an agent may have higher autonomy in some dimensions of a relationship than in others.

Capacity is understood as both what is contained within an agent as well as what an agent is able to produce. In this sense, it can relate to political and administrative knowledge, cohesion and ability (Jackman 1993), but also to military capacity such as monopoly of the legitimate use of violence, relating to the ability to both apply and distribute resources (Hendrix 2010). This dissertation resonates more with the latter understanding of capacity as it studies military actors, which means that I understand capacity as what an agent can accomplish and produce in a relationship as a result of its resources, materials and finances. The concept of capacity may therefore at the outset appear closer to the typology of compulsory power by Barnett and Duvall than the other typologies. However, the form of military relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors has also been institutionalised and structured through the latter's SFA and military cooperation, which – as I demonstrate in the first article – has been shaped through productive power. Capacity therefore also speaks to multiple typologies of power. Further, also capacity may

vary depending on the dimensions presented by Baldwin. For instance, it may change over time due to the provision of SFA and donations. Capacity is therefore particularly relevant in the third article, where I also use the term *empowerment*,⁹ which I use as a description of power: it refers to giving someone or something power to do something (such as through SFA).

Influence on decision-making refers not only to making decisions, but also to the ability to influence others' decisions. It thus relates to, on the one side, A getting B to do something that B would not normally do, but on the other side, also A indirectly shaping B's very desires to do something themselves (Kincheloe 2005). Influencing decision-making may therefore be done through expressed compulsory power, institutional power, structural power or productive power, and thus allows the relational perspective on power to supersede a one-typology approach to power. The ability for an agent to influence decision-making will also vary depending on dimensions of the relationship such as the feature of each agent's leverage towards the other, such as weight, power base, and time. Influence on decision-making in the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors is thus not only understood in terms of domination, but also in terms of how the actors manage and leverage the other actors to achieve certain outcomes, which I highlight particularly in the second article.

The concepts of autonomy, capacity and influence on decision-making are therefore not only aspects of a relational dynamic – through which one can study power dynamics – these concepts also allow for a multifaceted approach to power, be it different typologies of power (Barnett and Duvall) or various dimensions of power (Baldwin). These aspects of power also relate to each other. Capacity is an element that can be used to gain influence, and autonomy can be about avoiding external influence on decision-making. The dynamics of these power aspects do not stem only from coercion, nor only from cooperation. This study recognises that power in a relationship is negotiated; an agent can accept the terms to relinquish some form of power (e.g. autonomy) to gain another form of power (e.g. capacity).

Due to the exploratory nature of this research, the theoretical framework of power studied through autonomy, capacity and influence on decision-making evolved along the way. This does,

⁹ The term *empowerment* is thus here used as a description of power and should not be confused with literature on female empowerment or empowerment of marginalised groups (such as Alsop and Heinsohn 2005; Kabeer 2005).

however, not mean that these aspects were not addressed in all articles. Figure 4 presents how each article addresses these aspects of power.

<p><i>Article 1:</i> The relationship between the G5 Sahel Joint Force and external actors: a discursive interpretation</p>	<p><i>Autonomy, capacity, influence on decision-making</i></p>
<p><i>Article 2:</i> The impact of external support on coalition efficiency: the case of the G5 Sahel Joint Force</p>	<p><i>Autonomy, capacity, <u>influence on decision-making</u></i></p>
<p><i>Article 3:</i> Bilateral donations to a multilateral coalition The role of the middle men in the case of the G5 Sahel Joint Force</p>	<p><i>Autonomy, <u>capacity</u>, influence on decision-making</i></p>
<p><i>Article 4:</i> The effect of asymmetric interdependence on the outcomes of military cooperation in the Sahel</p>	<p><u>Autonomy</u>, capacity, influence on decision-making</p>

Figure 4: The relationship between theoretical aspects of power and the articles.

Indeed, all articles address autonomy, capacity and influence on decision-making, though to varying degrees. The first article addresses each of these aspects to a similar degree. The remaining articles also address each aspect, but each has a specific emphasis on one of the aspects of power, marked in bold and underscored text in the figure.

Although I explore these elements in the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors (especially Barkhane, the EUTM and donors), it is important to note that this relationship has not existed in a vacuum. First, the G5S-JF has been brought together by its member states of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. These five states have thus impacted the G5S-JF's relationship with external actors. The EUTM is an operation from the EU, hence, the EU has influenced the relationship between the EUTM and the G5S-JF. Barkhane is a French operation, hence, France has played a role in the relationship between Barkhane and the G5S-JF. Furthermore, there are already-existing relations between the EU and France on one side, and the G5 Sahel member states on the other, which are found on the periphery of the specific relationship examined in this dissertation: that between the G5S-JF and external actors. Figure 5 demonstrates what this looks like, with the core relationship examined between the G5S-JF, Barkhane and EUTM in bold lines and key outside influences on this relationship in dotted lines. The lines without arrows signal bi-directional relationships. The arrow from France to the EUTM signals

French personnel which are deployed in the EUTM, and the arrow from the EU to Barkhane signals European member states' contributions to Barkhane and Task Force Takuba, which operates under Barkhane. As France is an EU member, there is also an arrow from France to the EU. Donors have been kept outside of this figure because they do not have direct interactions with the G5S-JF. Rather, donors provide support to the G5 Sahel member states, and it is the member states' responsibility to allocate earmarked support to the joint force. If donors should be included in the figure, it would constitute a body at the top which encompasses part of France and part of the EU, as these are some of the key donors. There would then be a direct line from donors to the G5 Sahel member states, and a dotted line from the member states to the joint force for the resources. The third article goes more thoroughly through the bilateral nature of donors' support.

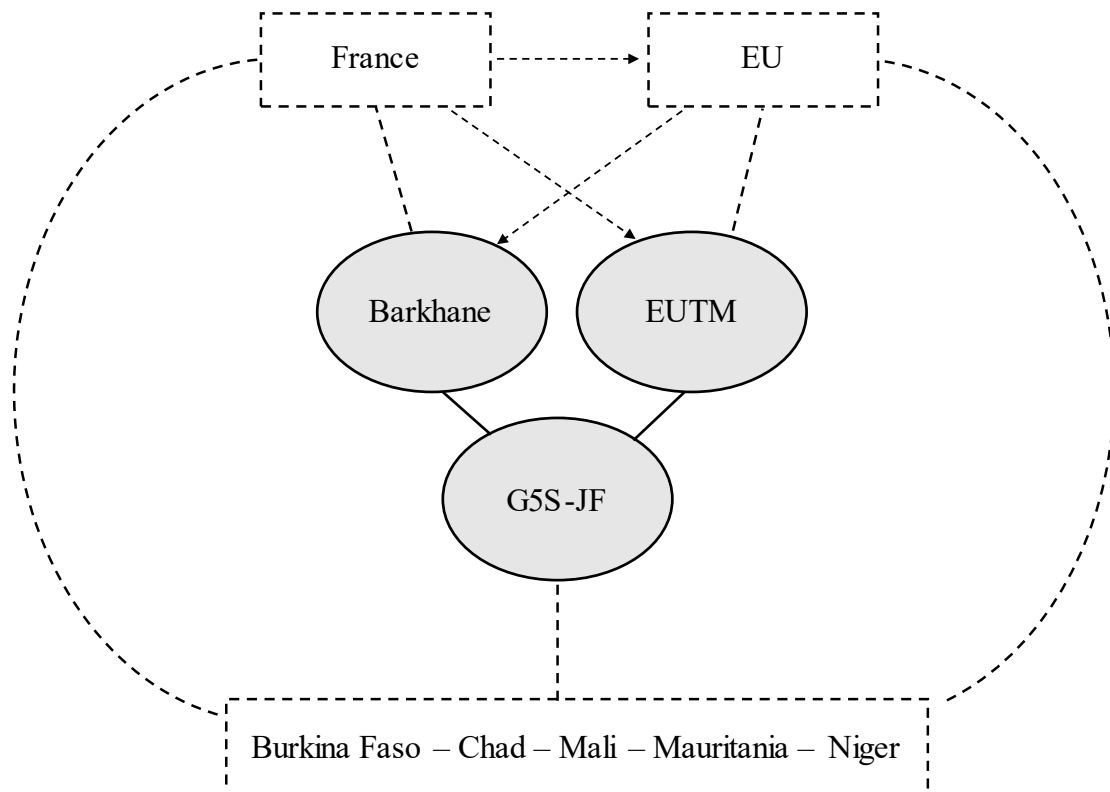


Figure 5: Key external political influence on the power relations between the G5S-JF and Barkhane and EUTM.

Theoretically, this means that the aspects of autonomy, capacity and influence on decision-making in the relationship between the G5S-JF and external military actors have also been influenced by the political bodies behind these actors – the G5 Sahel member states, France and the EU – as well

as the relations between these. However, it is important to note that although the bilateral relationships between France, the EU and the G5 Sahel member states have been part of this study's analysis, it is the relationship between the G5S-JF as a unit and external actors that has remained the focus of this research.

4 THE SAHEL AND THE G5 SAHEL JOINT FORCE

THE SECURITY CONTEXT OF THE SAHEL

The Sahel is a vast area that stretches from Mauritania and Senegal in the west to Sudan and Eritrea in the east. It covers a large area with savannas in the south and desert in the north as it stretches into the Sahara, as can be seen on the map in Figure 6. However, what encompasses 'the Sahel' is subject to political discourse and has therefore changed over time. Over the past decade, politicians and academics have often pointed to a more defined Sahel area, specifically encompassing the G5 Sahel member states: Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger.

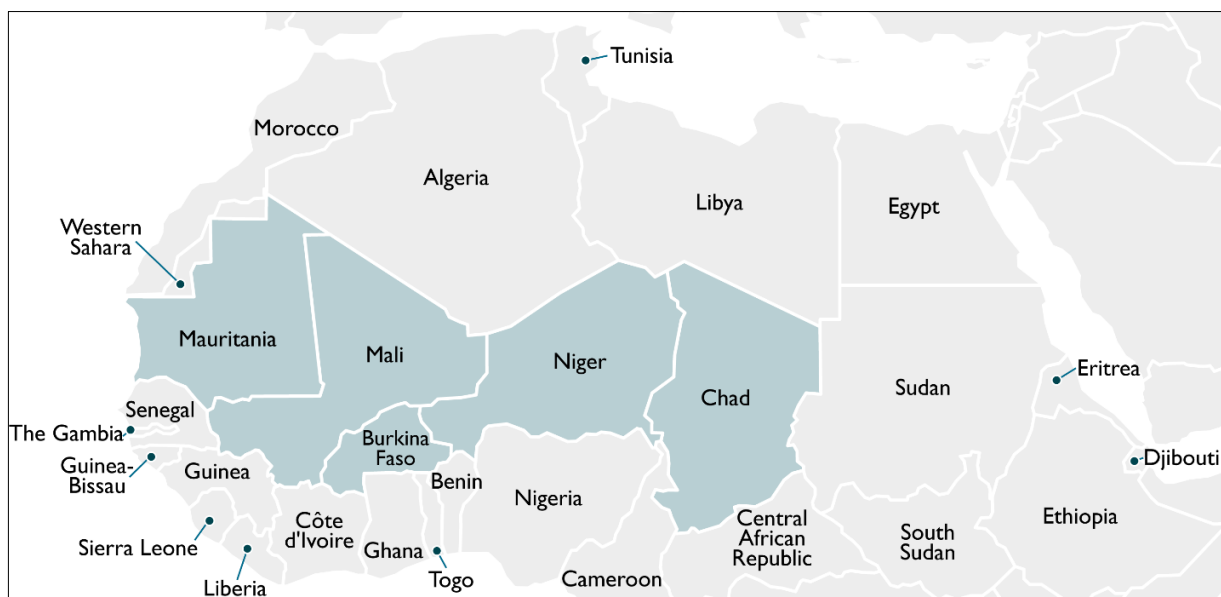


Figure 6: Map of North Africa and the Sahel, with the G5 Sahel member states highlighted. Made by Georgina Berry.

This defined Sahel is often discussed as a whole – which at times is also reflected in this dissertation – with regional characteristics such as multifaceted ethnic groups, diverse and rich culture, and large desert areas, and with challenges such as transnational insurgency and crime,

illicit trafficking, climate change and poverty. Much of the current focus on this defined Sahel region started following the military coup in Mali in 2012, when a secessionist movement parallel to more violent Salafist groups made an advance on large parts of Mali (Gamawa 2017). This happened in the same year as Mali was subject to a military coup. Although the advance towards the capital Bamako was stopped, largely due to the French intervention of operation Serval, many violent Salafist groups rooted themselves in local communities, and since this, violence and the emergence of violent Salafist groups have spread both within Mali and to neighbouring states (Thurston 2020; Rupesinghe and Bøås 2019).

Trying to summarise the various security threats currently facing the G5 Sahel member states, and thus the G5 Sahel region, is by no means an easy task, nor is this a particular goal of this dissertation. Yet, the point of the matter is that the security picture in this region is rather complex and includes a lot of various actors: some with radical affiliations¹⁰ and others not; some with high engagement in trafficking and crime and others not. Identifying who is who, and militarily speaking ‘identifying the enemy’, has become a core challenge for the military personnel operating in the area, particularly as many of the more organised groups fluctuate: new ones are established, others vanish, alliances are formed and broken, and individuals’ belonging fluctuates at least as frequently as the groups. This sets a difficult stage for the national militaries of the G5 Sahel member states, and ultimately also for the G5S-JF. Numbers from 2021–22 show that the armed forces of Burkina Faso appear to constitute around 11,000–12,000 people, the Chadian armed forces consist of about 35,000 personnel, the Malian armed forces consist of approximately 20,000 troops, Mauritania has a military force of just over 21,000 people, and the Nigerien military consists of approximately 13,000 troops.¹¹ Some of these numbers were significantly lower in 2014 when these five states established the G5 Sahel organisation to jointly address challenges in the region.

¹⁰ Such as al Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM), the Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP), the Islamic State of the Greater Sahara (ISGS), and the umbrella organisation for al Qaeda-affiliated groups Jama’at Nusrat al Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM).

¹¹ The numbers presented have been gathered from the Global Firepower Index of 2022 and modified with indicators from the World Bank Index. It should be mentioned that several of these states lack comprehensive human resources systems within the military. This means that the numbers presented represent a perceived indication of size rather than an actual figure.

THE G5 SAHEL JOINT FORCE AND EXTERNAL ACTORS

In 2014, the G5 Sahel organisation was established with the purpose of cooperating on issues of economic development and security, with headquarters based in Nouakchott, Mauritania. In 2015, the G5 Sahel organisation furthered the partnership to allow for cross-border cooperation between the member states' militaries. These joint efforts were initially conducted ad hoc but were formalised further in 2017 when the G5 Sahel organisation established the G5S-JF.

Authorised by the African Union (AU) and recognised by the UN (AU Peace and Security Council 2017, 2), the G5S-JF was mandated to combat terrorism, organised crime and transnational trafficking. The G5S-JF initially consisted of 5,000 military and civil personnel. Chad, Niger and Mauritania deployed one battalion each, whereas Niger and Mali deployed two battalions each. In Sector West, one Mauritanian and one Malian battalion were deployed; in Sector Central, one Nigerien, one Malian and one Burkinabe battalion; and in Sector East, one Nigerien and one Chadian battalion. The battalions were mandated to operate on border areas within their own state, but with the initial allowance to cross each other's borders by up to 50 km should that be necessary. This was expanded to 100 km in 2020. A map of this area of operation in the three sectors can be seen in Figure 6, on the orange-marked borderlines.

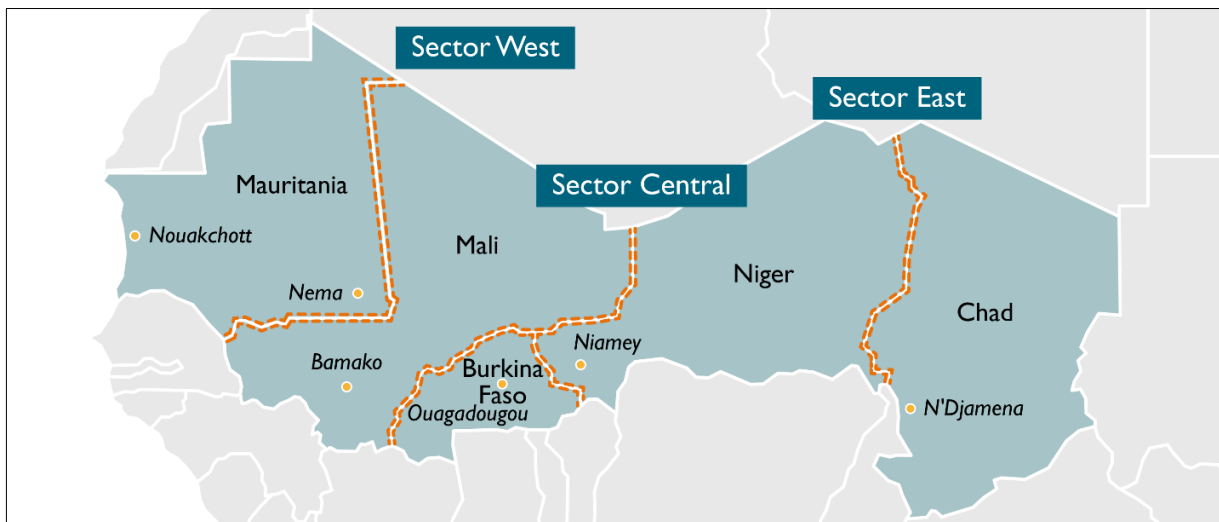


Figure 7: A map of the G5S-JF area of operations. Made by Georgina Berry.

In 2021, Chad deployed its second battalion to the joint force, which was placed in Sector Central due to increased violence. This took the total of G5S-JF battalions up to eight. This eighth battalion represented something new for the G5S-JF: it was the first battalion to be deployed outside its own state. Apart from the battalions, the G5S-JF has had its main headquarters in Bamako, Mali, and sector headquarters in Sector West in Nema (Mauritania), in Sector Centre in Niamey (Niger) and in Sector East in N'Djamena (Chad), as can also be seen in Figure 6.

The process of becoming operational has been slow for the G5S-JF. In 2017, the G5S-JF focused on simply becoming operational and thereby conducted one operation in Sector Centre. In 2018, the joint force increasingly deployed in the field and conducted five operations. In 2019, they conducted 15 operations and, since then, these numbers continued to increase. Yet, the joint force has still struggled to conduct major operations on its own. For this, and many other aspects of its operationalisation, the G5S-JF has received substantial support from external actors. It is thus necessary to illustrate the level of engagement of external actors with the G5S-JF in order to further understand the relationship between them.

The resources, equipment and finances provided by external actors have constituted the backbone of the operationalisation of the G5S-JF. France organised a donor conference in December 2017, and the EU arranged a follow up donor conference in February 2018, which resulted in over \$400 million being pledged to support the G5S-JF (Africa Center for Strategic Studies and 2018 9 February). In addition to material support, foreign donors have also assisted the G5S-JF through for instance military training, police training and logistical support.

In 2014, France launched *operation Barkhane*, which in practicality was a merging of the previous French operations Serval and Épervier (Charbonneau 2017).¹² Barkhane has had a dual mandate, where on the one side they have been authorised to operate jointly with the national armies of Mali, Niger and Chad and thereby also to train and mentor them. From 2017, this also included the G5S-JF (Dieng 2019). On the other side, Barkhane has also been mandated to operate as a proactive counter-terrorism force on its own. In an attempt to internationalise and burden-share military efforts in the Sahel, President Emmanuel Macron announced a re-configuration of

¹² Serval was the 2013 intervention in Mali to push the rebel and extremist groups back, and Épervier was deployed in Chad in 1986 and has since trained the Chadian army.

Barkhane in 2021 to scale down the French presence and the withdrawal from Mali in 2022.¹³ The G5S-JF has received mentoring and training from Barkhane since the joint force was established in 2017, and they have conducted several operations together. In 2020, Barkhane and the G5S-JF established a shared command with a joint headquarters and a joint intelligence cell in Niamey to oversee all joint operations between these forces.

The EUTM was established in 2013 to build the military capacity of the Malian Armed Forces (FAMa). By 2019, the EUTM had trained over 14,000 FAMa personnel (Kelly 2019). In 2018, the EUTM expanded its mandate to support the G5S-JF (European Council 2018). This included advise and assist at the joint force’s headquarters, as well as providing pre-deployment training for the upcoming headquarters personnel. In 2020, the EUTM expanded its mandate further to also include military training of the G5S-JF troops (European Council 2020). The EUTM thus embraced a more regional approach to then also operate outside the borders of Mali. In summer 2021, the EUTM announced that it was expanding its mission also to Burkina Faso.

A summary of Barkhane and the EUTM’s support to the G5S-JF can be seen in Figure 8.¹⁴ The figure shows when the various support from external actors started and demonstrates how this support has both increased over the years as well as formalised the relationship between external actors and the G5S-JF. It should be noted that this overview may indicate a type of ‘hierarchy’ amongst the external actors, where Barkhane’s role is more substantial than that of the EUTM due to the shared command. But I should also emphasise that France plays a significant role in the EU, which makes it difficult to completely separate these actors and their efforts from each other.

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Barkhane	Mentoring and military training				
				Shared command	
EUTM		‘Advise and assist’ at headquarters			
				Military training	

Figure 8: Key external assistance to the G5S-JF and its development since 2017.

¹³ French President Macron announced on 17 February 2022 that Barkhane and Task Force Takuba will be withdrawn from Mali but continue operations in neighbouring states. This followed months of what mimicked a political chess game of disagreements between French authorities and the Malian military interim government.

¹⁴ For an overview of resource support to the G5S-JF, please see Appendix 1 in the third article.

Although this dissertation attends mostly to Barkhane and the EUTM – as well as donors – as external actors, it must be acknowledged that there is a myriad of actors engaged in the security situation in the Sahel. The UN mission MINUSMA was established in Mali in 2013 (UN Security Council 2013) and is mandated to protect civilians, implement security sector reform, foster political dialogue, and contribute to the signing and implementation of the 2015 Algerian Peace Agreement, amongst other tasks (UN Security Council 2013; 2017). MINUSMA has also been mandated to provide logistical support to the G5S-JF. In addition to the EUTM, the EU has also had capacity-building missions (EUCAP) in Niger and Mali since 2012 and 2014, respectively, for internal security forces, which also support the police units of the G5S-JF. In 2020, the EU further launched the special forces operation Task Force Takuba to operate under Barkhane, especially in the tri-border area between Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. The US has also been active in the Sahel region for many years through military training and bilateral support to the G5 Sahel member states. China has been deepening its peace and security role in Africa and in the Sahel in the past decade especially, including support for the G5S-JF (Mboya 2021). Russia has a long history of military cooperation with Sahelian states, which includes both military training and weapons sales. In the past year, Russia also pierced into the security dynamics in Mali with the deployment of the private security company Wagner Group (BBC News 2021; Bonny 2021). This has caused new dynamics also for the G5S-JF, which is reflected upon in the articles. Regional actors like ECOWAS and the AU both engaged militarily in Mali in 2012 and have since largely been involved in the Sahel region politically. It is thus rather clear that the Sahel security theatre consists of both overlapping security responses and a security traffic jam, as previously pointed out.

Despite this large involvement of a variety of external actors in the Sahel region, I have decided to pay particular attention to the role of France (Barkhane), the EU (EUTM) and donors. The reason for this is not because the other actors presented here are in any way irrelevant; in fact, a study involving the role of the US, Russia and China for instance would provide greater foundations for reflecting on the global impact of the geopolitical competition currently ongoing in the Sahel. Rather, it is because the G5S-JF has had formalised agreements with Barkhane and the EUTM that directly have related to the operational side of the G5S-JF, as displayed in Figure 8, and that donations to the joint force have also had direct operational relevance to the force. In

the next section, I will explain how I have gone about actually researching and studying the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors.

5 STUDYING THE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE G5 SAHEL JOINT FORCE AND EXTERNAL ACTORS

This section will outline the methodological framework of my research. Before going into the various methods, ethics and positionality, there is a need to first highlight my philosophical standing as a researcher and how it forms this dissertation.

PHILOSOPHICAL STANDING WITHIN POLITICAL SCIENCE

My point of departure in this dissertation stems from a recognition of critical constructivist reasoning. Specifically, that means that this dissertation recognises that there are valuable lessons to be learned from understanding how reality may be impacted by the subjectivity of human beings.

Ontology deals with the question of what constitutes truth and what decides the legitimacy of what is 'real'. Whereas a narrow branch of realist and positivist perspectives assume that the real world exists independently of human experience, aligning with the idea of 'one truth' (Marsh, Ercan, and Furlong 2017, 182), the constructivist tradition rather argues that there is no such thing as 'one true reality' and thus that reality varies depending on who is looking (Weber 2014; Keohane 1988). In this dissertation, I acknowledge that there are various perspectives on 'the truth' and 'the reality'. More specifically, I recognise that there are various aspects that can explain the power dynamics between the G5S-JF and external actors.

The backdrop of this dissertation's epistemology thus also relies on the recognition that knowledge and truth can be understood in various ways, particularly by studying interactions between humans, agents and groups (Parsons 2017). In this sense, it is the *meaning* of the truth (as understood by actors intersubjectively) or the *meaning* of the reality that is important. Such an interpretivist or constructivist perspective suggests that our perceptions of material reality shape our actions in or towards this reality, and this ultimately shapes the reality.

Taking a critical constructivist approach to this research does not mean that this dissertation rejects the meaning of material reality. Rather, this dissertation treats reality as something that constitutes an interplay between subject and object. It is therefore valuable to understand how subjects can give meaning to objects. In other words, meaning and reality are created from the interplay between the subject and the object (Velody and Williams 1998, 2). This means that although power can be found in resources and influence on particular material outcomes, I study power as relational, between actors, where power and influence are given subjective meanings by the parties involved. This is why this dissertation has included studies and articles on autonomy, capacity and influence on decision-making power. Each of these aspects of power are given meaning by the relationship in which they are found: that between the G5S-JF and external actors.

AN ABDUCTIVE CASE STUDY

This PhD conducts a case study of the G5S-JF. Although other actors are included, as the study focuses on the relations between the joint force and external military actors, it is the G5S-JF that stands at the core of the research. Conducting a single-case study allowed me to dig deep into the case and provide comprehensive and detailed analysis of it (Gerring 2006, 49). This permitted me not only to analyse the G5S-JF as a coalition overall, but also to examine specific sections of it – its programmes, policies and actions – when it comes to its cooperation with external actors. Therefore, this research became a more “holistic” case study (Yin 2017, 50–52). There are challenges with using a single-case study as opposed to a multi-case study or a comparative study. Predominantly, it is often assumed that a study of multiple cases results in a larger ground for generalisation and theory-building analysis and therefore that, on the basis of a single-case study, one cannot make widespread claims about other contexts. However, Gerring (2006, 41) states that a single-case study is highly appropriate when the research is exploratory. This dissertation therefore aims to build research-based knowledge on the G5S-JF and has done this in an exploratory manner, which may better facilitate a comparative or multi-case study going forward.¹⁵

¹⁵ A comparative case that could be relevant to the G5S-JF is the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) fighting Boko Haram in Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon. However, a comparative case study between the G5S-JF and the MNJTF is outside the scope of this dissertation. The MNJTF has existed for many more years and has been subject to

This research project has been conducted from 2019–2022. This essentially means studying a case that has been undergoing continuous development and change due to its relatively recent establishment in 2017. Some of the subsequent challenges have been the continuous changes on the ground, both regarding the security situation as well as the changes of mandates of cooperation agreements with for instance Barkhane and the EUTM. Researching the G5S-JF at this point in time has most likely also led to me not being able access currently classified documents, such as the strategic operational plan of the G5S-JF.

Following these developments as they occur has, however, allowed me to pay attention to trends that may have gone overlooked should this research have been conducted in later years, as the activities of the G5S-JF mould it as an organisation and narratives change over time. Further, understanding how dynamics change over time, often related to the development of the security situation as well as the changes in the relationships between various actors, may further foster more accurate results of the data. The fact that the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors changed over time prompted me to continuously go back and forth between literature and data in order to draw out meanings relevant to theories of power, both despite and because of these changes. Finally, conducting a case study in real-time allows the research to be of great relevance to practitioners, including both military and political personnel active in the Sahel and external actors involved in the Sahel.

Due to the recent establishment of the G5S-JF and this being a real-time case study, I have taken a rather exploratory approach. Taking a deductive approach to my study proved of little value in the first year, when I initially assumed that the G5S-JF fit into the frames of counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency. Although these aspects are related to my research, I realised during the first fieldtrip to Bamako that these assumptions were not getting to the core of the case of the G5S-JF. From this point forward, I worked in a more exploratory manner, where I focused on observing and gathering data on the G5S-JF. As this dissertation is a stand-alone project, and not part of a larger project, I was free to follow the data in this manner.

significantly more research than the G5S-JF. A prospective comparative case study of the two will therefore likely benefit from having here first established more research-based knowledge on the G5S-JF.

All in all, this dissertation has thus benefitted from an abductive approach, which simply put is a combination of both inductive and deductive reasoning (Paavola 2005). Abductive research calls for an integrated approach, where both empirical work, theory, framework and developments in the case feed into both the direction and redirections of the research (Dubois and Gadde 2002), which I do through examining the power relations between the G5S-JF and external actors. An abductive approach allowed me to rely on previous existing theories, but the research is still exploratory in nature as it seeks to find the ‘best’ possible explanations and answers to the puzzle (Timmermans and Tavory 2012). In this sense, an abductive approach consistently fluctuates between its inductive and deductive reasonings. This is exactly what has been done in this dissertation: I started off with the case of the G5S-JF, and my research has at its core attempted to figure out what the G5S-JF constitutes a case of. Indeed, engaging with theories and literature on power relations, security cooperation, SFA and donor-dependency, parallel to gathering data on the case of the G5S-JF, this dissertation is presenting and understanding the G5S-JF as a case of a host military organisation existing in a relationship of asymmetric interdependence with intervening military actors. The abductive approach to research allowed me to reach this conclusion.

METHODS FOR GATHERING DATA

Due to the relatively recent establishment of the G5S-JF, I predominantly examined primary sources. Written primary documents were particularly useful for establishing a knowledge base on the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors, relating to written agreements on how the relationship has come about and their respective mandates. I identified interviews as a second useful method to obtain data on the G5S-JF because it allowed me to develop a more dynamic understanding of how the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors has played out, and not least what this has meant for the power relations between these actors. In order to access relevant interviewees, fieldwork was deemed necessary.

Prior to the lockdown in Norway in March 2020 due to Covid-19, I spent a couple of weeks in Abuja, Nigeria, a week in Paris and four weeks in Bamako, Mali. However, following the global lockdown, fieldwork and research-related trips were delayed by 12 months. Relying fully on remote interviews proved difficult. This was because the majority of the military network I had

built in Bamako during February 2020 had left by the time I realised fieldwork would be delayed further in autumn 2020, due to the military rotation scheme, which is typically of six months. Though the initial plan had been to travel to other G5 Sahel member states than just Mali, I decided to return to Bamako in February 2021. Fearing that travel might be further restricted later in 2021, I needed to make sure that this fieldtrip would get me what I needed, and thus returning to somewhere where I already had some contacts seemed the best possible chance of achieving this.

The fieldwork conducted in the Sahel is therefore skewed towards Mali. Though this is, to some extent, reflected in my data, this is also where the main headquarters for the G5S-JF has been located, as well as the EUTM's headquarters, a Barkhane office, and MINUSMA's headquarters. Travelling to Bamako thus facilitated access to people from these various organisations.

Semi-structured elite interviews

I interviewed people based on their position or job, meaning I largely relied on elite interviews. Elite interviews were able to provide me with different information than popular interviews. I talk to these people due to their position, meaning that they have inside information pertinent to my case of research (Ntienjom Mbohou and Tomkinson 2022). This also means that I can often assume that the information they tell me is representative of the entity which they represent. Quality is thus more important than quantity in this scenario. Elite interviews tend to be formal encounters, and significant planning is typically needed because these people can be hard to get hold of, often hold tight schedules and potentially travel frequently. This also means that changes may occur to our agreed meeting time, which thus requires flexibility, but also polite persistency (Aberbach and Rockman 2002), on my side.

I used the snowball technique, where my interviewees further referred me to other stakeholders to interview. This allowed me to meet people who are directly relevant to my research, such as military personnel, who before fieldwork were difficult to get in touch with due to non-public names or lack of publicly available contact information. There is a risk that the snowball technique provides a biased sample through interviewees referring me to like-minded people as themselves. To mitigate this risk, I used the snowball technique on several of my first-time interviews as well as my various gatekeepers, which allowed the snowball to roll in different directions. This opened up a broad unit of data collection and provided a more adequate foundation

for the analysis. I conducted a total of 49 interviews. Although my ability to conduct fieldwork was limited due to travel restrictions based on Covid-19, stopping after 49 interviews was also a deliberate choice as I felt I had reached a saturation point, where the latest interviews verified the data I had already gathered.

As this research is about the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors, it was vital to engage with people from the G5S-JF, Barkhane, the EUTM, the donor community, and others. The interviews are anonymised, but I have categorised them into five themes to provide the reader with some context in Figure 9. The interviews have been referenced in the articles through a number, category, date and location. Any additional information could reveal the identity of certain interviewees, but a general list of nationalities of my interviewees is possible to share: Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, France, Germany, Spain, the US, Norway, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and Switzerland.

External security personnel (working for a military actor in the Sahel outside the G5S-JF)	12
External political personnel (working for a political actor in the Sahel outside the G5S-JF)	17
Internal security personnel (working within or for the G5S-JF)	6
Internal political personnel (working within or for the G5S-JF)	1
Observers (academics, non-governmental organisations, civil society, or others)	13
Total	49

Figure 9: Categorisation of interviews.

As can be seen from the interview overview in Figure 9 my data is skewed towards that of external actors. As an external myself, and with the assistance of the expat community in Bamako, it proved easier for me to get in touch with external personnel. This, however, did not mean that these interviews were uncritical of external involvement in the region or with the G5S-JF. On the contrary, many externals expressed frustration with the situation as well as with their respective organisations. Further, I managed to conduct interviews with people internal to the G5S-JF system, which ultimately provided the depth of understanding needed to examine the dynamics of the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors. Of these, only one is categorised as internal

political personnel. Access to internal political personnel was reduced due to Covid-19 travel restrictions, which meant that I did not travel to Nouakchott (Mauritania) where the headquarters of the G5 Sahel organisation, and thus also the political level of the G5S-JF, is located. Nevertheless, with the research focus being on military cooperation, it was also a deliberate choice to focus more on security personnel. Locals and those more permanently based in the Sahel (observers) further aided an understanding of the dynamic between the G5S-JF and external actors.

In my interviews, I used a semi-structured approach, which relies on open-ended questions and allows for the option of follow-up questions and further probing on subjects raised (Barriball and While 1994). It was important to me that the interviewees could present their own assumptions about what subjects and perspectives are important to understand and focus on regarding the G5S-JF. Therefore, the specific topics of the interviews differ slightly, which means that the validity and reliability of the interviews depend on my ability to convey equivalence of meaning (Denzin 1989). However, it was also necessary for these interviews to differ, due to the various organisational affiliations of the interviewees, in addition to their diverse experiences. I produced interview guides before each fieldtrip depending on interviewees' affiliations, rank and work experience. Similarities across these guides were questions about formal cooperation, what this looked like, how it played out, and how it related to the interviewees' position. However, how I probed in terms of questions of power dynamics, autonomy, dependency, and influence on decision-making varied due to the potential sensitivities of such queries.

Interviews will always be subject to bias and subjectivity, and it is vital that I view all interviewees through the lens of the position they hold and the entity they represent. I could also not exclude the possibility of people deliberately misleading me or sugar-coating their perspectives. To minimise this bias, I used triangulation of the information given to me in order to cross-check findings (Deacon, Bryman, and Fenton 1998). There are multiple ways in which to understand and utilise triangulation. Denzin (2017) speaks of data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theoretical triangulation and methodological triangulation. Investigator triangulation refers to multiple observers of the data gathered, which has not been used as I am the sole member of this PhD project. Methodological triangulation – to approach data from various methodologies – has not been actively used, even though the methods used to gather data have been both interviews and document gathering. These two methods (not methodologies) have allowed me to

triangulate my findings. This data triangulation has been done through testing out ‘information’ from interviews and official documents or literature in other interviews and official documents or literature. The triangulation conducted in this research is not a technique to “provide guaranteed truth or completeness” of my data (Hammersley 2008, 32). Rather, I have used data triangulation as an investigative strategy, where I have searched for different data sources to help inform my judgement on the data gathered.

The final form of triangulation that Denzin (2017) presents is theoretical triangulation. Due to the abductive approach of this research, this is not something that has intentionally been deployed in the research process. However, looking back at the process, this dissertation has engaged with a variety of ways to conceptualise forms of relational power. Although the approach to power has been relational at heart, there are many different aspects examined that have impacted the relational power dynamics, such as discursive power (first article), influence on decision-making power (second article) and material power (third article), which are each connected to different theoretical traditions. While theoretical triangulation has not been used actively in my data gathering, the abductive approach of the research has involved engagement with multiple aspects of power with roots in diverse theories. As such, the finding of asymmetric interdependence has thus been theoretically triangulated because it has been found in the relational aspects of discursive power, decision-making power and material power.

Despite the active data triangulation and the indirect theoretical triangulation in this research, subjective data will always be just that: subjective. Indeed, especially due to the use of the snowball technique, I cannot deny the potential of systematic bias, and the interviewees may not be representative of all the people I could have interviewed. Not only is the data skewed towards Mali, but also, due to my confinement to Bamako whilst in Mali, a systematic bias may have emerged towards higher ranked military, rather than soldiers operating on the ground. It was nonetheless important for me to speak to higher ranked officers due to the questions I was interested in unpacking regarding the cooperation between the G5S-JF and external actors. My interviewees’ subjectivity also became a source for meta-data, which I used to critically evaluate the research data I had gathered.

Documents

The written primary sources predominantly come from official resolutions, statements and documents from the G5 Sahel organisation, the EU, France, the UN and the AU. These were crucial for the first article of this research, which seeks to understand the establishment of the G5S-JF and the discursive roots of its relationship with external actors. The sources for the first article were collected in both English and French, and most were produced from 2012–2017. Sources from 2017 onwards predominantly informed the second, third and fourth articles. These primary sources were first and foremost understood as a product of their respective organisations: they are policy oriented, written in similar language over time (e.g., UN resolutions), and represent the perspective or focus of the organisations or bodies that produced them.

I also collected media news updates related to the G5S-JF, operation Barkhane and the EUTM. These were collected from the official websites of the various actors and from African and Sahelian news agencies such as Jeune Afrique and MaliActu. I also set up a Google search on “G5 Sahel Joint Force” and “Force Conjointe du G5 Sahel”, which provided me with daily email updates on all newly released news articles containing these words. Due to the limited research currently existing on the G5S-JF, it was necessary to use online news updates as a form of documentation. The news articles are written in either French or English (of which I read both), and they were stored in the software programme Zotero, which saves a screenshot of the article to ensure access to the article even after it, potentially, is taken off the website. In addition to news articles, I also paid close attention to social media. I understood quite early on that Barkhane, the EUTM and the G5S-JF have been active on social media, especially Facebook and Twitter. The media and social media updates were predominantly used to give me a good foundation for mapping current developments on the ground. Media was treated as data when I created an overview of bilateral donations to the G5S-JF, which I provide in the third article, and which constitutes – to my knowledge – the only publicly available systematic overview of these donations. A challenge with media and social media updates is to confirm their reliability and be critical to their bias. In order to assure the reliability of the various news outlets, I made sure to find similar information elsewhere when possible: from other written texts, other agency outlets, or through interviews at a later stage. Indeed, the skewedness of news and information was also something I continuously sought to dig out through interviews.

METHODS FOR ANALYSING THE DATA

Coding in NVivo

After collecting data, both interviews and primary written sources were coded in the computer software NVivo to systematise the data categorically. The initial coding phase focused on the macro-level: which topics stand out as important, and which areas of the G5S-JF should I dive into deeper? The result was clear from early on: 1) why and how the G5S-JF was established; 2) the direct cooperation between the G5S-JF and external actors in the joint force's chain of command; 3) material and financial donations to the G5S-JF; and 4) the divergence between the intent and the outcome of the G5S-JF and its cooperation with external military actors in the Sahel. These constitute the four articles of this dissertation.

I use two different methods to analyse my data. The first is a discourse analysis, conducted for my first article. The discourse analysed is that of official, written documents on the Sahel's security situation from 2012–2017. This was coded in three rounds. Round 1 focused on coding what the discourse referred to as threats and challenges, as well as solutions. Round 2 coded the identity of various actors and the division of responsibility between these actors, and I brought this together with how challenges and solutions had been presented in the discourse. Round 3 was coded as similarities and differences between the discourse producers: the EU, the UN, France, the G5 Sahel organisation and the G5 Sahel member states. The result was a discourse analysis demonstrating the nature (context), the logic (system) and the manifestation (outcomes) of the discourse on the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors.

The second method is thematic analysis, which was used for the second, third and fourth articles. The data analysed here were predominantly the interviews. For the thematic analysis, the interviews were also coded three times. Round 1 was an initial coding to identify and distinguish the topics of the various articles. In round 2, I dived into each article coding to identify themes and areas for discussion. In round 3, I coded the data to find both complementary and contradictory statements of the various themes identified in round 2. The first and second coding always took place in NVivo. As quite a visual person, I conducted the third coding by hand on printed sheets. This was later typed into NVivo.

Discourse analysis

In the first article, I analyse my primary sources of documents discursively. A discourse analysis searches for purpose behind written and oral text (Gill 2000). A critical discourse analysis is particularly useful for drawing out the dynamics of a relationship between actors, and it can reveal how the autonomy, capability and influence on decision-making are discursively positioned in this relationship. The dynamics both between those addressed in the discourse as well as the relations with the author(s) of the discourse can be analysed. Therefore, a discourse is in this research understood as “a framework for the justification for the power of practitioners” (Bryman 2008, 499). Starting this research with a discourse analysis was thus deemed invaluable for getting a grip on the power dynamics at play between the G5S-JF and external actors at the initial stages of their relationship. A discourse analysis reflects on the context of the discourse. This means that one has to understand a text through the lens of who wrote it and for what purpose it was written. However, a discourse analysis is also focused on how language and discourse shape the world. In the words of Potter (1996, 146), a discourse analysis “emphasises the way versions of the world, of society, events and inner psychological worlds are produced in discourse”. It is thus an action-oriented method, where some of the key questions are what the discourse is doing and what the consequences of this may be, but also what the discourse is not doing, such as what may be left out from a text.

The discourse analysis conducted in the first article started out very broad, where I attempted to draw out issues that were connected to identities, responsibilities, contrasts, threats, solutions, problems, and other issues that were prominent. It thus started off by scrutinising a variety of aspects in the discourse, which was further narrowed down and specified following the first trip to Bamako, when my research became more exploratory of relations between the G5S-JF and external actors. To some extent, the process of the discourse analysis thus mimicked the process of this dissertation, where my interview data gave me impetus for the focus of the discourse analysis and the first article.

A critical discourse analysis aims to examine how social relations and power relations can be observed and created through discourse and how these may then impact material realities. It is thus not neglecting a pre-existing reality of the world, but focuses on how subject and object

interact – thus, how language and discourse may be tools to shape the reality (Foucault 1977). In the words of Phillips and Hardy (2002, 3): “as discourse analysts, then, our task is to explore the relationship between discourse and reality”. Although this form of discourse analysis can bring out the official aspects of the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors, it also has its limitations: this analysis only accounted for official and public discourse and not for potential underlying intentions and motivations behind the discourse. Some of the inconsistencies of this discourse were brought out in the first article, but it is particularly the fourth article that explains the divergence between *the intent* behind the military cooperation between the G5S-JF and external actors – as it is established in the official discourse – and *the outcome*.

Thematic analysis

In the second, third and fourth articles, I have analysed the interview data thematically, which means that I have identified, analysed and interpreted various patterns of meaning found in the data. Using a thematic analysis allowed me to present both the richness and the details found in my data, as well as provide contrasting and perhaps conflicting perspectives from the various informants. A thematic analysis facilitated not only identifying core themes whilst analysing these interviews, but for doing so in an organised and descriptive way, which was important for understanding how the power relations between the G5S-JF and external actors play out. This allowed my analysis, findings and answers to be presented in a structured and detailed manner, which is important in exploratory research (Braun and Clarke 2006).

Thematic analysis is quite flexible, which on one side is advantageous to the researcher because it allows the researcher to model the method to the study and often provides an accessible form of analysis. However, at the same time, this flexibility also demands that the researcher is transparent and clear in the method to provide rigorousness and trustworthiness. In order to provide dependability and confirmability, and thus also to produce a trustworthy piece of research, one needs to present a logical, traceable and clearly documented analysis (Tobin and Begley 2004). I have thus attempted to clearly demonstrate how I interpret the data and explain what leads to the conclusions that I draw. As a Sahel-focused researcher, I cannot claim that other cases are demonstrating the same dynamics as the case of the G5S-JF. Therefore, the use of thematic analysis has given me impetus to explain and decipher my interpretation of the data, so that readers

or “those who seek to transfer the findings to their own site can judge transferability” (Nowell et al. 2017, 3) themselves.

ETHICAL REFLECTIONS

When conducting qualitative research through interviews and fieldwork, there are several issues I have had to account for. This research has carefully complied with the ethical considerations and guidelines as outlined by the Norwegian National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Science and the Humanities¹⁶ and, in addition, specific guidelines and ethics in Mali while conducting fieldwork there. The latter is particularly associated with Le Comité Nationale d'Éthique pour la Santé et les Science de la Vie (National Ethics Committee for Health and Life Science), which emphasises autonomy of consent, equal treatment of interviewees, benevolence and non-maleficence (Comité National d'Éthique 2002; Jisselmuiden et al. 2011).

Safety and security

This research addresses politically sensitive issues, as it deals with issues of power in military cooperation. It has been important for me that personal safety and livelihood is prioritised. Thus, I have provided all my interview subjects with anonymity to ensure the safety of the people I talk to, and for them to not feel limited in what they can share with me. Although revealing names of some of my interviewees could reinforce the arguments of the study, preserving the interviewees' anonymity is not only ethically necessary but also more beneficial to this research. By keeping interviewees anonymous, I was more likely to get personal perspectives from those people I talked to as they knew they would not be exposed publicly, and it avoided potential use of my research as a publicity outlet for my interviewees.

Where appropriate, I have used written consent forms, informing the interviewees of their rights to withdraw at any given point, as well as describing my research conduct. These have, however, not been used in all cases. A challenge with using written consent is that the pre-requirements might provoke concerns and then result in people refusing to meet with me (Bryman 2008, 123). I have faced interviewees from high-ranking politicians to on-ground personnel who would rather not have their name written down at all. In these cases, I have gained verbal consent,

¹⁶ Approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) with case number 877186.

following consultations with supervisors. I have also calculated that there is a risk of gathering written consent on fieldtrips due to the limited areas for safekeeping of these documents – the safest of which is my backpack, which I have carried everywhere, but which also carries the risk of theft.

The safety aspect of fieldtrips has been concerning two particular matters: the first is security due to the conflict situation in the Sahel, and the latter is the safety from Covid-19. For both matters, my fieldtrips have been planned in close coordination with a team at PRIO and in consultation with the Norwegian Embassy in Bamako. We made a plan for how to make the fieldtrips, especially in Bamako in 2021, as safe as possible, such as with frequent use of facemasks and antibac, keeping social distance, and other than that trying to find a good balance between Covid-norms in Mali and in Norway. When conducting interviews, I have often let my interviewees suggest time and place to assure they feel safe, and otherwise I have suggested places identified as appropriate by other interviewees.

Positionality

Carrying out interviews, particularly in Mali, as a white, European woman has called for significant reflections of positionality and power dynamics between myself and my interviewees. Though I am convinced a whole dissertation could be written on that topic itself, I will here briefly share some of my own reflections around this. Positionality is a large topic, and it broadly refers to a researcher's relation to his/her research. Positionality for me is thus a sense of self-awareness, consciousness and reflection of who I am during fieldwork and whilst conducting interviews. Two issues have been particularly at the forefront of my reflections, and they speak to the dynamic of insider-outsider and gender perspectives.

There is no hiding that I am an outsider to the Sahel region as well as an outsider to military actors. Perks of being an insider to the research can include a better understanding of your interviewees' cultures and mindset and a greater ability to interact naturally with the interviewees. Insiders may thus find it easier to establish trust in the relational setting. An outsider is more likely to struggle with these things. However, these perks are also faced with subsequent challenges of for instance subjectivity and biased assumptions (DeLyser 2001), which an outsider might not be as prone to (Denzin and Lincoln 2000; Patton 2002).

Being an outsider to the Sahel region meant that I, to a great extent, did not have any significant local bias, such as more knowledge of or familiarity with any particular area and not least any particular people – either by ethnicity or nationality. This meant that I felt that I could approach this research with an open mind and observe not only through my data, but also through meta-data, such as atmosphere, both within interviews and outside. I also viewed being an outsider to France and the EU as positive, because it gave impetus to my interviewees to be outspoken about these actors, without feeling that they included me in their criticism; and, not least, it allowed me to study these actors without the bias of being identified with them.

However, there was also a need for me to distance myself from the much criticised, and justifiably so, idea that ‘white people extract from Africa’. Although the historical colonialism is over, there are significant colonial legacies that have been left in the Sahel, where particularly France continues to play an important role. Moreover, there was a need for me to not treat fieldwork as an ‘extraction of information’ trip. Sharing my own research and perspectives with interviewees following fieldwork has thus been important to me. Of course, I wanted to absorb information and perspectives whilst I was there, but more importantly, I wanted my informants to guide me and enlighten me through providing not only the information that I was asking for, but also everything I was not asking for. I could not assume that my thoughts and perspectives on the G5S-JF mimicked that of people based in the Sahel.

The distinction between outsider-insider became blurrier as I spent time in Bamako, which other scholars have frequently pointed out to be the case in other situations too (Sherif 2001; Dwyer and Buckle 2009). The expat community in Bamako is diverse and large, due to the many international actors present, and it – a bit similar to Bamako itself – quickly became a safe and welcoming bubble. Becoming acquainted and friends with many in the expat community, I quickly felt like an insider to this as I found myself inside this community both for work and for social interactions. In this sense, I felt that my positionality changed as time passed: I started out as a complete outsider, but later felt like an insider to the expat community based in Bamako. This placed me within a community with a somewhat hierarchical understanding of the security situation in the Sahel, which encouraged me to be even more aware about distancing myself from colonial extraction thinking and elucidate my non-affiliation with the EU or France. Being able to reflect on this change was useful because it allowed me to approach different aspects of my

research through various lenses. However, there are other aspects of my positionality that were more constant, such as my gender.

Although recent years have seen more women engaging with research on military and hard security questions, these remain male-dominated topics. Also outside academia, military matters remain largely male-dominated, and there is no hiding that my informants and their work-circles largely consisted of men. As I conducted elite interviews, the job position and work experience of my interviewees were more important than their gender, but this male-dominated sample also resulted in an interesting dynamic in many of my interviews: me as a relatively young woman, and my interviewees, which were older than me and mostly men.

In my experience, my positionality often changed during my interviews, which I found related to the gender dynamic of many of the interviews. I would like to share a paragraph from my fieldwork notebook:

When I step into a room for an interview, I am the young woman talking to a man who so far is older than me. Hopefully, that makes them feel quite comfortable because I don't think they see me as threatening. I don't feel that they look suspiciously at me. Maybe I even appear fairly naïve. I feel this can help put the interviewee in the position where they feel comfortable, that they feel that they can teach me, and for me that's great. I want them to teach me what I don't know. And I think it might make them more comfortable to talk if they feel they're not being interrogated, but rather chatting to someone who is very curious.

These reflections speak particularly to the dynamic between me as the interviewer and the interviewees. I believe that the gender dynamic, as well as the age dynamic between me and the informants, had an almost automatic effect that allowed the interviewees to be comfortable with telling me both through informing and teaching without feeling interrogated or intimidated by me, as well as allowing me to be curious and ask a lot of questions. This dynamic further encouraged me to truly prepare for the interviews: even though I wanted the interviewees to view me as friendly and non-threatening, I also wanted them to take me seriously. I needed to demonstrate that I knew what I was talking about. In this sense, I experienced that my positionality changed during interviews. However, unavoidably, these reflections and perspectives are obviously also based on my assumptions, which is also part of my positionality.

REFLECTIONS ON GENERALISABILITY

This is a single-case study of the G5S-JF and its relations with external actors, which raises the question of what claims of knowledge I can make beyond this case or context. Creating generalisable value out of a single-case study can be done through providing detailed descriptions of the data, the analysis and ultimately the context of my research because it allows the reader to find meanings that might be relevant elsewhere. The methods of discourse analysis and thematic analysis both allowed for such descriptions, which is something I have continuously attempted to provide in the various articles. However, the generalisability and the validity of my research also require a strong description of the process of gathering data, which has only received limited attention in the articles, but has been advanced here in this document.

There are many elements that would suggest that the case of the G5S-JF is relatively unique, such as its sub-regional mandate of counter-terrorism, the intense international attention the joint force has received globally, and the colonial past and colonial legacy of France in the region. The broad generalisability of this single-case study should therefore not be overstated. However, there are features of this research that also go beyond this regional context. After all, “analysis of a single case often suggests implications about a more general phenomenon” (Yin 2003, 144), of which I will bring out two here. The first one is the overarching topic of power dynamics between an external or intervening force and a host force. Relations between intervening and host forces take place in many countries in our world, with strong examples from Afghanistan over the past twenty years, Iraq and Somalia, amongst others. In the case of the G5S-JF and external actors, I find that the relationship constitutes an asymmetric interdependence. The outcomes of this dissertation therefore provide contingent generalisability, which means that certain conditions must be met for the generalisability to hold (Steinberg 2015; Bennett and Braumoeller 2022). The findings of asymmetric interdependence in this dissertation are relevant in other contexts too, and should be tested in other contexts where there is military cooperation between intervening and host forces, also non-state actors such as in the proxy war literature.

The second is this research’s theoretical generalisability of power dynamics. In this dissertation, I have examined and explained the power dynamics between the G5S-JF and external military actors as a relational phenomenon. I have disentangled a relational approach to power

through studying interactions between agents and examined their level of autonomy, capacity and influence on decision-making as expressed through their relationships. This approach allows for theoretical generalisation because this research therefore speaks to both different dimensions and typologies of power, which is discussed further in the theoretical development section under heading 7. This relational understanding of power also speaks to other research fields where agents are often divided, such as understanding the power dynamics between the North and the South, or the strong and the fragile, hence also providing theoretical and contingent generalisability. My research could also give impetus to researching dynamics of power in relational terms in other spheres of political science, such as in party politics, political administration, and foreign policy analysis, amongst others.

6 SUMMARY OF ARTICLES

The following sections will summarise the four articles of this dissertation. The sections will outline the *what* and the *how* of each article, as well as how the articles answer the specific research questions of the dissertation. Following these summaries, the findings section will draw out the empirical findings and reflect on theoretical implications of these findings.

ARTICLE 1

The first article is titled “The relationship between the G5 Sahel Joint Force and external actors: A discursive interpretation” and has been published by the *Canadian Journal of African Studies*. The article examines the roots of the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors operating in the Sahel region, particularly the UN, the EU and France, and therefore addresses the first sub-question directly. The article asks: *How has external actors’ discourse towards the Sahel justified and shaped military cooperation between the G5S-JF and external actors?*

The data used for this article predominantly draws on primary written sources, where I analysed over 130 official documents, reports and statements by the UN, the EU and France. In addition, I complement this data with an analysis of over 50 official documents, communiqués and other statements by G5 Sahel member states and the G5 Sahel organisation.

Drawing on the literature on discourse and intervention, this article shows how the external actors' discourses on fragile states and terrorism laid the foundation for external presence in the region and framed external support to the G5S-JF as a necessity for its operationalisation. Through the discourse's justifications for external responses to the threat and its framing of these actors' presence in the region as essential, we see that the relationship between external actors and the G5S-JF was manifested through military training, resource distribution, administration of the headquarters and during operations, where external actors held significant influence over the joint force. However, the analysis additionally demonstrated not only how this discourse has been used by external actors, but also how it has been welcomed, or strategically mimicked, by G5 Sahel member states. This shows how external involvement has benefitted and been managed by the G5 Sahel member states.

The article demonstrates how we can use the existing knowledge found in the literature on discourse and intervention to also specifically understand military cooperation in current conflict situations, and ultimately contributes novel insights into the dynamics of power when the cooperation between the G5S-JF and external actors was established.

ARTICLE 2

The second article is titled "The impact of external support on coalition efficiency: The case of the G5 Sahel Joint Force" and has been accepted with corrections at the journal of *Defence Studies*. The article examines micro-level processes of the chain of command of the G5S-JF to understand macro-level aspects of external support and roles, and therefore addresses the second sub-question of this dissertation. The article asks: *To what extent do external actors influence the efficiency of the G5S-JF's chain of command, and what does this tell us about the power dynamics between the joint force and external actors?*

The data used for this article primarily stem from 45 semi-structured interviews which were conducted in Abuja (Nigeria), Bamako (Mali) and Paris (France). In addition to the interviews, I relied on mandates and official reports from the G5S-JF, the EUTM and Barkhane to understand the dynamics at the various levels. I analysed my data thematically: I examined both the internal dynamics of, and the role of external actors on, the strategic, operational and tactical levels of the G5S-JF's chain of command. The power dynamics between the G5S-JF and external actors were

examined through assessing the influence on decision-making and division of responsibilities within the G5S-JF's chain of command, and therefore this article addresses part of the second sub-question of the dissertation which asks what the relationship looks like, and who holds more autonomy, capacity and influence on decision-making.

Engaging with the hegemonic logic on coalitions – that a hegemonic structure improves efficiency and stability – the article demonstrates how external actors have assumed leading roles within the joint force's chain of command, more so than any of the joint force's member states. Because of the external leading roles, the G5S-JF's chain of command did indeed increase its efficiency. This would at the outset confirm the hegemonic logic of coalition efficiency and suggest a hegemonic relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors. However, I question *whose* efficiency we have seen, pointing at the lack of transfer of responsibility from external actors to the joint force, thereby also questioning the sustainability of this efficiency. I further demonstrate the limitations of understanding the external influence on the G5S-JF as hegemonic in nature by bringing out the agency of the G5S-JF and its member states. The article concludes by showing how the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors may be asymmetric, but not hegemonic, and that the leading roles of external actors have in fact had a destabilising effect on the joint force, as this was a contributing factor to Mali's withdrawal from the joint force in May 2022.

ARTICLE 3

The third article is entitled “Bilateral donations to a multilateral coalition: the role of the middle men in the case of the G5 Sahel Joint Force” and has been submitted to the *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*. This article addresses donations to the G5S-JF and asks: *Who is empowered by material and financial donations to the G5S-JF, and what does the bilateral system of these donations mean for this empowerment?* The third article therefore also responds to the second sub-question.

The majority of financial and material support to the G5S-JF has gone bilaterally through its member states. It has been the member states' responsibility to transfer said support to the joint force. This article therefore expands on the traditional provider-recipient lens in the SFA literature, as there are three relationships occurring, between: 1) the donors (provider) and the G5 Sahel

member states (recipient); 2) the G5 Sahel member states (provider) and the G5S-JF (recipient); and 3) the donors (provider) and the G5S-JF (recipient). Drawing on the same 45 interviews as in the second article, I analyse the data thematically. The article examines the level of autonomy, capacity and capability, and influence on decision-making each agent has expressed in these relationships of donation transactions to the joint force. It further provides the first – to my knowledge – systematic overview of material and financial donations to the G5S-JF.

Through the lens of autonomy, capacity and capability, and influence on decision-making, this article demonstrates how empowerment works in various ways in the three relationships. Ultimately, I find that the three agents in this transaction have existed in interdependent relationships with each other, but that this interdependence has been asymmetric. I demonstrate how the asymmetry of the interdependence has been tilted in favour of the middle men – the G5 Sahel member states – who have gained more leverage over both the donors and the G5S-JF than vice versa through the SFA. Thus, through the bilateral system of donations, the empowerment intended for the joint force on the regional level has been redirected to the member states on the national level. This has undermined the goal of using a regional approach to combat security threats in the Sahel.

Ultimately, this article finds that various forms of power are negotiated in a relationship and that the concept of asymmetric interdependence provides a fruitful lens through which to understand the relationship between the G5S-JF, the G5 Sahel member states and the donors. This finding gave impetus for the final article.

ARTICLE 4

The fourth and final article is titled “The effect of asymmetric interdependence on the outcomes of military cooperation in the Sahel” and has been re-submitted to the journal of *Cooperation and Conflict*. In this article, I ask: *What can the relational power dynamic between the G5S-JF and external actors tell us about the outcomes of this military cooperation?* I thus make a case for studying the outcome of security cooperation between external and host forces through the lens of their relationship. This is because in order for such military cooperation to have a sustainable effect, the host needs to develop ownership and autonomy over its own security

responses. This article therefore responds to the second sub-question as well as more directly addresses the overarching research question.

The article relies on official statements, documents, and resolutions from the G5 Sahel organisation, G5 Sahel member states, French ministries, the EU and the UN, as well as 49 semi-structured elite interviews conducted in Abuja, Bamako and Paris, along with a few remote interviews from 2019–2021. These have been analysed thematically under two main categories: the first being the bilateral, as opposed to regional, approach; and the second being autonomy and regional ownership.

This article sets out from the observation that there is an evident discrepancy between the stated intent and the actual outcome of the cooperation between the G5 Sahel Joint Force (G5S-JF) and external actors. Building on insights from peacebuilding and SFA literature, I argue that there has been an asymmetric interdependence between the G5S-JF and external actors, which can explain why the G5S-JF never developed into an autonomous force with ownership over its security responses. The concept of asymmetric interdependence provides a new lens through which to research the outcome of SFA – through focusing not only on the characteristics of the agents involved in the SFA, but paying explicit attention to their relationship. This finding can potentially shed light on other relationships between international, regional, national, and local actors more generally.

However, this article also brings the concept of asymmetric interdependence further, and argues that this concept is useful for understanding current developments in the Sahel region. Indeed, although this asymmetric interdependence has created a form of stable relationship between Sahelian actors and European actors over the past decade, 2021/22 signalled a shift, where Mali used its leverage of managing external involvement through going into agreement with the Russian private security company Wagner Group, resulting in the deployment of Russian mercenaries in Mali. This contributed to France announcing its withdrawal of Barkhane from Mali in February 2022 and Mali's withdrawal from the G5S-JF in May the same year. The heightened tension between Malian and French authorities signals that the asymmetry may have shifted, and further implies that the concept of asymmetric interdependence allows for the acceptance of power not being a static phenomenon, but a fluid ever-changing dynamic.

7 MAIN FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

This research started out by asking what explains the power relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors. The four articles address various aspects of this question, and, though individually standing, they speak to each other. They speak to the interplay between regional ownership of the G5S-JF and external influence, and they seek to explain the gap between the intent of the G5S-JF's cooperation with external actors and the outcome that we see today.

7.1 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

Following the analysis of my data from the first, second and third articles, it became clear that the G5S-JF and external actors have found themselves in an interdependent relationship, which means that although the joint force has depended on external actors for support, external actors have also depended on the joint force. However, it also was clear that the interdependence has been unequal, or asymmetric, where the joint force's dependence on external actors has been more vital than vice versa. The power dynamic between the G5S-JF and external actors can therefore be explained as a relationship of asymmetric interdependence.

Although the concept of asymmetric interdependence is therefore not addressed directly until the third article, both the first and the second article show the interdependence that has existed between the G5S-JF and external actors, as well as the asymmetry of this interdependence, though without labelling it as asymmetric interdependence. The first article determines that, in the primary stages of the relationship between the joint force and external actors, the joint force was put in a dependency-position towards the external actors, but also that the G5S-JF has managed its dependency on external actors through making itself indispensable for external actors to gain influence in the Sahel region, hence an interdependence. The second article shows how the G5S-JF's dependency on external actors, addressed in the first article, was also manifested within the interactions of the G5S-JF's chain of command and the structure of cooperation with external partners. This raised questions about whether and how the G5S-JF could operate as an autonomous military actor in the Sahel post external support or presence.

The third article demonstrates how power is negotiated: it shows how some forms of empowerment can increase whilst other forms of power become diminished. The role of the G5

Sahel member states is highlighted as critical in the interactions between donors and the G5S-JF, and the analysis demonstrates an interdependence between both the donors, the G5 Sahel member states, and the G5S-JF. The interactions between these three agents have also revealed an asymmetry of the interdependence. The first three articles therefore raise the question of the sustainability of the joint force should the external actors move towards a withdrawal.

The fourth article is therefore a result of the first three articles, and it examines the implications of the relationship of asymmetric interdependence between the joint force and external actors: that this type of relational dynamic did not allow for the joint force to develop ownership nor responsibility for the security theatre it has operated in. The article thus ultimately demonstrates that the concept of asymmetric interdependence provides a new lens through which to research SFA, a relational lens which can potentially also shed light on other relationships between international, regional, national and local actors more generally.

Thereby, the articles mimic the process of this exploratory research, at the same time as the articles are all linked through trying to understand the power relationship between the G5S-JF and external military actors in the Sahel. Figure 10 is a combination of Figure 2 and Figure 4. It demonstrates how the different articles answer the main research question and the sub-questions and how they relate to the various aspects of power.

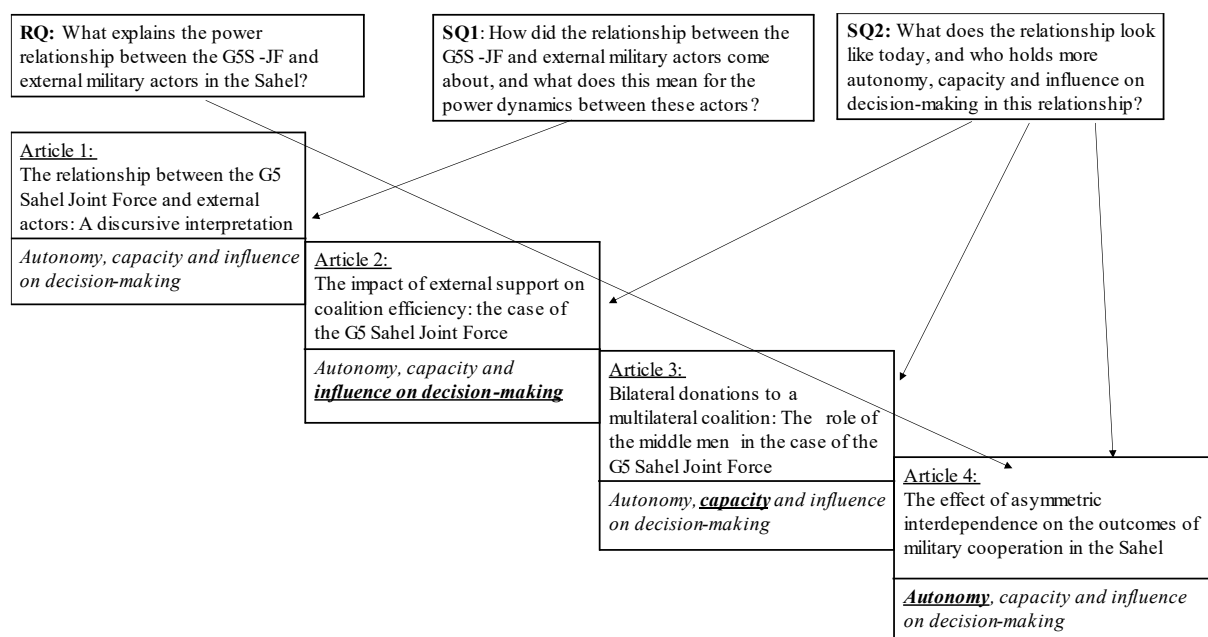


Figure 10: A combination of Figure 2 and Figure 4, connections between research questions, articles and aspects of power.

The different articles thus contribute in each their way to answer the main research question of this dissertation and have collectively helped me reach the conclusion that the power relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors can be explained as interactions of asymmetric interdependence. All articles have been submitted for publication at various journals, and the current status of the articles is summarised in Figure 11.

	Title	Journal	Status
1	The relationship between the G5 Sahel Joint Force and external actors: A discursive interpretation	<i>Canadian Journal of African Studies</i>	Published
2	The impact of external support on coalition efficiency: the case of the G5 Sahel Joint Force	<i>Defence Studies</i>	Accepted with corrections
3	Bilateral donations to a multilateral coalition: the role of the middle men in the case of the G5 Sahel Joint Force	<i>Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding</i>	Submitted
4	The effect of asymmetric interdependence on the outcomes of military cooperation in the Sahel	<i>Cooperation and Conflict</i>	Re-submitted

Figure 11: Overview of articles and status of publication

Although each article contributes to answering the main research question in each its way, I suggest that this dissertation as a whole may provide insights into something bigger than the sum of its parts. Indeed, the fourth article makes a case for understanding the outcome of military cooperation between an external and a host through the lens of their relationship, and demonstrates how the asymmetric interdependence between the G5S-JF and external actors has been a key obstacle to the joint force developing into a strong autonomous coalition. This dissertation therefore provides insights more generally into relationships between external or intervening actors and host actors – be it relationships based on military relations, peacebuilding relations, aid relations or others – and suggests that studying their relationships gives greater clarity to the outcome of the cooperation between these different agents.

This research on power dynamics between the G5S-JF and external actors also provides valuable insights into current developments in the Sahel through highlighting that power dynamics

are not static. The leverage that the G5S-JF and the G5 Sahel member states have when facing European actors with regards to deciding which external partners to engage with has been increasingly utilised by Mali, as can be seen through its recent engagement with the Russian Wagner Group and the subsequent worsening relations between Mali and France. The latter point also speaks to Mali's withdrawal from the G5S-JF. In an official statement by Mali (Ministère des Affaires étrangères du Mali [@MaliMaeci] 2022), the withdrawal was attributed to Chad's refusal to hand over the presidency of the G5 Sahel organisation to Mali as initially planned, as well as the alleged manoeuvring of an external state (presumably, France) in the G5 Sahel organisation and joint force. As this research demonstrates, France and the EU hold significant influence over the G5S-JF. It is therefore reasonable to assume that Mali's motivation for leaving the G5 Sahel organisation and the G5S-JF was also rooted in Mali's desire to dissociate with France. Hence, although this research focuses on the time period between 2017 and 2021, its findings are also relevant beyond this timeframe.

7.2 THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT OF ASYMMETRIC INTERDEPENDENCE

This research has found that the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors is characterised by the power dynamic of asymmetric interdependence. This is not a claim of asymmetric power, which is more in line with relative power and possessive power, and would therefore have been a rather evident finding between the G5S-JF and external actors. Rather, this research's finding speaks to how the *interactions* show interdependence, and how these interactions also show an asymmetry of this interdependence. Bringing these findings into Figure 3 from the theory section therefore gives us what is displayed in Figure 12.

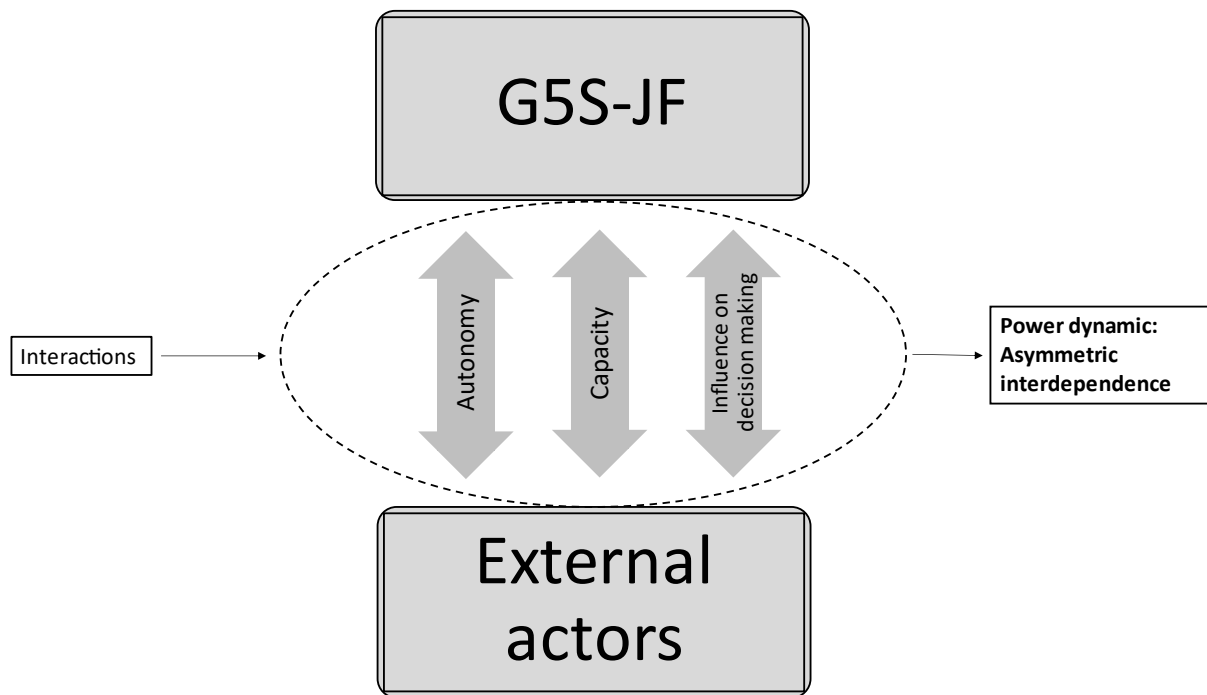


Figure 12: The relational power dynamic between the G5S-JF and external actors.

The finding of asymmetric interdependence therefore combines two well-established concepts from political science – interdependence and asymmetry – which are worth exploring more. *Interdependence* means that there is a mutual dependence between things, people, agents and/or actors. The workings of the world are becoming more interdependent through globalisation and inter-connectedness, such as through economy with cross-border flows of import and export (Keohane and Nye 1989). An interdependent relationship refers to power in a relational manner. Power dependency theory argues that in a relationship of two, power constitutes the level of an actor's dependence on the other (Rouhana and Fiske 1995, 52). Interdependence therefore occurs when two or more agents depend on each other, and this dependence gives power to the other(s). Interdependence therefore restricts the independence and autonomy of an agent, at the same time as it may enhance its influence on other agents (Keohane and Nye 1989, 8). The level of interdependence and dependence may vary between the parties of a relationship, as one actor may be more dependent on the other than vice versa, causing an asymmetry.

Asymmetry means per definition unequal, and thus refers to a relationship between actors which are unequal or contribute with unequal parts to the relationship. An asymmetric relationship

“is founded on reciprocal but different commitments by each side” (Womack 2015, 39) and is thus a negotiated relationship between unequal actors. This does not mean however that an asymmetric relationship consists of one dominant side and one dominated side, but that there are various aspects where one agent may control more than the other. Combining these two concepts as *asymmetric interdependence* therefore refers to there being an interdependence between the agents of a relationship, but that this interdependence is asymmetric. Here, I am not referring to an asymmetric relationship, which would describe *relative* power dynamics; rather, it is the interdependence that is asymmetric. The concept of asymmetric interdependence therefore addresses *relational* aspects of power.

Asymmetric interdependence as a relational concept has been used in studies on political economic relations (Jarblad 2003; Öniş and Yılmaz 2016), energy relations between states (Binhack and Tichý 2012), trade between states (Hirschman 1945; Petri 1984), and currency markets (Shahzad et al. 2021). This concept has also been applied to security contexts and formal cooperation within international relations studies (Neuss 2009; Aydin-DüzgiT, Balta, and O’Donohue 2020; Andreas 2005), and although asymmetry has been used to understand military alliances (see for instance Morrow 1991) and approaches to conducting war (Barnett 2003), the concept of *asymmetric interdependence* has to my knowledge not been used to explain the military relationships between an intervening force and a host force. By demonstrating the asymmetrical interdependence of the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors, this dissertation therefore speaks to theories of relational power, literature on military cooperation, interventions, SFA and donor-dependency.

Asymmetric interdependence is an interesting concept as a form of relational power. This is because the concept does not prioritise any particular taxonomy of relational power. Looking at the various articles in retrospect, it becomes clear that asymmetric interdependence indeed speaks to all four taxonomies of power presented by Barnett and Duvall (2005). The first article speaks to productive power, as it examines how discourse produces subjectivity in how the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors came about. It demonstrates how productive power played out for both the G5S-JF and for external actors through their relational aspects of autonomy, capacity and influence on decision-making. It reveals a mutually used productive power between the G5S-JF and external actors when it came to the establishment of the G5S-JF

and its relations with external actors. The second article speaks to structural and institutional power, as it looks at the direct cooperation (structural) between the G5S-JF and external actors – meaning the composition of the agents’ capacities in their direct relationship – as well as the system of this cooperation (institutional power). Also this article demonstrates that structural and institutional power laid with both the G5S-JF and external actors in their cooperation, though these forms of power may have been utilised to varying degrees, hence an asymmetric interdependence.

The third article speaks to compulsory and structural power as it examines how the G5 Sahel member states gain significant leverage through the structure of donations to the G5S-JF (structure), and how these states control the joint force’s action and military capacity through this structure (compulsory). This article shows the mutual dependence, or interdependence, that exists between the donors, the G5 Sahel member states, and the G5S-JF, and here the asymmetry of this interdependence. By the time the fourth article was written, the concept of asymmetric interdependence fuelled my theoretical perspective. The fourth article builds on the concept of asymmetric interdependence and demonstrates how this dynamic of the *relationship* between the G5S-JF and external actors never allowed for the joint force to develop ownership or responsibility over its own security responses in the Sahel. It therefore speaks to how compulsory, institutional, structural and productive power play out as a whole, and how the concept of asymmetric interdependence allows for a study of multiple forms of power.

Furthermore, the concept of asymmetric interdependence also allows for a multidimensional approach to power, as Baldwin (2016) advocated for. The concept moves away from suggesting that a relationship consists of a stronger and a weaker agent. Rather, it encourages a multidimensional understanding through suggesting that the agents have different strengths in a relationship that can be leveraged for other dimensions of the relationship. Asymmetric interdependence as a power dynamic should also not be viewed as a fixed dynamic. This research has demonstrated how power dynamics are prone to changing contexts, and that these dynamics may change accordingly. Indeed, this study both acknowledges – and has witnessed – how relational power changes over time and according to context. This goes back to Baldwin’s dimensions of power – he argues that “the value of power resources may vary from one time period to another”. Not only can the agents’ power base or capacity change over time,

but so can their degree and aspect of influence, as well as their means to achieve such influence. This is where the fluidity of the asymmetry becomes interesting, because as context changes, so does the importance of the different facets of power, and therefore, so does the asymmetry, which Mali's move away from France attests to. This dissertation started, continued, and finished with the aim of answering questions. However, the dissertation and the answers it has found open up for many more questions that ought to be explored in future research.

8 FUTURE RESEARCH

There are particularly four areas of future research that this dissertation would like to highlight. The first is that of internal dynamics, both within the G5S-JF and among donors. Future research should address the internal dynamics of the G5S-JF. This relates to both the differences and similarities of the member states and how they have cooperated with each other – have some member states been more aligned than others, have some been more conflicting than others, and what has this meant for the internal dynamics of decision-making? The internal dynamics will have likely been impacted by the military interim governments in Mali and Burkina Faso following military coups in 2020/2021 and 2022 respectively, as well as the death of former Chadian President Déby and his replacement by his son in 2021. Further, the Malian withdrawal from the G5S-JF was officially due to Chad's refusal to hand over the presidency of the G5 Sahel organisation to Mali (and the strong involvement of France), which indeed raises questions about the internal dynamics of the G5S-JF, particularly in terms of hierarchical perceptions of legitimacy and of military regimes. Based on this dissertation's contribution on the donor-system to the G5S-JF, future research should also give more space to the different donors: what have the various donors' incentives for supporting the joint force been? Have there been dynamics of competition or cooperation between donors, and how has this impacted the G5 Sahel member states' relations to each other?

Second, an increasingly challenging security aspect in the Sahel is violence against civilians perpetrated by military actors, including the G5S-JF. Having implemented the Civilian

Incident Tracking and Analysis Cell (CITAC)¹⁷ for the G5S-JF in 2021, there has now also been a system in place to methodically examine violence against civilians perpetrated by the G5S-JF.¹⁸ With the challenge of violence against civilians having intensified since the arrival of Russian Wagner Group in Mali, it is a timely and important aspect of the G5S-JF that ought to be examined more systematically going forward.

Third, having produced research on the G5S-JF as a single case therefore now facilitates potential future research in addressing the G5S-JF in a comparative manner, particularly with coalitions of a similar nature, such as the MNJTF fighting Boko Haram. A comparative study of these would benefit from assessing differences of internal dynamics, where the MNJTF has a rather clear hegemonic member state of Nigeria, whereas the G5S-JF member states appear more similar in strength. The G5S-JF and the MNJTF also hold different relations with their former colonial powers, particularly with regards to the former colonial powers' involvement in the coalitions, which could provide fruitful analysis for a comparison – particularly given Mali's withdrawal from the G5S-JF. Such a comparative study would also be beneficial to practitioners should the focus of the research be lessons learned, with particular relevance given the Accra Initiative's announcement of a new multinational joint task force.

Finally, this research provides contingent and theoretical generalisations and encourages future research on the dynamics between intervening and host forces in other contexts. By analysing the relationships between intervening forces and host forces through the aspects of autonomy, capacity and influence on decision-making, one can make claims of the power dynamics that characterise the interactions in these relationships in a structured, clear and thorough manner. Ultimately, this dissertation demonstrates how the concept of asymmetric interdependence explains the power dynamics in the relationship between the G5S-JF and external military actors in the Sahel, and the concept of asymmetric interdependence may prove a fruitful lens of analysis when applied to other contexts as well.

¹⁷ This system was implemented with support from the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Center for Civilians in Conflict. "Mécanisme d'identification, de suivi et d'analyse des dommages causés aux civils" (MISAD) in French.

¹⁸ Prior to the implementation of CITAC, it was often difficult to separate incidents caused by national militaries and militaries operating under the G5S-JF banner.

REFERENCES

- Aberbach, Joel D., and Bert A. Rockman. 2002. 'Conducting and Coding Elite Interviews'. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 35 (4): 673–76. Doi: 1554807.
- Adler, Emanuel. 1997. 'Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics'. *European Journal of International Relations* 3 (3): 319–63. Doi: 10.1177/1354066197003003003.
- Africa Center for Strategic Studies and 2018. 9 February. 'The G5 Sahel Joint Force Gains Traction'. *Africa Center for Strategic Studies* (blog). 9 February. <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/g5-sahel-joint-force-gains-traction/>.
- AU Peace and Security Council. 2017. 'Communiqué'. African Union. PSC/PR/COMM(DCLXXIX). 679th meeting.
- Auerswald, David P., and Stephen M. Saideman. 2014. *NATO in Afghanistan: Fighting Together, Fighting Alone*. NATO in Afghanistan. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Baldwin, David A. 2016. *Power and International Relations: A Conceptual Approach*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Barnett, Michael, and Raymond Duvall. 2005. 'Power in International Politics'. *International Organization* 59 (1): 39–75. Doi: 10.1017/S0020818305050010.
- Bartels, Elizabeth M., Christopher S. Chivvis, Adam R. Grissom, and Stacie L. Pettyjohn. 2019. *Conceptual Design for a Multiplayer Security Force Assistance Strategy Game*. RAND Corporation.
- Bayart, Jean-François, and Stephen Ellis. 2000. 'Africa in the World: A History of Extraversion'. *African Affairs* 99 (395): 217–67. Doi: 723809.
- BBC News. 2021. 'Mali: West Condemns Russian Mercenaries "Deployment"'. *BBC News*, 24 December. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-59777385>.
- Bellamy, Alex J., Paul D. Williams, and Stuart Griffin. 2010. *Understanding Peacekeeping*. Polity.
- Bennett, Andrew, and Bear F. Braumoeller. 2022. 'Where the Model Frequently Meets the Road: Combining Statistical, Formal, and Case Study Methods'. *arXiv*. Doi: 10.48550/arXiv.2202.08062.
- Bennett, D. Scott. 1997. 'Testing Alternative Models of Alliance Duration, 1816-1984'. *American Journal of Political Science* 41 (3): 846–78. Doi: 10.2307/2111677.
- Berdal, Mats, and Dominik Zaum, eds. 2017. *Political Economy of Statebuilding: Power after Peace*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Biddle, Stephen, Julia Macdonald, and Ryan Baker. 2018. 'Small Footprint, Small Payoff: The Military Effectiveness of Security Force Assistance'. *Journal of Strategic Studies* 41 (1–2): 89–142. Doi: 10.1080/01402390.2017.1307745.
- Björkdahl, Annika, and Kristine Höglund. 2013. 'Precarious Peacebuilding: Friction in Global–Local Encounters'. *Peacebuilding* 1 (3): 289–99. Doi: 10.1080/21647259.2013.813170.
- Bonny, Aurore. 2021. '500 Wagner Paramilitaries Reportedly Enter Mali amid Controversy'. *AA*, 25 December. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/500-wagner-paramilitaries-reportedly-enter-mali-amid-controversy/2457079>.
- Braun, Virginia, and Victoria Clarke. 2006. 'Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology'. *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3 (2): 77–101. Doi: 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.
- Bryman, Alan. 2008. *Social Research Methods*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Charbonneau, Bruno. 2017. 'Intervention in Mali: Building Peace between Peacekeeping and Counterterrorism'. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 35 (4): 415–31. Doi: 10.1080/02589001.2017.1363383.
- Charbonneau, Bruno, and Tony Chafer, eds. 2014. *Peace Operations in the Francophone World: Global Governance Meets Post-Colonialism*. New York: Routledge.

- Cold-Ravnskilde, Signe Marie. 2021. 'Borderwork in the Grey Zone: Everyday Resistance within European Border Control Initiatives in Mali'. *Geopolitics*, May, 1–20. Doi: 10.1080/14650045.2021.1919627.
- Cold-Ravnskilde, Signe Marie, and Katja Lindskov Jacobsen. 2020. 'Disentangling the Security Traffic Jam in the Sahel: Constitutive Effects of Contemporary Interventionism'. *International Affairs* 96 (4): 855–74. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iaaa093>.
- Collier, Paul. 1999. 'Aid "Dependency": A Critique'. *Journal of African Economies* 8 (4): 528–45. Doi: 10.1093/jae/8.4.528.
- Comité National d'Éthique. 2002. 'Portant Création Du Comité National d'éthique Pour La Santé et Les Sciences de La Via'. *Comité National d'Éthique*. 22 April. <https://clinregs.niaid.nih.gov/sites/default/files/documents/mali/DecreeNo02-200.pdf>.
- Cunningham, Oliver. 2012. 'The Humanitarian Aid Regime in the Republic of NGOs: The Fallacy of 'Building Back Better''. *Josef Korbel Journal of Advanced International Studies* 4 (9). <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/advancedintlstudies/9>.
- Deacon, David, Alan Bryman, and Natalie Fenton. 1998. 'Collision or Collusion? A Discussion and Case Study of the Unplanned Triangulation of Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods'. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 1 (1): 47–63. Doi: 10.1080/13645579.1998.10846862.
- DeLyser, Dydia. 2001. "'Do You Really Live Here?'" Thoughts on Insider Research'. *Geographical Review* 91 (1/2): 441–53. Doi: 10.2307/3250847.
- Denzin, Norman K. 1989. *Interpretive Biography*. 1st edition. Newbury Park: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- . 2017. *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods*. New York: Routledge.
- Denzin, Norman K., and Yvonna S. Lincoln, eds. 2000. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications.
- Dieng, Moda. 2019. 'The Multi-National Joint Task Force and the G5 Sahel Joint Force: The Limits of Military Capacity-Building Efforts'. *Contemporary Security Policy* 40 (4): 481–501. Doi: 10.1080/13523260.2019.1602692.
- Dijkstra, Hylke. 2010. 'The Military Operation of the EU in Chad and the Central African Republic: Good Policy, Bad Politics'. *International Peacekeeping* 17 (3): 395–407. Doi: 10.1080/13533312.2010.500150.
- Dingott Alkopher, Tal. 2016. 'From Kosovo to Syria: The Transformation of NATO Secretaries General's Discourse on Military Humanitarian Intervention'. *European Security* 25 (1): 49–71. Doi: 10.1080/09662839.2015.1082128.
- Donais, Timothy. 2009. 'Empowerment or Imposition? Dilemmas of Local Ownership in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding Processes'. *Peace & Change* 34 (1): 3–26. Doi: 10.1111/j.1468-0130.2009.00531.x.
- Dubois, Anna, and Lars-Erik Gadde. 2002. 'Systematic Combining: An Abductive Approach to Case Research'. *Journal of Business Research* 55: 553–60. Doi: 10.1016/S0148-2963(00)00195-8.
- Dwyer, Sonya Corbin, and Jennifer L. Buckle. 2009. 'The Space Between: On Being an Insider-Outsider in Qualitative Research'. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 8 (1): 54–63. Doi: 10.1177/160940690900800105.
- Dyson, Stephen Benedict, and Thomas Preston. 2006. 'Individual Characteristics of Political Leaders and the Use of Analogy in Foreign Policy Decision Making'. *Political Psychology* 27 (2): 265–88. Doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9221.2006.00006.x.
- Edomwonyi, Oghogho. 2003. 'Rwanda : The Importance of Local Ownership of the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Process : Peacebuilding'. *Conflict Trends* 2003 (4): 43–47. Doi: 10.10520/EJC15807.
- European Council. 2018. *Council Decision: Amending and Extending Decision 2013/34/CFSP on a European Union Military Mission to Contribute to the Training of the Malian Armed Forces*

- (*EUTM Mali*). 2018/716, 14 May. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legalcontent/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018D0716&from=en>
- . 2020. 'EUTM Mali: Council Extends Training Mission with Broadened Mandate and Increased Budget'. Press release, 23 March 2020. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/03/23/eutm-mali-council-extends-training-mission-with-broadened-mandate-and-increased-budget/>.
- Fardel, Tessa, and Eric Pichon. 2020. 'The G5 Sahel and the European Union: The Challenges of Security Cooperation with a Regional Grouping'. Briefing. *European Parliament*.
- Findley, Michael G., and Tze Kwang Teo. 2006. 'Rethinking Third-Party Interventions into Civil Wars: An Actor-Centric Approach'. *The Journal of Politics* 68 (4): 828–37. Doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2508.2006.00473.x.
- Foucault, Michel. 1977. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Frowd, Philippe M. 2021. 'Borderwork Creep in West Africa's Sahel'. *Geopolitics*, March, 1–21. Doi: 10.1080/14650045.2021.1901082.
- Gamawa, Yusuf Ibrahim. 2017. *The Tuaregs and the 2012 Rebellion in Mali*. Johannesburg: Partridge Africa.
- Gegout, Catherine. 2019. 'Realism, Neocolonialism and European Military Intervention in Africa'. In *Fear and Uncertainty in Europe: The Return to Realism?*, edited by Roberto Belloni, Vincent Della Sala, and Paul Viotti, 265–88. Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-91965-2_13.
- Gent, Stephen E. 2009. 'Scapegoating Strategically: Reselection, Strategic Interaction, and the Diversionary Theory of War'. *International Interactions* 35 (1): 1–29.
- Gerring, John. 2006. *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*. 1st edition. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Gill, Rosalind. 2000. 'Discourse Analysis'. In *Qualitative Researching with Image, Sound and Text*, edited by Martin W. Bauer and George Gaskell, 172–90. London: Sage Publications.
- Gorur, Aditi. 2016. 'Defining the Boundaries of UN Stabilization Missions'. *Stimson Center* (blog). 14 December 2016. <https://www.stimson.org/2016/defining-boundaries-un-stabilization-missions/>.
- Guzzini, Stefano. 2013. *Power, Realism and Constructivism*. London: Routledge.
- Hagelin, Björn. 1988. 'Military Dependency: Thailand and the Philippines'. *Journal of Peace Research* 25 (4): 431–48.
- Hammersley, Martyn. 2008. 'Troubles with Triangulation'. In *Advances in Mixed Methods Research*, edited by Manfred Max Bergman, 22–36. London: Sage.
- Hammes, T. X. 2016. 'Raising and Mentoring Security Forces in Iraq and Afghanistan'. *Orbis* 60 (1): 52–72. Doi: 10.1016/j.orbis.2015.12.004.
- Harkness, Kristen. 2015. 'Security Assistance in Africa: The Case for More'. *The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters* 45 (2). Doi: 10.55540/0031-1723.2905.
- Hendrix, Cullen S. 2010. 'Measuring State Capacity: Theoretical and Empirical Implications for the Study of Civil Conflict'. *Journal of Peace Research* 47 (3): 273–85. Doi: 10.1177/0022343310361838.
- Henke, Marina E. 2017. 'The Politics of Diplomacy: How the United States Builds Multilateral Military Coalitions'. *International Studies Quarterly* 61 (2): 410–24. Doi: 10.1093/isq/sqx017.
- . 2019. 'Constructing Allied Cooperation'. *Cornell University Press* (blog). <https://www.cornellpress.cornell.edu/book/9781501739712/constructing-allied-cooperation/>.
- Ignatieff, Michael. 2004. *Empire Lite: Nation Building in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan*. London: Vintage Books.
- Iwuoha, Victor Chidubem. 2019. 'Clash of Counterterrorism-Assistance-Seeking States and Their Super Power Sponsors: Implications on the War against Boko Haram'. *African Security Review* 28 (1): 38–55. Doi: 10.1080/10246029.2019.1652662.
- Jackman, Robert W. 1993. *Power Without Force: The Political Capacity of Nation-States*. University of Michigan Press.

- Jarvis, Lee. 2009. *Times of Terror: Discourse, Temporality and the War on Terror*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jisselmuïden, Carel, Francis Kombe, Bator Mbengue, and Bipasha Bhattacharya. 2011. *Un Guide Pour Les Comités d'éthique de La Recherche En Afrique*. Geneva, Switzerland: Council on Health Research for Development. <https://www.cohred.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Guide-CER-version-francaise.pdf>.
- Kabonga, Itai. 2016. 'Dependency Theory and Donor Aid: A Critical Analysis'. *Africanus: Journal of Development Studies* 46 (2): 29–39. Doi: 10.25159/0304-615X/1096.
- Karlin, Mara E. 2017. *Building Militaries in Fragile States: Challenges for the United States*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Karlsrud, John, and Yf Reykers. 2018. *Multinational Rapid Response Mechanisms: From Institutional Proliferation to Institutional Exploitation*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Karssen, Julian. 2019. *Building African Solutions to American Problems US Security Assistance to the African Union Mission in Somalia (2001-2016)*. University of Oslo, dissertation.
- Kelly, Fergus. 2019. 'EU to "increase Presence and Improve Support" for Sahel Partners Fighting Terrorism'. *The Defense Post* (blog). 13 November. <https://www.thedefensepost.com/2019/11/13/eu-support-sahel-terrorism-mali/>.
- Keohane, Joseph S., and Robert O. Nye. 1977. *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company.
- Keohane, Robert O. 1988. 'International Institutions: Two Approaches'. *International Studies Quarterly* 32 (4): 379–96. Doi: 10.2307/2600589.
- Kilcullen, David. 2011. *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*. Reprint edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kincheloe, Joe L. 2005. *Critical Constructivism Primer*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Knowles, Emily, and Jahara Matisek. 2019. 'Western Security Force Assistance in Weak States'. *The RUSI Journal* 164 (3): 10–21. Doi: 10.1080/03071847.2019.1643258.
- Krasner, Stephen D. 1976. 'State Power and the Structure of International Trade'. *World Politics* 28 (3): 317–47. Doi: 10.2307/2009974.
- Langan, Mark. 2020. 'Neo-Colonialism, Nkrumah and Africa-Europe Ties'. In *Routledge Handbook of Pan-Africanism*, edited by Reiland Rabaka, Ch.6. Oxon: Routledge.
- Larsdotter, Kersti. 2015. 'Security Assistance in Africa: The Case for Less'. *The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters* 45 (2). Doi: 10.55540/0031-1723.2906.
- Layne, Christopher. 2000. 'US Hegemony and the Perpetuation of NATO'. *Journal of Strategic Studies* 23 (3): 59–91. Doi:10.1080/01402390008437800.
- Lee, Sung Yong. 2011. 'The Limit of Ethnocentric Perceptions in Civil War Peace Negotiations'. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly* 28 (3): 349–73. Doi: 10.1002/crq.20027.
- Leeds, Brett Ashley, and Burcu Savun. 2007. 'Terminating Alliances: Why Do States Abrogate Agreements?' *The Journal of Politics* 69 (4): 1118–32. Doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2508.2007.00612.x.
- Lefebvre, J. A. 1986. 'Client Dependency and Donor Dependency: Americans Arms Transfers to the Horn of Africa'. Connecticut: Univ. of Connecticut, CT. <https://www.osti.gov/biblio/7204230>.
- Lefebvre, Jeffrey A. 1987. 'Donor Dependency and American Arms Transfers to the Horn of Africa: The F-5 Legacy'. *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 25 (3): 465–88. Doi: 10.1017/S0022278X00009939.
- Lentz, Erin, Christopher B. Barrett, and John Hoddinott. 2005. 'Food Aid and Dependency: Implications for Emergency Food Security Assessments'. *SSRN*, Scholarly Paper 1142287. Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network.
- Louise Barriball, K., and Alison While. 1994. 'Collecting Data Using a Semi-Structured Interview: A Discussion Paper'. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 19 (2): 328–35. Doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2648.1994.tb01088.x.
- Mac Ginty, Roger, and Oliver P Richmond. 2013. 'The Local Turn in Peace Building: A Critical Agenda for Peace'. *Third World Quarterly* 34 (5): 763–83. Doi: 10.1080/01436597.2013.800750.

- Macron, Emmanuel. 2017. 'United Nations General Assembly – Speech by M. Emmanuel Macron, President of the Republic'. France Diplomacy - Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. 19 September. <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/united-nations/news-and-events/united-nations-general-assembly/unga-s-72nd-session/article/united-nations-general-assembly-speech-by-m-emmanuel-macron-president-of-the>.
- Mann, Gregory. 2021. 'French Colonialism and the Making off the Modern Sahel'. In *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel*, edited by Leonardo A. Villalòn, 35–50. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Marsh, David, Selen A. Ercan, and Paul Furlong. 2017. 'A Skin Not a Sweater: Ontology and Epistemology in Political Science'. In *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, edited by Vivien Lowndes, David Marsh, and Gerry Stoker. London: Macmillan Publishers Limited.
- Marsh, Nicholas, Øystein H Rolandsen, Julian Karssen, and Marie Sandnes. 2020. 'Compounding Fragmentation: Security Force Assistance to Fragile States in the Sahel and Horn of Africa'. PRIO Report. Oslo: PRIO.
- Marston, Daniel Patrick. 2021. 'Operation TELIC VIII to XI: Difficulties of Twenty-First-Century Command'. *Journal of Strategic Studies* 44 (1): 63–90. Doi: 10.1080/01402390.2019.1672161.
- Matisek, Jahara, and William Reno. 2019. 'Getting American Security Force Assistance Right: Political Context Matters'. *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 92 (January): 65–73. https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/jfq/jfq-92/jfq-92_65-73_Matisek-Reno.pdf
- Mboya, Cliff. 2021. 'Will China Get Involved in the Sahel?' *The Africa Report*, 9 December. <https://www.theafricareport.com/155211/will-china-get-involved-in-the-sahel/>.
- Ministère des Armées (France). 2019. 'Dossier de Presse: Operation Barkhane'. *Association de Soutien à l'Armée Française*. https://www.asafrance.fr/images/dossier-presse-cema_operation-barkhane_mort-au-combat-13-militaires-mali_25-novembre-2019.pdf.
- Moss, Todd J., Gunilla Pettersson Gelande, and Nicolas van de Walle. 2006. 'An Aid-Institutions Paradox? A Review Essay on Aid Dependency and State Building in Sub-Saharan Africa'. *SSRN*, Scholarly Paper ID 860826. Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network.
- Narten, Jens. 2008. 'Post-Conflict Peacebuilding and Local Ownership: Dynamics of External–Local Interaction in Kosovo under United Nations Administration'. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 2 (3): 369–90. Doi: 10.1080/17502970802436361.
- Nilsson, Mikael. 2008. 'The Power of Technology: U.S. Hegemony and the Transfer of Guided Missiles to NATO during the Cold War, 1953–1962'. *Comparative Technology Transfer and Society* 6 (2): 127–49. Doi: 10.1353/ctt.0.0007.
- Nowell, Lorelli S., Jill M. Norris, Deborah E. White, and Nancy J. Moules. 2017. 'Thematic Analysis: Striving to Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria'. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 16 (1). Doi: 10.1177/1609406917733847.
- Ntienjom Mbohohou, Léger Félix, and Sule Tomkinson. 2022. 'Rethinking Elite Interviews Through Moments of Discomfort: The Role of Information and Power'. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 21 (1): 1–10. Doi: 10.1177/16094069221095312.
- Oliveira, Ricardo Soares de, and Harry Verhoeven. 2018. 'Taming Intervention: Sovereignty, Statehood and Political Order in Africa'. *Survival* 60 (2): 7–32. Doi: 10.1080/00396338.2018.1448558.
- Paavola, Sami. 2005. 'Peircean Abduction: Instinct or Inference?' *Semiotica* (153-1/4): 131–54. Doi: 10.1515/semi.2005.2005.153-1-4.131.
- Packenham, Robert A. 1973. *Liberal America and the Third World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Paffenholz, Thania. 2015. 'Unpacking the Local Turn in Peacebuilding: A Critical Assessment towards an Agenda for Future Research'. *Third World Quarterly* 36 (5): 857–74. Doi: 10.1080/01436597.2015.1029908.
- Paris, Roland. 1997. 'Peacebuilding and the Limits of Liberal Internationalism'. *International Security* 22 (2): 54–89. Doi: 10.2307/2539367.

- Parsons, Craig. 2017. 'Constructivism and Interpretive Theory'. In *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, edited by Vivien Lowndes, David Marsh, and Gerry Stoker, Ch.5. London: Macmillan Publishers Limited.
- Patton, Michael Quinn. 2002. *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*. Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE.
- Peiffer, Caryn, and Pierre Englebert. 2012. 'Extraversion, Vulnerability to Donors, and Political Liberalization in Africa'. *African Affairs* 111 (444): 355–78. Doi: 10.1093/afraf/ads029.
- Phillips, Nelson, and Cynthia Hardy. 2002. *Discourse Analysis: Investigating Processes of Social Construction*. Thousand Oaks, SAGE Publications.
- Pollitt, C., C. Talbot, J. Caulfield, and A. Smullen. 2004. *Agencies: How Governments Do Things Through Semi-Autonomous Organizations*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Potter, Jonathan. 1996. *Representing Reality: Discourse, Rhetoric and Social Construction*. London: SAGE.
- Reich, Hannah. 2006. "'Local Ownership" in Conflict Transformation Projects: Partnership, Participation or Patronage?' *Berghof Foundation*. <https://berghof-foundation.org/library/local-ownership-in-conflict-transformation-projects-partnership-participation-or-patronage>.
- Richmond, Oliver P. 2006. 'The Problem of Peace: Understanding the "Liberal Peace"'. *Conflict, Security & Development* 6 (3): 291–314. Doi: 10.1080/14678800600933480.
- Rolandsen, Øystein H., Maggie Dwyer, and William Reno. 2021. 'Security Force Assistance to Fragile States: A Framework of Analysis'. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 15 (5): 563–79. Doi: 10.1080/17502977.2021.1988224.
- Rupesinghe, Natasja, and Morten Bøås. 2019. 'Local Drivers of Violent Extremism in Central Mali'. *NUPI Report no. 21*.
- Saideman, Stephen M. 2016. 'The Ambivalent Coalition: Doing the Least One Can Do against the Islamic State'. *Contemporary Security Policy* 37 (2): 289–305. Doi: 10.1080/13523260.2016.1183414.
- Sherif, Bahira. 2001. 'The Ambiguity of Boundaries in the Fieldwork Experience: Establishing Rapport and Negotiating Insider/Outsider Status'. *Qualitative Inquiry* 7 (4): 436–47. Doi: 10.1177/107780040100700403.
- Shurkin, Michael, John IV Gordon, Bryan Frederick, and Christopher G. Pernin. 2017. *Building Armies, Building Nations: Toward a New Approach to Security Force Assistance*. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1832.html.
- Steinberg, Paul F. 2015. 'Can We Generalize from Case Studies?' *Global Environmental Politics* 15 (3): 152–75. Doi: 10.1162/GLEP_a_00316
- Suhrke, Astri. 2012. *When More Is Less: The International Project in Afghanistan*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Thurston, Alexander. 2020. *Jihadists of North Africa and the Sahel*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Timmermans, Stefan, and Iddo Tavory. 2012. 'Theory Construction in Qualitative Research: From Grounded Theory to Abductive Analysis'. *Sociological Theory* 30 (3): 167–86. Doi: 10.1177/0735275112457914.
- Tobin, Gerard A., and Cecily M. Begley. 2004. 'Methodological Rigour within a Qualitative Framework'. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 48 (4): 388–96. Doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2648.2004.03207.x.
- UN Security Council. 2013. 'Resolution 2100'. S/RES/2100. UN Security Council.
- . 2017. 'Resolution 2364'. S/RES/2364. 7.
- Velody, Irving, and Robin Williams, eds. 1998. *The Politics of Constructionism*. London: SAGE Publication.
- Verhoest, Koen, B. Guy Peters, Geert Bouckaert, and Bram Verschuere. 2004. 'The Study of Organisational Autonomy: A Conceptual Review'. *Public Administration and Development* 24 (2): 101–18. Doi: 10.1002/pad.316.

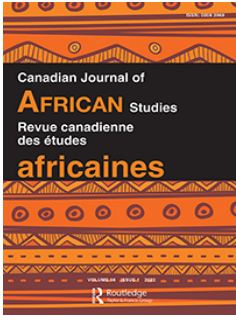
- Walt, Stephen M. 1985. 'Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power'. *International Security* 9 (4): 3–43. Doi: 10.2307/2538540.
- . 1990. *The Origins of Alliances*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
<https://www.cornellpress.cornell.edu/book/9780801494185/the-origins-of-alliances/>.
- Weber, Martin. 2014. 'Between "Ises" and "Oughts": IR Constructivism, Critical Theory, and the Challenge of Political Philosophy'. *European Journal of International Relations* 20 (2): 516–43. Doi: 10.1177/1354066112466573.
- Weinstein, Warren. 1975. 'The Limits of Military Dependency: The Case of Belgian Military Aid to Burundi, 1961-1973'. *Journal of African Studies* 2 (3): 419–31.
<https://www.africabib.org/rec.php?RID=184803128>
- Wessel, Ramses A., and Steven Blockmans. 2013. 'Between Autonomy and Dependence: The EU Legal Order Under the Influence of International Organisations—An Introduction'. In *Between Autonomy and Dependence: The EU Legal Order under the Influence of International Organisations*, edited by Ramses A. Wessel and Steven Blockmans, 1–9. The Hague: T.M.C. Asser Press.
- Wilén, Nina. 2021. 'Analysing (In)Formal Relations and Networks in Security Force Assistance: The Case of Niger'. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, September, 1–18. Doi: 10.1080/17502977.2021.1958546.
- Wolfe, Wojtek Mackiewicz. 2008. *Winning the War of Words: Selling the War on Terror from Afghanistan to Iraq*. London: Praeger Security International.
- Yin, Robert K. 2003. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Third edition. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.
- . 2017. *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*. 6th edition. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.

Part II - Articles

ARTICLE 1: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE G5 SAHEL JOINT FORCE AND EXTERNAL ACTORS: A DISCURSIVE INTERPRETATION.

Sandnes, M. 2022. 'The relationship between the G5 Sahel Joint Force and external actors
A discursive interpretation.' *Canadian Journal of African Studies*.

Doi: 10.1080/00083968.2022.2058572.



The relationship between the G5 Sahel Joint Force and external actors: a discursive interpretation

Marie Sandnes

To cite this article: Marie Sandnes (2022): The relationship between the G5 Sahel Joint Force and external actors: a discursive interpretation, Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue canadienne des études africaines, DOI: [10.1080/00083968.2022.2058572](https://doi.org/10.1080/00083968.2022.2058572)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00083968.2022.2058572>



© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 10 May 2022.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

The relationship between the G5 Sahel Joint Force and external actors: a discursive interpretation

Marie Sandnes 

Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) and University of Oslo, Norway

ABSTRACT

Drawing and expanding on the literature on discourses and intervention, this article investigates how the relationship between the G5 Sahel Joint Force (G5S-JF) and external actors (the UN, EU and France) came about. To understand the dynamics between the joint force and these external actors, I critically analyse the external actors' discourse on the security situation in the Sahel and examine how G5 member states have related to this discourse. The relationship has manifested in various ways, including military capacity building and resource distribution, where external actors hold significant influence over the joint force. Although the G5S-JF and the G5 member states exert agency through managing and to some extent controlling their dependency on external actors, such a dynamic has implications for the G5S-JF's sub-regional ownership and sustainability.

RÉSUMÉ

En s'inspirant de la littérature sur les discours et l'intervention, et en l'approfondissant, cet article examine comment la relation entre la Force conjointe du G5 Sahel (FCG5S) et les acteurs extérieurs (l'ONU, l'UE et la France) a pris forme. Pour comprendre la dynamique entre la Force conjointe et ces acteurs extérieurs, j'analyse de manière critique le discours des acteurs extérieurs sur la situation sécuritaire au Sahel, et j'examine comment les États membres du G5 se sont reliés à ce discours. Cette relation s'est manifestée de diverses manières, notamment par le renforcement des capacités militaires et la distribution des ressources, où les acteurs extérieurs exercent une influence importante sur la Force conjointe. Bien que la FCG5S et les États-membres du G5 exercent une influence en gérant et en contrôlant quelque peu leur dépendance à l'égard des acteurs extérieurs, cette dynamique a des répercussions sur l'appropriation et la durabilité de la FCG5S au niveau sous régional.

KEYWORDS

Sahel; security; power relations; critical discourse analysis; military cooperation

MOTS-CLÉS

Sahel; sécurité; relations de pouvoir; analyse critique du discours; coopération militaire

Introduction

The literature on discourse and interventions shows that the actions of intervening military actors are impacted by how foreign policy discourse conceptualises the conflict

CONTACT Marie Sandnes  marsan@prio.org  Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) and University of Oslo, Norway

© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

situation, frames identities and justifies external involvement in a conflict (Boucher 2009; Holland 2012; Alkopher 2016). In this article, I build on this literature and study how discourse not only provides discursive grounds for military intervention but also justifies and shapes cooperation between different military actors. Specifically, I examine how discourse has mattered for the relationship between the G5 Sahel Joint Force (G5S-JF) and external military actors in the Sahel region.

Many studies on the turbulent security situation in the Sahel revolve around the involvement of external actors, such as the UN and its Multidimensional Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) (Lyammouri 2018), the European Union and its Training Mission in Mali (EUTM) (Tull 2020), or the former colonial power France and its military operation Barkhane in the Sahel region (Guichaoua 2020). Limited attention has thus far been given to the relationship between these external actors and the emerging sub-regional level of the G5S-JF.¹ With this paper, I seek to generate a clearer understanding of this relationship through a discursive interpretation.

The G5 Sahel organisation was established in 2014 as a platform for political coordination among Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Chad. In 2017, this organisation established a joint military coalition, the G5S-JF. The 5000-troop-strong force was mandated to “combat terrorism, drug trafficking and human trafficking” (AU Peace and Security Council 2017, 3). The G5S-JF was pointed to early on as an African solution to an African problem (Campbell 2017), and presented as having a home-grown and sub-regional identity. However, since its establishment, the G5S-JF has received criticism for being fragile (Cold-Ravnkilde 2018) and for not having a peaceful effect on the security situation in the Sahel (International Crisis Group 2017). Despite these critiques, the joint force appears to constitute an important cooperation partner for many external actors.

The G5S-JF receives substantial support from MINUSMA, the EUTM and Barkhane, such as military capacity building, logistical support, financial assistance and resources, and in 2020 the joint force and Barkhane entered into a shared command. This paper examines the discursive foundation of the relationship between the G5S-JF and these external actors. I focus on the external actors’ discourse on the Sahel prior to the G5S-JF’s establishment, and discuss how this relates to the power relations between the G5S-JF and external actors through also analysing the discourse of G5 member states. I ask: *How has external actors’ discourse towards the Sahel justified and shaped military cooperation between the G5S-JF and external actors?*

The external actors whose discourse I examine have been narrowed down to those engaged militarily in the Sahel: France through Operation Barkhane, the EU through EUTM Mali and the UN through MINUSMA. The discourse of the G5 refers to that of Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania and the G5 organisation. The discourse analysis is split into three sections. In the first section, I analyse the *knowledge creation* of the security situation of the Sahel through the lens of the discourses on terrorism and fragile states, prior to the G5S-JF’s establishment. In the second, I examine the resulting *power dynamics* created between the different military actors engaged in the Sahel. In the final part of the analysis, I deliberate on the *manifestations* of the first two analytical points in the Sahel. Following this, I discuss the discourse in relation to the current relationships between the G5S-JF and external actors through a focus on finances, resources and military capacity building.

Drawing and expanding on the literature on discourse and interventions, I argue that changes in the conceptualisation of the security threat in the Sahel resulted in corresponding changes in defining the actor(s) responsible for responding to this insecurity. This shaped the identity of the transnational and sub-regional G5S-JF when it was established. I further argue that the discourse not only legitimises external actors' presence in the region but also frames external support as essential for the existence of the G5S-JF. Whilst this puts the G5S-JF in a position of dependency, such a position is also navigated by the G5 member states and thus the G5S-JF. Support from external actors may indeed be vital for the joint force to continue, but this has implications for the joint force's independence and thus also its sustainability. Such a reliance suggests a lack of local ownership, calling the joint force's alleged "home-grownness" into question. Taken to its conclusion, the analysis suggests that the G5S-JF may continue to exist only so long as there is external interest in sustaining it.

Theoretical and analytical framework

There is a broad literature on discourses and military interventions that treats discourse as important because knowledge, or perceived knowledge, constitutes the basis for decision-making. Part of the discourse and intervention literature points to how conceptualisation of threats affords responsibility to various actors (Alkopher 2016). If a threat is conceptualised as national, the responsible actor will most often be the state; if it is conceptualised as transnational, then the responsibility is often assumed to be multinational. For instance, terrorism is often portrayed as a global threat, and this has resulted in global responses to this threat, predominantly seen as part of the global war on terror (Jackson 2005).

Further, the discourse and intervention literature highlights how discourses often create identities through contrast, such as "good" and "evil," "strong" and "fragile," or "us" and "them" (Boucher 2009). A discourse's shaping of identity is therefore often presented through opposites. In the discourse on fragile states, we see that there is a separation between the "fragile" and the "strong." This creates a normative distinction between actors, thereby producing a narrative that can further justify and to some extent legitimise certain policies and actions (Ahmed 2005).

The literature on discourse and interventions points to the causal pathway between a discourse and military interventions. The shaping of identities through contrasts puts one side in the "right" and the other in the "wrong" (Cap 2010). In the fragile state discourse, we see that the manner in which certain states are classified as fragile and others as strong provides justification for the allegedly strong states to assist the allegedly fragile ones. In this way, discourses are constitutive, and determining, of assumed fixed categories. The discourses on terrorism and fragile states are clear examples of this phenomenon, where the label of terrorism presents a global threat, and so-called fragile states are framed as in need of assistance. This also relates to the increasingly common form of external interventions in allegedly fragile contests: security force assistance (SFA). SFA "consists of training and equipping military and civilian security forces to enhance professionalism and operational capacity" (Marsh et al. 2020, 6). The concepts of terrorism and fragile states thus hold political power, as various definitions may serve a range of political purposes, such as legitimising and de-legitimising actions and actors (Jackson 2005).

Studying conceptualisations and identities in a discourse therefore implies the study of the discursive process of empowering certain people, values and knowledge and marginalising others (Van Dijk 2006). Such studies can thus provide valuable insights for understanding military interventions.

This article expands on this literature and critically examines how these aspects of a discourse impact military cooperation and military relations, a perspective not previously given much space in the literature on discourse and intervention. In particular, I study the power dynamics between external actors and the G5S-JF. To do so, the host states' perspectives must also be included.

Host states of external interventions are not passive players in the relationships that form during an external intervention. On the contrary, Soares de Oliveira and Verhoeven (2018, 8) argue that African elites "have been taming intervention: they have adopted interventionist tropes and practices so as to put them at the service of the (re-)enforcement of political order." In fact, many African elites seek out external intervention, because it could stabilise a relatively fragile context, strengthen the state and, not least, result in financial flows to the country. Cold-Ravnkilde (2021), for instance, demonstrates how Mali as a host state performs sovereignty through manoeuvring within its partnership with the intervening actor, the EU, and Frowd (2021) uncovers similar patterns in Niger. This logic builds on the rationale of extraversion: that many African states express their own sovereignty through managing their dependence on external actors (Bayart and Ellis 2000). This may, however, place political elites in Africa in a squeeze between responding to domestic audiences and pleasing external interveners when it comes to national sovereignty (Guichaoua 2020, 911). This implies that there are complex power dynamics at stake in military interventions, where external actors may indeed exert power, but where the host (here, the G5S-JF) manages and to some extent controls the influence of external actors. This would not diminish external influence on the joint force, but it places interesting power dynamics at stake.

I apply critical discourse analysis to the case presented here because it emphasises the relationship between power and discourse. Critical discourse analysis allows me to examine and demonstrate the causal pathway between the discourse's conceptualisation of security threats, attribution of responsibility and framing of identities, and the power relations between the G5S-JF and external actors. I connect the power of influence to discursive knowledge, in the sense that language produces knowledge, knowledge produces power through influence, and this results in actions (Phillips and Hardy 2002, 3).

However, discourse does not appear on its own. Regarding the security context in the Sahel, Cold-Ravnkilde and Jacobsen (2020, 859) state that

intervention continuity and escalation cannot be explained simply with reference to frameworks of "success" or "failure," but require a broader conceptualization of effects, including how specific threat perceptions, rationales and problematization get constituted and consolidated through and during ongoing intervention practices.

Further, as Weber (2013) demonstrates, it is not only states that construct what the international system looks like. In other words, a state is not the sole "author of a discourse." Rather, the actions and discourses of states also stem from society: from the practices that construct the state itself, or the reality that is presented through media and public debate. While discourse emerges from and reflects a reality, this article focuses on how discourse

matters for that reality. Hence, I do not intend to study the motivations behind a discourse. Not only are such intentions difficult to verify (Erforth 2020, 562), but decisions of language use may boil down to the banality of everyday life. Rather, this is a study of how language and discourse, intentional or not, created a space for the establishment of the G5S-JF, framed its identity and shaped the power relations between the joint force and external actors. I therefore view power as relational (Guzzini 2013); it must be examined within relationships, in terms of both influence and management of that influence.

The discourse analysed in this article is collected from over 130 official documents, resolutions, reports and statements from the UN, EU and France. While there are a variety of (often divergent) visions of the Sahel region, as displayed through the many Sahel strategies from state and multilateral actors, a discussion of the differences in these actors' conceptualisations of the region is outside the scope of this paper. I focus instead on the similarities found in these actors' discourses. The Sahelian discourse, which complements the analysis, is gathered from over 50 official documents, communiqués and other statements from the G5 member states and organisation. Although there are internal dynamics of disagreements and varying national interests of the G5, a thorough analysis of these is also outside the article's scope.

Two of the external actors are multinational organisations, and one is a state. I have intentionally narrowed the scope of the analysed discourse to fit that of key external military actors in the Sahel. It must also be mentioned that France plays an important role in the UN and the EU. France is one of the economically and militarily strongest – and thus also one of the most influential – states within the EU. Being a permanent member of the UN Security Council, France is also the penholder for all resolutions on Mali, many of which are analysed here. In other words, the EU and UN are also impacted by French policies and discourses, which in the context of the Sahel have been criticised for having neo-imperialist connotations (see for instance Charbonneau 2008). France continues to play an important role in its former colonies, financially, politically and through security policies. It is thus critical to keep France's colonial legacy in mind for this analysis.

The analysed documents date mostly from 2012 to 2017, meaning from when the rebellion broke out in Mali² – which intensified perceptions of insecurity with the potential to spread to neighbouring countries – to when the G5S-JF was established. When working with subjective documentary data, it is useful to also engage with other sources to verify one's work and ensure its credibility. Therefore, I also draw on the academic literature and 30 semi-structured interviews³ with personnel active within political or military circles in the Sahel.⁴ As the interviews were conducted in 2019 and 2020, they fall outside the time frame of the discourses I analyse (from 2012 to 2017). The interviews and academic literature therefore contribute to the discussion and analysis of the discourse, but do not themselves constitute the discourse. The following discourse analysis is divided into three parts: knowledge creation, power dynamics and manifestations of the discourse.

Knowledge creation

Fragile state discourse

The external discourse on the Sahel is often mobilised through tropes about fragile statehood. According to the EU, "[t]he Sahel region faces a number of pressing challenges such

as extreme poverty, frequent food crises, high population growth rates, institutional weaknesses, irregular migration and related crimes such as trafficking in human beings and migrant smuggling” (European External Action Services 2016, 1). Using words such as “pressing,” “extreme” and “frequent” brings out the urgency of action. Further, by stating that some of the main factors of the Sahelian crisis are “poverty and underdevelopment that feed the informal economy [and] corruption and weaken local institutions,” which allows violent extremist groups to “take advantage of the instability to thrive from a shadow economy” (Jacques 2018, translated by the author), French ministers also assume a lack of structure on the part of the Sahelian states to respond to security threats alone.

Pointing to Mali, the UN News webpage stated on 14 August 2020 that the country’s security situation “stems from long-standing structural conditions such as weak state institutions.” The EU has expressed that “Chad remains a fragile country” (EU External Action Service 2016); similarly, according to the European Commission’s website as of October 2021, “Burkina Faso remain[s] fragile.”⁵ Furthermore, the UN has expressed that Chad and Niger “offer the clearest examples showing that urgent action is required to meet basic needs and shore up stability to prevent these fragile countries from tipping into crisis” (UN 2015). Mauritania stands out as a possible exception, as the European Commission claimed on their website as of October 2021 that it “has in more recent years managed to maintain internal stability.”⁶ This language reveals that the G5 Sahel states, except perhaps Mauritania, are characterised by the UN, France and the EU as having weak institutions and a large set of subsequent challenges.

By labelling challenges in the Sahel as structural, the external actors’ discourse suggests that these states are not capable of overcoming the challenges without assistance. This can be demonstrated by the EU stating that “regional and international coordination is key to ensure the effectiveness of international efforts in support to local and regional endeavours” in the Sahel (European Council 2014, 3). Regarding the Malian security situation, the UN has emphasised the importance of “close coordination with other bilateral partners, donors and international organizations engaged in these fields” (UN Security Council 2013, 7). In Chad, the UN also encouraged “the donor community to sustain its efforts to address the humanitarian, reconstruction and development needs of Chad” (UN Security Council 2009, 6). Furthermore, the fragile state discourse suggests that the security challenges constitute a threat beyond the states’ borders. The EU noted in 2015 that the above-mentioned security challenges “have potential spill-over effects outside the region, including the EU” (European Council 2015, 4). Thus, this discourse frames and is constitutive of the UN, EU and France’s knowledge about the region, which – accurately or not – creates an underlying need and justification for external support to the region.

The G5 member states are not particularly vocal about the fragility of their state structures. However, they do call for external support, such as when the late Chadian president Idriss Déby expressed in 2016 that “the situation deserves a deep assessment of the international community, in order to put an end to this conflict” (Déby 2016, 6). In 2013, after the French intervention Serval had regained control over several cities in northern Mali, the late president Dioncounda Traoré thanked the French forces for “responding positively and without delay to our request for military assistance” (Traoré 2013, 2). Thus, adhering to such external discourse calling for external involvement in the region has become a way for political elites to strengthen their positions through acquisition of

military and financial assistance. In the words of Soares de Oliveira and Verhoeven (2018, 8): “African states have displayed remarkable agency in turning their fragility into a discursive and material resource in an evolving transnational context.”

Not only is the situation in the Sahel framed by external actors and the G5 member states as one in need of support from external actors, but the framing justifies such support through identifying the threat as directly impacting these external actors if not dealt with in the Sahel. Therefore, the fragile state discourse established a consensus that external actors were to play a critical role in the Sahel security domain before the G5S-JF was launched.

Discourse on terrorism and organised crime

The threat of terrorism has increasingly been part of the discourse on the Sahel in recent years. In 2012, the UN reiterated its serious concern about “the increasing entrenchment of terrorist elements including Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), affiliated groups and other extremist groups, and its consequences for the countries of the Sahel and beyond” (UN Security Council 2012b, 1). In 2013, the foreign minister of France stated that “we need to stop the terrorists, or else Mali will fall into their hands” (Fabius 2013; cf. Erforth 2020, 569), and the EU has expressed its “deep concern at the continued extension of terrorist activities in the Sahel region” (European Council 2018). The terrorism discourse therefore also shapes our knowledge about the Sahel.

This discourse has also been adopted by Sahelian states. Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso are particularly subject to violence from al Qaeda and Islamic State-affiliated groups, and Sahelian states thus echo the external discourse on terrorism as a significant threat. In 2016, the late Chadian president Déby expressed that “Africa is today under attack of the full force by terrorism,” stating that it is “the threat of the century” (Déby 2016). Whilst praising his own country for having “cleared all terrorist pockets” domestically, the Mauritanian president Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz specifically stated that “terrorists have found a favourable home in northern Mali” (G5 Sahel 2016a). The G5 member states thus differ in how they use the discourse on terrorism – but it is actively used nevertheless.

In 2015, the UN identified with “growing concern the transnational dimension of the terrorist threat in the Sahel region” (UN Security Council 2015, 3). Terrorism is here identified as a transnational threat, which means that it exists within and between several states, but has also moved beyond its territory of origin, thereby posing a threat to external regions. This suggests that “terrorism can only be defeated by a sustained and comprehensive approach involving the active participation and collaboration of all States, and regional and international organizations[,] to impede, impair, and isolate the terrorist threat” (UN Security Council 2013, 1). Hence, with the use of the label “terrorism,” the Sahel security situation is framed as a threat to external actors and regions. This is another justification for an external presence in the Sahel.

What stands out in the discourse on terrorism in the Sahel is its links with organised crime. This has changed since 2012, when the UN expressed its concern for “criminal groups activities in the north of Mali” (UN Security Council 2012b, 1). In the following years, the UN, EU and France began to consistently associate terrorism and crime, implying that they come as a pair, using language such as “fight against terrorism and

organized crime” (Gillier 2015, 3), “combat terrorism and organised crime” (European External Action Services 2016, 2) and “the impact of terrorism and transnational organised crime” (UN Security Council 2017b, 1). This idea of a crime–terror nexus is largely rhetorical and is supported by only tenuous evidence. Furthermore, this nexus poses challenges not only for the exercise of labelling, but even more for what the response to such associated threats ought to be, and whose responsibility it is to act.⁷

The G5 Sahel member states’ discourse on the threat picture mimicked that of external actors. Nigerien president Issoufou Mahamadou linked terrorism with organised crime in 2014 (Mahamadou 2014, 6), and a couple of years later the G5 Sahel organisation stated that “drug trafficking, especially in cross-border areas, fuels this terrorist threat” (G5 Sahel 2016b). Through using language similar to that of external actors, and by viewing these threats as common, the G5 member states emphasise the importance of the Sahel region to European and Western security. Thus, it appears that the G5 member states attempt to pull external actors into the mix as a way of managing and encouraging external investments to the region, as proposed by the extraversion theory.

Hence, the fragile state and terrorism discourses frame security threats in the Sahel as constituting a danger to external actors, and render external involvement in the Sahel not only justified but also indispensable. In light of this creation of discursive knowledge about the Sahelian security situation, the following section will highlight what the discourse’s conceptualisation of the security threat means for the specific power dynamics that have occurred between various actors, through identifying the presented solutions to this threat and the associated division of responsibility in the discourse.

Power dynamics

Identifying the solution

The knowledge creation section of this article demonstrated how insecurity is framed through the fragile state and terrorism discourses and, further, how this creates consensus for external involvement in the region. As a military-focused solution, the UN stated that training of the *forces armées Maliennes* (FAMa) “is vital to ensure Mali’s long-term security and stability” (UN Security Council 2013, 9). The very existence of EUTM Mali is based on this logic: they support and train FAMa “to meet their operational needs by providing expertise and advice, in particular as regards command and control, logistical chains, human resources and international humanitarian law” (European External Action Services 2016, 2). Operation Barkhane – deployed in 2014 when it took over for the French operations Serval in Mali and Épervier in Chad – was mandated to operate in Mali, Niger and Chad through the lenses of counter-terrorism and cooperation with the national armies (France Ministère des Armées 2020). Épervier had previously been deployed in Chad since 1986, signifying Barkhane as a continuation of France’s presence in the region. France’s role in the Sahel today is thus a legacy of France’s colonial footprint. In 2015, the UN encouraged Barkhane in its effort “to support G5 Member States to increase regional counter-terrorism cooperation” (UN Security Council 2015, 3). This implies that it is the training of G5 national armies justified through the fragile state discourse, and not the national armies *per se*, that constitutes the solution to the security situation. The solution thus falls to the trainers, or the external actors.

In 2017, the UN welcomed “the continued action by the French forces,” but this time in the capacity of “deter[ring] the terrorist threat in the North of Mali” (UN Security Council 2017b, 3). This speaks to France’s identity as a significant military actor in the Sahel as the previous colonial power, not only through military training and assistance but essentially also as a security provider in the face of the threat labelled terrorism, which then removes some of the responsibility of national armies. This is in line with France’s colonial legacy, where, for instance, it has retained its presence, such as through providing military capacity building to its former colonies’ armies, to maintain its influence.

The discursive prominence of capacity building mimics the tendencies we see from Western militaries in the past couple of decades: more willingness to engage in military capacity building than in combat missions. The continual call for support of national forces of the G5 – such as when the EU called for “renewed support for the political efforts of the G5 Sahel countries,” including for “the capacity of these countries to combat terrorism and trafficking” (European Commission 2018) – is therefore interesting if viewed through the literature on SFA. This literature suggests that SFA’s impact is less significant than when engaging own combat forces (Biddle et al. 2018). It is also considered cheaper and less risky for the intervening state’s own soldiers, which can explain why this type of assistance has been prioritised, at least from the European side.⁸ As such, the EU has indeed demonstrated that it is doing something through SFA, but without engaging troops on the battleground until 2020.⁹

The G5 member states do not refer to their own militaries as weak, but still encourage external actors to provide support through training and resources for these militaries. In 2015, Malian president Ibrahim Boubacar Keita thanked the EUTM for helping to build the aim of “a republican army, perfectly trained and equipped” (Studio Tamani 2014), and the Nigerien president stated in 2017 that, with external support, the government will “continue to implement programs to build up the defense and security forces” (Mahamadou 2017). Such language encourages the international community to pay greater attention to the Sahel region, not least to mobilise for support. At the end of the day, this external involvement will benefit the political elites of the G5 states through providing resources, shoring up the legitimacy of the regime, and supplying means to manage and stabilise the security situation.

Hence, the discursive notion of training the G5 militaries as the solution to the security situation feeds the narrative of external actors as strong and competent, and G5 national actors as in need of capacity. The states of the Sahelian region do not explicitly characterise their own militaries as fragile, but they do mimic the external discourse that posits training and support to their militaries as desirable and necessary. This raises questions about the division of responsibilities in addressing the threat established by the discourse.

Division of responsibilities

As the discourse on the Sahel is characterised by a threat of national, regional and international relevance, it is vital to understand how the responsibility for addressing this threat is divided across these levels. In terms of providing security on the ground, the UN has stressed the importance of, for instance, FAMA taking “full responsibility for providing security throughout the Malian territory” (UN Security Council 2013, 9). This expectation of full responsibility for security provision appears contradictory in light of the UN’s

simultaneous claims that Sahelian armies are in need of training to achieve the capacity to do so. The responsibility for providing these armies with this capacity thus lies essentially with their trainers, the EUTM and Barkhane. Hence, despite the SFA objective of empowering national armies, this discourse in fact also empowers external actors by providing them with influence over national militaries.

However, as demonstrated in the knowledge creation section, the security situation in the Sahel is constructed both as a transnational threat and as one in which terrorism and crime come as a pair. Framing the threat as the twinned concepts of terrorism and organised crime complicates considerations of who is responsible for providing a solution. Although there are international agencies addressing “international crime,” such as Interpol, crime is often considered the responsibility of a state and its internal security apparatus. As organised crime has been framed by the discourse as “transnational,” spilling over state borders, this also implies a sub-regional responsibility in addressing it.

On the other hand, the label of terrorism carries with it global responsibility, due to the widespread threat this allegedly poses. The conceptualisation of the terrorism threat as global and the threat of crime as national, when combined with the discursive framing of terrorism and crime as a pair, implies a need for collaboration between these levels. Although this could be viewed as external actors justifying their own presence in the Sahel, this blurring of responsibility can also be beneficial for host states. This was demonstrated by Frowd (2021) when he showed how Niger intentionally expanded its border management along EU lines because of support received and training for various ministries and roles that benefit the state. Cold-Ravnskilde (2021) demonstrated similar processes in Mali. The blurring of threats is thus a way for external actors to enhance and justify their presence in the Sahel – and is convenient for bringing together development and security contexts in light of limited budgets – but also is a way for the G5 member states to benefit internally from external actors’ presence. Moreover, the picture of the threat not only allows for but to some extent encourages a larger space for the sub-region of the G5 Sahel, which finds itself situated between the national and the international levels. Between 2012 and 2017, this sub-regional level was increasingly emphasised in the external actors’ discourse.

In 2012, the UN urged “Sahel and Maghreb States to enhance interregional cooperation and coordination in order to take all necessary measures to develop strategies to combat AQIM activities” (UN Security Council 2012a, 5). Following this, the G5 Sahel organisation was established in 2014. The UN welcomed “the establishment of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5),” and particularly underscored “the importance of achieving regional ownership and response” to the security threats (UN Security Council 2015, 3). Simultaneously, there was a shift in the EU Sahel strategy, which in 2011 included only Mali, Mauritania and Niger (European External Action Service 2011), but which in 2014 expanded to also include Burkina Faso and Chad (European Council 2014). Therefore, we see that a better framed and (re)defined sub-regional level was given increasing attention in the discourse, at the same time as the discourse started to emphasise the transnational elements of the threat.

Despite the establishment of the G5 Sahel organisation, the UN continued to encourage “the Member States of the Sahel region to *improve* coordination to combat recurrent threats in the Sahel” (UN Security Council 2015, 10, italics added), thereby suggesting the coordination was not adequate. Later, more pressure was put on the region when the UN

underscored “the *responsibility* of the countries in the region in addressing these threats and challenges” (UN Security Council 2016, 3, italics added). This shows that the UN shifted from *encouraging* regional actors and states to improve their response to the security threat, in 2015, to assigning the Sahel region the *responsibility* to do so, in 2016.

In some ways this works against the G5 member states’ attempt to draw external actors to intervene in the region. However, at the same time, Operation Barkhane, MINUSMA and the EUTM had already intervened and become active in the Sahel region, thus also benefiting the elites of the G5 member states. Assuming the regional responsibility as the UN urged could thus bring further external support and attention to the G5 member states.

We see that the external discourse places the responsibility to respond to the security situation on the national actors, but at the same time frames external support as indispensable. As the discourse increasingly emphasised the transnationality of the security challenges, there was a simultaneous call for the sub-region to cooperate. Intentional or not, the discourse created and facilitated a space for a sub-regional military response to the security threat. If we understand power in the sense of persuasion and influence, we can see that the subsequent establishment of the G5S-JF in 2017 responded to the external actors’ discursive push for more cooperation on security issues. However, G5 member states have also exerted power in this development, as they aligned their discourse and action with external actors, and thus performed agency within these processes.

Manifestations of the discourse

Identity of the G5S-JF

When the G5S-JF was established in 2017 as the military cooperation branch of the G5 Sahel organisation, it was specifically mandated to “combat terrorism, drug trafficking and human trafficking” (AU Peace and Security Council 2017, 3). This appears to respond directly to the criminal challenges in the Sahel, whose responsibility belongs with the states in the region, as well as the labelled terrorist threat, which, as demonstrated, constitutes a more global threat. Hence, the establishment of the joint force signifies that the states directly affected by the labelled threats in the Sahel assumed the responsibility they were assigned through the discourse as used by external partners.

Responding to the transnationality of the threats, the G5S-JF focuses on border areas, particularly in three sectors: (a) Sector West on the border between Mali and Mauritania; (b) Sector Centre on the tri-border area between Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso; and (c) Sector East on the border between Niger and Chad. The joint force’s focus on border areas goes hand in hand with the discourse’s focus on transnational threats. An informant expressed that the “G5 mission is all about labelling the threat transnational, and their obvious reply has been to focus on borders, but this is barely covering anything.”¹⁰ In other words, the delimitation of the G5S-JF’s area of operations could be seen as a direct response to the transnational elements that were drawn out in the external actors’ discourse, but the subsequent border focus demonstrates the geographical limitations of the joint force, as violent extremist groups of course also operate and move within the states.

The G5S-JF was created in the wake of the discourse presented through framing of threats, solutions and responsibilities. We see that the G5S-JF’s mandate reflected the

threats displayed in the discourse on terrorism and crime, and its area of operations reflected the labelled transnational threats through focusing on border areas. Its establishment can thus be seen as a direct response to the call for the region to cooperate and to better respond to these threats, but also as a way for G5 member states to elicit increased international attention to the Sahel region.

The legacy of external support

When the G5S-JF was established, it entered a theatre already flourishing with a variety of military actors. The essential division of labour between the EUTM and Barkhane has meant that the EUTM trains national militaries in a pre-deployment capacity, whereas Barkhane trains and mentors the troops deployed in the field whilst conducting joint operations. The G5S-JF was incorporated into this structure to some extent. Directly to the G5S-JF, the EUTM is providing “political and institutional support and [is] supporting the development of the military capabilities of the G5S Joint Force” (EUTM Mali 2019). This means that the EUTM is advising and assisting at the G5S-JF headquarters on organisational, structural and planning matters,¹¹ and in 2020, the EUTM was mandated to also train the joint force’s troops (European Council 2020). Indirectly, the EU earmarked €10 million for MINUSMA to provide logistical support to the G5S-JF (EU Commission 2017, 3, 7; UN Security Council 2019, 11). The premises in the discourse that suggested Sahelian states and militaries are in need of external capacity and assistance are hence mimicked in EUTM–G5S-JF relations.

Existing dynamics between Barkhane and Sahelian militaries have also been incorporated into the current relationship between Barkhane and the G5S-JF. Barkhane is based on a partnership with the Sahel, with the aim to “support the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel) partner countries in taking over the fight against armed terrorist groups” through joint operations and SFA (France Ministère des Armées 2020, 4). A large share of the G5S-JF’s operations so far have been either joint with, or with support from, Barkhane,¹² which reflects the discourse’s construction of Barkhane’s identity as capable,¹³ and the identity of the national forces – or the G5S-JF – as in need of assistance. A French official stated that “if we go out from Mali today, Mali will collapse in a few weeks,” which illustrates this perspective. This would also be in line with France framing themselves as indispensable for the region, consistent with external discourses on weak state capacity in the Sahel. Further, at the G5 Summit in Pau, in January 2020, the G5S-JF and Barkhane entered into an agreement regarding a shared command structure (Kelly 2020). Hence, the current relations build on existing dynamics between Barkhane and G5 national armies, but have been intensified by the establishment of the G5S-JF.

The existing dynamics between national, regional, and international or external actors lay the foundation for the joint force’s partnerships with the EUTM, Barkhane and MINUSMA, reflecting the power dynamics exercised in the fragile state and terrorism discourses. In addition, the establishment of the G5S-JF has attracted a great deal of attention from external actors, which has resulted in increased financial assistance and provision of resources to the region. This demonstrates the G5 member states’ agency, because such support ultimately strengthens the political elites of the states. What these pre-set dynamics mean for the current relationship between external actors and the G5S-JF, and further the joint force’s sustainability, will be discussed in the next section.

The dynamic between G5S-JF and external actors

Financing the G5S-JF

When the G5S-JF was launched, the UN stated that “the G5 Sahel States have the responsibility to provide the G5S-JF with adequate resources” (UN Security Council 2017a, 3). However, whilst acknowledging this inherent regional responsibility, the UN encouraged “bilateral and multilateral partners to expeditiously convene a planning conference to ensure coordination of donor assistance efforts” (UN Security Council 2017a, 3), parallel to the responsibility division emerging from the fragile state discourse.

The G5 member states and the African Union (AU) have echoed the call to external actors for support to the joint force. Whilst acknowledging the establishment of the G5S-JF, the AU called on

Member States and the other members of the international community to provide all the necessary support to the efforts of the Member States of the G5 Sahel, including financial and logistical assistance, equipment, as well as an enhanced support in the area of timely shared intelligence, in order to facilitate the speedy and full operationalisation of the Joint Force. (AU Peace and Security 2017, 4)

The relevance of the security situation in the Sahel for external actors, as demonstrated in the knowledge creation section, has thus also been used by the region and sub-region to receive support.

In response, France and the EU initiated donor conferences in 2017 and 2018 that resulted in €414 million being pledged for training and equipment for the G5S-JF (France Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Étrangères 2019).¹⁴ That these donor conferences were run by the EU and France suggests that these actors were essentially taking the lead in getting the joint force on its feet in terms of resources. An informant explained that the Sahel has become “a popular place to be engaged because they have created [...] a new environment for external intervention and use it to draw funders.”¹⁵ It is not only external actors that have created this environment; many African states appeal to the international community “through the deployment of ideological tropes” (Soares de Oliveira and Verhoeven 2018, 12) to generate external interest and investments. In this way, momentum was created for external support to the region, as the establishment of the G5S-JF not only increased but streamlined support to the Sahel, thus strengthening the G5 member states, at least in material terms. The system of donations is thus worth a review.

While the G5S-JF falls under the G5 Sahel organisation, the majority of donations and resources provided to its battalions go bilaterally to the G5 member states, and not the G5 organisation itself.¹⁶ This means that the member states are responsible for transferring any donations earmarked for the joint force to its battalions. Although the G5S-JF and the G5 organisation are given the responsibility for the security situation in the Sahel, they do not appear to hold the responsibility for their own resources, or for their implementation. From this point of view, it seems that external actors hold significant power over the G5S-JF's resource levels and the earmarked distribution.

However, because many G5 states do not have sophisticated overview systems of their military, donations are somewhat difficult to trace once they reach the G5 states.¹⁷ This means that there is a general lack of oversight regarding what has actually been

donated to the joint force's battalions. This keeps the donors in the dark to some extent, but is also a way for G5 member states to manage the G5S-JF's dependency on external support by being in control of received weaponry, finances and other resources. Ultimately, although external actors exercise power over the G5S-JF, the joint force and its member states perform agency through managing this material dependency.

Dependency on military cooperation

According to Gorman and Chauzal (2018), the G5S-JF is "walking a fine line between local ownership by its member states and access to international expertise of external partners." This relates particularly to the EUTM's advice and assistance to the joint force and, as of 2020, its training of the G5S-JF troops, as well as Barkhane's mentoring of – and joint operations with – the joint force's troops.

The impact of EUTM training has previously been criticised for being insufficient (Tull 2020)¹⁸ and ineffective (Cold-Ravnkilde and Nissen 2020). This calls into question not only the purpose of conducting training, but also the manner in which it is conducted. The seeming lack of impact of this military training could, for instance, originate from diverging perceptions on the role of the military, as the training is based on "our Western presumption of what military is and does."¹⁹ An informant said, "if there is no recognition of the fact that African states run on different fuel than Western states, you will inevitably end up repeating the inflow of money for things that will not make a difference."²⁰ This suggests that the training currently conducted does not make a significant difference due to diverging military traditions.

On the other hand, assuming that the training does have an impact, this training by external actors has implications for the G5S-JF's sub-regional ownership. Because it uses external actors, the type of military training conducted resembles the type that the EUTM sees as important. In other words, the assistance provided may often diverge from what the recipient views as the assistance needed, or equipment may be donated that the recipient does not know how to either use or maintain.²¹ This raises questions about the extent to which the joint force is empowered through training: such training may indeed increase military capacity, but it does so on the premises of external militaries. On the other side, strengthening the military of the G5S-JF is also about strengthening state structures for the G5 member states. In this sense, receiving training – whether or not it is conducted on the premises of external actors – is a way for the G5S-JF and its member states to benefit from external involvement. Although political elites of the G5 member states might benefit from this involvement, it is the external trainers who are placed in a position of power in their relationships with the G5S-JF.

Because of the new shared command between Barkhane and the G5S-JF, they have established a joint headquarters in Niamey, Niger, in addition to having liaisons from Barkhane at the G5S-JF's headquarters in Bamako and G5 liaisons at the Barkhane headquarters in N'Djamena, Chad.²² This has thus far resulted in an increase in joint operations, as well as increased intelligence sharing through the intelligence fusion cell.²³ Working with Barkhane in the field has allegedly improved skills, bravery and discipline within the G5S-JF's battalions, as they appear to be more efficient, disciplined and motivated during joint operations than when operating alone.²⁴ From this viewpoint, the shared command structure might therefore be seen as a step towards more efficient operations. However, the

shared command raises questions about the power dynamics between France and the G5S-JF. On one hand, it is beneficial for the G5S-JF to improve its efficiency, not only because an enhanced military capacity is an end in itself but also because having a more efficient G5S-JF augments the region's leverage to request more external support. An assumption from external actors, however, is that the more the G5S-JF improves, the less help they may require in the future. This would eventually require that the G5S-JF can stand on its own. On the other hand, the shared command could mean an increasing French influence and power over the G5S-JF's operations. This entrenchment of assistance or cooperation may thus mean that the G5S-JF will have less autonomy, and therefore less regional ownership over operations. This again weakens the very identity of the joint force as a sub-regional and home-grown initiative.

Both the G5S-JF's existence and its operational capacity are highly dependent on, and characterised by, external actors' roles in the region. Such strong ties may well be necessary for the joint force to become more effective in its operations, as the G5S-JF is still young. Nevertheless, the joint force's dependency on external actors, which mimics the discursive presentation of Sahelian security actors as being in need of external assistance to succeed, means that external actors hold power over the G5S-JF. This dependency may well be managed by the G5 member states, as has been suggested earlier. After all, the G5S-JF benefits substantially from the financial inflows, international recognition and backing, military training, and, not least, resources such as weapons that external assistance supplies. Despite these benefits, the dependency on external actors stands in contrast to the inherent assumptions that the G5S-JF is a sub-regional entity with sub-regional ownership and responsibility. Further, the joint force's sustainability is challenged if its very existence depends on external actors' support.

Conclusion

This article has focused on how the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors in the Sahel has come about, and what it looks like today. The analysis shows how discursive conceptualisations of the threats, identities and responsibilities concerning the security situation in the Sahel not only advocated for a sub-regional military response but also laid the foundation for the G5S-JF's focus and mandate. Through the discourse's justifications for external responses to the threat and its framing of these actors' presence in the region as essential, we see today that the relationship between external actors and the G5S-JF has been manifested through military training, resources distribution, administration of the headquarters and during operations, where external actors hold significant influence and power over the joint force. The discourse reveals the belief that external actors ought to play a critical part in combatting the global threat of terrorism, and that external actors are needed in the Sahel due to their allegedly superior strength, capacity and resources. This is in line with the literature on discourse and intervention.

Furthermore, the analysis demonstrated not only how these discourses about terrorism and the need for external assistance have been used by external actors, but also how they have been welcomed, or strategically mimicked, by G5 member states. Indeed, the G5 member states have called for greater international attention to the Sahel region, and (not least) support. Increased external attention and presence benefit G5 member states through financial support, political legitimacy and overall stability. The analysis

demonstrates that the G5 member states' mimicry of external actors' discourse has indeed increased the external actors' justification for involvement in the G5S-JF, but it has also shown how this involvement benefits and is managed to some extent by the G5 member states. Indeed, the leverage and agency of Sahelian states have recently become eminent, especially with regard to Mali. Due to Mali's recent engagement with the Russian private security company Wagner Group, the power relations between the Sahel and European actors have shifted to some extent to Mali's advantage, which confirms Mali's management of external involvement and ability to tame intervention. Further research into how this may have shifted the power and asymmetry of these relations is encouraged.

By expanding on the discourse and intervention literature through examining how discourse shapes military cooperation between intervening and host actors, this article gives more dimension to the understanding of military intervention. Increasingly, military intervention revolves around the logic of training local forces through SFA. The article demonstrates how we can use the knowledge found in the literature on discourse and intervention to specifically understand military cooperation in current conflict situations. The article also contributes novel insights into the dynamics of power as it is displayed through the relationships between external actors and the G5S-JF, and not solely through the material possession of the agents involved. In sum, research on discourse and intervention can benefit from taking a more relational or cooperational approach through engaging with theoretical aspects of extraversion, as this will reveal a more comprehensive dynamic of interventions overall.

This article encourages more research on military relationships through discursive examinations. It also raises empirical questions about how the relations between the G5S-JF and external actors play out, for instance during military operations, and not least what happens when other external actors, such as Russia, potentially challenge European involvement in the Sahel. Furthermore, the article challenges notions of sub-regional security cooperation in general, and what a potential dependency on external actors – managed by the host or not – means for the sustainability and efficiency of such cooperation.

Notes

1. For research conducted on the G5S-JF, see for instance Dieng (2019) and Degrais (2018).
2. The Tuareg secessionist movement in 2012 led to a coup d'état in Mali. This coup, alongside an influx of soldiers, formerly under Ghaddafi in Libya, to Mali, caused the conflict in Mali to break out, and further enabled violent extremist groups to spread. External actors were politically and militarily engaged in the Sahel before 2012, but their engagement has increased since 2012.
3. Ethics approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data, case number 877186.
4. The anonymous interviews have been divided into five categories: (1) external security personnel (in the Sahel, but outside the G5 structure), (2) external political personnel (in the Sahel, but outside the G5 structure), (3) internal security personnel (within the G5 structure), (4) internal political personnel (within the G5 structure), and (5) observers (organisational, academic or others operating in the Sahel).
5. See https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/where-we-work/burkina-faso_en.
6. See https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/where-we-work/mauritania_en.
7. The EU has placed itself as an important actor on the African continent through the migration discourse also, claiming that migration from Africa constitutes a threat to Europe. The

migration discourse is important to keep in mind for this research, but will not constitute a focal point in the analysis.

8. Interview 11 with observer, 4 February 2020, Mali.
9. In summer 2020, the EU alongside France launched Task Force Takuba: special operation forces from European states deployed to fight violent extremist groups in the Sahel.
10. Interview 8 with external political personnel, 14 January 2020, France.
11. Interview 28 with internal security personnel, 22 February 2020, Mali; Interview 29 with internal security personnel, 23 February 2020, Mali.
12. Interview 11; Interview 27 with external security personnel, 22 February 2020, Mali; Interview 29.
13. Interview 6 with external political personnel, 10 January 2020, France; Interview 27.
14. In addition to the G5 Sahel states contributing \$10 million each, the EU pledged a total of \$143 million, France and Germany contributed \$21.7 million collectively, Saudi Arabia pledged \$100 million, the United Arab Emirates pledged \$30 million, and the US pledged \$60 million, with additional contributions from Spain, the Netherlands, Norway, Japan, Denmark, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Czech Republic and Slovenia (Africa Centre for Strategic Studies 2018).
15. Interview 1 with external security personnel, 30 September 2019, Nigeria.
16. Interview 11; Interview 13; Interview 22 with external political personnel, 15 February 2020, Mali; Interview 23 with external political personnel, 18 February 2020, Mali.
17. Interview 11; Interview 20 with external political personnel, 13 February 2020, Mali; Interview 23.
18. Interview 2 with external political personnel, 2 October 2020, Nigeria; Interview 11; Interview 13; Interview 26.
19. Interview 26 with observer, 19 February 2020, Mali.
20. Ibid.
21. Interview 11; Interview 15 with observer, 9 February 2020, Mali; Interview 26.
22. As part of the joint command, the G5S-JF's area of operation was extended to 100 km on each side of the border instead of 50 km.
23. Interview 27.
24. Interview 11; Interview 19; Interview 20.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Funding

This work was supported by The Norwegian Ministry of Defence.

Notes on contributor

Marie Sandnes is a doctoral researcher at the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) and the University of Oslo. Her research focuses on topics of regional security cooperation, military cooperation, organised violence and counter-terrorism, particularly in Africa. Currently, she is writing her doctoral dissertation on the G5 Sahel Joint Force.

ORCID

Marie Sandnes  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0675-4789>

References

- Africa Center for Strategic Studies. 2018. "The G5 Sahel Joint Force Gains Traction." *Africa Center for Strategic Studies*, 9 February. <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/g5-sahel-joint-force-gains-traction/>.
- Ahmed, N. M. 2005. *The War on Truth: 9/11, Disinformation and the Anatomy of Terrorism*. Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press.
- Alkopher, T. D. 2016. "From Kosovo to Syria: The Transformation of NATO Secretaries General's Discourse on Military Humanitarian Intervention." *European Security* 25 (1): 49–71. doi:10.1080/09662839.2015.1082128.
- AU Peace and Security Council. 2017. *679 Meeting*. PSC/PR/COMM(DCLXXIX), 13 April. <http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/679th-com-g5sahel-13-04-2017.pdf>.
- Bayart, J. F., and S. Ellis. 2000. "Africa in the World: A History of Extraversion." *African Affairs* 99 (395): 217–267.
- Biddle, S., J. Macdonald, and R. Baker. 2018. "Small Footprint, Small Payoff: The Military Effectiveness of Security Force Assistance." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 41 (1-2): 89–142. doi:10.1080/01402390.2017.1307745.
- Boucher, J. C. 2009. "Selling Afghanistan – A Discourse Analysis of Canada's Military Intervention, 2001-08." *International Journal* 64 (3): 717–733. doi:10.1177/002070200906400308.
- Campbell, J. 2017. "G5 Sahel: An African (and French) Solution to an African Problem." *Council on Foreign Relations* blog post, 29 December. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/g5-sahel-african-and-french-solution-african-problem>.
- Cap, P. 2010. *Legitimation in Political Discourse: A Cross-Disciplinary Perspective on the Modern US War Rhetoric*. Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Charbonneau, B. 2008. *France and the New Imperialism: Security Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa*. New York: Routledge.
- Cold-Ravnkilde, S. M. 2018. "A Fragile Military Response: International Support of the G5 Sahel Joint Force." *DIIS Policy Brief*, 23 November. <https://www.diis.dk/en/research/a-fragile-military-response>.
- Cold-Ravnkilde, S. M. 2021. "Borderwork in the Grey Zone: Everyday Resistance Within European Border Control Initiatives in Mali." *Geopolitics* (latest articles). doi:10.1080/14650045.2021.1919627.
- Cold-Ravnkilde, S. M., and C. Nissen. 2020. "Schizophrenic Agendas in the EU's External Actions in Mali." *International Affairs* 96 (4): 935–953. doi:10.1093/ia/iiaa053.
- Déby, I. 2016. "Declaration de son Excellence Idriss Deby Itno, Président de la République du Tchad, Chef de l'Etat, Président en exercice de L'Union Africaine." *71st session of the UN General Assembly*, 20 September. http://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/71/71_TD_fr.pdf.
- Degrais, N. 2018. "La Force conjointe du G5 Sahel ou l'émergence d'une architecture de défense collective proposée au Sahel." *Les Champs de Mars* 1 (30): 211–220.
- Dieng, M. 2019. "The Multinational Joint Task Force and the G5 Sahel Joint Force: The Limits of Military Capacity-Building Efforts." *Contemporary Security Policy* 40 (4): 481–501. doi:10.1080/13523260.2019.1602692.
- Erforth, B. 2020. "Multilateralism as a Tool: Exploring French Military Cooperation in the Sahel." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 43 (4): 560–582. doi:10.1080/01402390.2020.1733986.
- EU Commission. 2017. "Support to the G5 Sahel Joint Force Annex 2." *2017-2018 Action Programme of the African Peace Facility*, 1 August. <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/3/2018/EN/C-2018-6822-F1-EN-ANNEX-2-PART-1.PDF>.
- European Council. 2014. *Council Conclusions on Implementation of the EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel*. Brussels 17 March. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/28735/141577.pdf>.
- European Council. 2015. *Council Conclusions on the Sahel Regional Action Plan 2015–2020*. 7823/15, Brussels 20 April. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21522/st07823-en15.pdf>.
- European Council. 2018. *African Union-European Union Relation: Joint Consultative Meeting on Peace and Security*. Press Release, 23 October. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/10/23/african-union-european-union-relations-joint-consultative-meeting-on-peace-and-security/>.

- European Council. 2020. *EUTM Mali: Council Extends Training Mission with Broadened Mandate and Increased Budget*. Press Release, 23 March. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/03/23/eutm-mali-council-extends-training-mission-with-broadened-mandate-and-increased-budget/>.
- European External Action Services. 2014. *Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel*. March. https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/africa/docs/sahel_strategy_en.pdf.
- European External Action Services. 2016. *Factsheet EU Relations with Sahel Countries – Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger*. Factsheet, 17 June. http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/factsheets/docs/sahel-european-union-factsheet_en.pdf.
- EUTM Mali. 2019. *Press Kit European Union Training Mission Mali*. EUTM Mali 4th mandate, 6 January. <https://eutmmali.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/190106-PressKit-vEn-website-approved-version.pdf>.
- Fabius, L. 2013. Déclarations Officielle de Politique Étrangère du 21 Mars 2013: Mali/Conférence sur le Développement – Allocution du Ministre des Affaires Étrangères. Press Release, 31 March. Cited in Erforth, B. 2020. "Multilateralism as a Tool: Exploring French Military Cooperation in the Sahel." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 43(4): 560–582. doi:10.1080/01402390.2020.1733986.
- France Ministère des Armées. 2020. *Press Pack Operation Barkhane*. Ministère des Armées, February. <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/barkhane/dossier-de-reference/operation-barkhane>.
- France Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Étrangères. 2019. *G5 Sahel Joint Force and the Sahel Alliance*. Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Étrangères, February. <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/security-disarmament-and-non-proliferation/crises-and-conflict/s/g5-sahel-joint-force-and-the-sahel-alliance/>.
- Frowd, P. M. 2021. "Borderwork Creep in West Africa's Sahel." *Geopolitics* Advance online publication. doi:10.1080/14650045.2021.1901082.
- G5 Sahel. 2016a. "Nous avons nettoyé toutes les poches terroristes et leurs bases logistiques au nord du pays." *G5 Sahel organisation*, 2 June. <https://www.g5sahel.org/nous-avons-nettoye-toutes-les-poches-terroristes-et-leurs-bases-logistiques-au-nord-du-pays/>.
- G5 Sahel. 2016b. "Rencontre à Bruxelles entre UE et G5 Sahel." *G5 Sahel Organisation*, 18 June. <https://www.g5sahel.org/rencontre-a-bruxelles-entre-u-e-et-g5sahel/>.
- Gillier, M. 2015. *La Coopération dans le Sahel: Une Approche Globale*. Ministère des Affaires Étrangères et du Développement International, February. https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/PSD275_V3_light_cle0d71e6.pdf.
- Gorman, Z., and G. Chauzal. 2018. "Establishing a Regional Security Architecture in the Sahel." *SIPRI Commentary*, 25 June. <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/topical-background/2018/establishing-regional-security-architecture-sahel>.
- Guichaoua, Y. 2020. "The Bitter Harvest of French Interventionism in the Sahel." *International Affairs* 96 (4): 895–911. doi:10.1093/ia/iiaa094.
- Guzzini, S. 2013. *Power, Realism and Constructivism*. New York: Routledge.
- Holland, J. 2012. *Selling the War on Terror: Foreign Policy Discourses After 9/11*. New York: Routledge.
- International Crisis Group. 2017. "Finding the Right Role for the G5 Sahel Joint Force." *International Crisis Group Report*, 12 December. <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/258-finding-the-right-role-for-the-g5-sahel-joint-force.pdf>.
- Jackson, R. 2005. *Writing the War on Terrorism: Language, Politics and Counter-Terrorism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Jacques, J. M. 2018. "Commission de la Défense Nationale et des Forces Armées." *Assemblée Nationale Report*, 31 October. http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/15/comptes-rendus/cion_def/l15cion_def1819017_compte-rendu.
- Kelly, F. 2020. "Sahel Coalition: G5 and France agree new joint command, will prioritize fight against Islamic State." *The Defense Post*, 14 January. <https://www.thedefensepost.com/2020/01/14/sahel-coalition-france-g5-islamic-state/>.
- Lyammouri, R. 2018. "After Five Years, Challenges Facing MINUSMA Persist." *OCP Policy Center Policy Brief*, November. <https://media.africaportal.org/documents/OCPPC-PB1835.pdf>.
- Mahamadou, P. I. 2017. "Message à la nation de SEM Issoufou Mahamadou, Président de la République, chef de l'État" *Présidence de la République du Niger*, Speech, 31 December.

- <https://www.presidence.ne/discours-du-prsident/2017/12/31/message-a-la-nation-de-sem-issoufou-mahamadou-president-de-la-republique-chef-de-letat-31-decembre-2017>.
- Marsh, N., O. H. Rolandsen, J. Karssen, and M. Sandnes. 2020. "Compounding Fragmentation: Security Force Assistance to Fragile States in the Sahel and Horn of Africa." *PRIO Paper*. <https://www.prio.org/utility/DownloadFile.ashx?id=061&type=publicationfile>.
- Phillips, N., and C. Hardy. 2002. *Discourse Analysis: Investigating Processes of Social Construction*. London: SAGE.
- Soares de Oliveira, R., and H. Verhoeven. 2018. "Taming Intervention: Sovereignty, Statehood and Political Order in Africa." *Global Politics and Strategy* 60 (2): 7–32.
- Studio Tamani. 2014. "IBK New Year's Speech: I only want peace, nothing but peace." *Studio Tamani*, 1 January. <https://www.studiotamani.org/index.php/themes/politique/391-discours-de-nouvel-an-de-ibk-je-ne-veux-que-la-paix-rien-que-la-paix>.
- Traoré, D. 2013. "Discours de M. Dioncounda Traoré, Président de la République du Mali, et du Président de la République française." *Déclaration/Discours d'Élysée Présidence de la République*, 2 February. <https://es.ambafrance.org/IMG/pdf/discours-de-m-dioncounda-traore-president-de-la-republique-du-mali-et-du-president-de-la-republique-francaise.pdf?11681/e34ab5669049301737db376c3c60f265449ed5d7>.
- Tull, D. 2020. "The European Union Training Mission and the Struggle for a New Model Army in Mali." *IRSEM Research Paper*, 11 February. https://www.irsem.fr/data/files/irsem/documents/document/file/3233/RP_IRSEM_89.pdf.
- UN Security Council. 2009. *Resolution 1861*. S/RES/1861(2009), 14 January. [https://undocs.org/S/RES/1861\(2009\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/1861(2009)).
- UN Security Council. 2012a. *Resolution 2056*. S/RES/2056(2012), 5 July. [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2056\(2012\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2056(2012)).
- UN Security Council. 2012b. *Resolution 2071*. S/RES/2071(2012), 12 October. [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2071\(2012\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2071(2012)).
- UN Security Council. 2013. *Resolution 2100*. S/RES/2100(2013), 25 April. [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2100\(2013\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2100(2013)).
- UN Security Council. 2015. *Resolution 2227*. S/RES/2227(2015), 29 June. [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2227\(2015\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2227(2015)).
- UN Security Council. 2016. *Resolution 2295*. S/RES/2295(2016), 29 June. [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2295\(2016\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2295(2016)).
- UN Security Council. 2017a. *Resolution 2359*. S/RES/2359(2017), 21 June. <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2359>.
- UN Security Council. 2017b. *Resolution 2374*. S/RES/2374(2017), 5 September. [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2374\(2017\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2374(2017)).
- UN Security Council. 2019. *Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel: Report of the Secretary-General*. S/2019/868, 11 November. https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S_2019_868.pdf.
- Van Dijk, T. A. 2006. "Discourse and Manipulation." *Discourse & Society* 17 (3): 359–383. doi:10.1177/0957926506060250.
- Weber, C. 2013. *International Relations Theory: A Critical Introduction*. 4th ed., Ch. 4. London: Routledge.

ARTICLE 2: THE IMPACT OF EXTERNAL SUPPORT ON COALITION EFFICIENCY: THE CASE OF THE G5 SAHEL JOINT FORCE

Accepted with corrections at the journal of Defence Studies.

II

The Impact of External Support on Coalition Efficiency: The Case of the G5 Sahel Joint Force

Marie Sandnes, Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)

Accepted with corrections in a peer-reviewed international journal.

Abstract:

This article examines the extent to which external actors influence the efficiency of the G5 Sahel Joint Force's (G5S-JF) chain of command and what this means for the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors. I argue that external actors have taken leading roles within the G5S-JF's chain of command and that this external influence has increased the efficiency of the joint force's command. This suggests that the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors follows the logic of hegemonic theory, with external actors providing efficiency and stability through a strong leading voice, as other scholars have previously assumed. However, I demonstrate that there are limitations to a hegemonic understanding of this relationship, as it does not take into account the agency of the joint force. In fact, as things have developed, the hegemonic stability logic rather appears to have been proven wrong as the strong leading role of external actors was a contributing factor to Mali's withdrawal in May 2022 and the subsequent instability of the joint force.

Key Words: chain of command, military cooperation, military coalitions, Sahel, power dynamics

Introduction

The G5 Sahel Joint Force (G5S-JF) was established in 2017 as the military branch of the G5 Sahel (G5S) organisation consisting of Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad. It was then mandated to combat terrorism, illicit trafficking and transnational crime (AU Peace and Security Council 2017, 3). Since its establishment, the G5S-JF has been criticised for being inefficient and for lacking the capacity to fulfil its mandate (International Crisis Group 2017; Cold-Ravnkilde 2018). Subsequently, the G5S-JF has relied on significant support from external actors, where observers have argued that external actors have taken leading roles in the G5S-JF (Dieng, Onguny, and Mfondi 2020; Welz 2022a). This article examines external actors' influence on the G5S-JF's chain of command at the strategic, operational and tactical levels. The external actors examined in this article are: the European Union (EU) Training Mission in Mali (EUTM), which has advised and assisted at the G5S-JF's headquarters and since 2020 also trained the joint force's battalions; and the French counter-terrorism operation Barkhane, which has mentored G5S-JF troops on the ground and conducted joint operations with the joint force since 2017. Barkhane expanded this cooperation in 2020 when Barkhane and the G5S-JF entered into shared command.

The involvement of external actors in the G5S-JF raises questions concerning the impact of external support on the joint force's efficiency and what kind of power dynamics play out in the joint force's chain of command. Therefore, this article asks: To what extent do external actors influence the efficiency of the G5S-JF's chain of command, and what does this tell us about the power dynamics between the joint force and external actors?

I examine the chain of command in the G5S-JF through the three levels of war: the strategic level, the operational level, and the tactical level. The analysis is thus structured according to these three levels. The EUTM and EU, and/or Barkhane and France, are present at each level. This article demonstrates that the G5S-JF lacks a strong, united voice within its own chain of command and that external actors have assumed leading roles within the command structure of the G5S-JF. I argue that whilst the external leadership has increased the joint force's efficiency, this efficiency is not sustainable as it remains dependent on external capacities. I also argue that whilst it might appear that external actors hold a hegemonic role within the G5S-JF, the logic of hegemonic theory is too simplistic an approach for understanding the relationship between external actors and the

G5S-JF as it does not take into consideration the agency of the joint force, nor does hegemonic logic explain Mali's recent withdrawal from the G5S-JF.

In the following, I first present the framework of this research, which introduces the three levels of war framework, literature on military efficiency, theory on the relationship between hegemonic power and military efficiency in a coalition, and the methods I use for gathering and analysing data: fieldwork interviews, reports and thematic analysis. I go on to investigate military efficiency at the strategic, operational and tactical levels of the G5S-JF, where I analyse both the internal dynamics of the G5S-JF and the role of external actors. I specifically discuss the suitability of the logic found in hegemonic theory for understanding the impact of external actors on the G5S-JF's efficiency.

Framing the Research

The path from planning to executing military operations is defined in a military's doctrine and it exists chiefly at three levels: the strategic level, the operational level and the tactical level. This division of warfare mirrors the majority of militaries today and is useful in this article because the G5S-JF was structured in this manner from the very beginning, as Figure 1 shows.

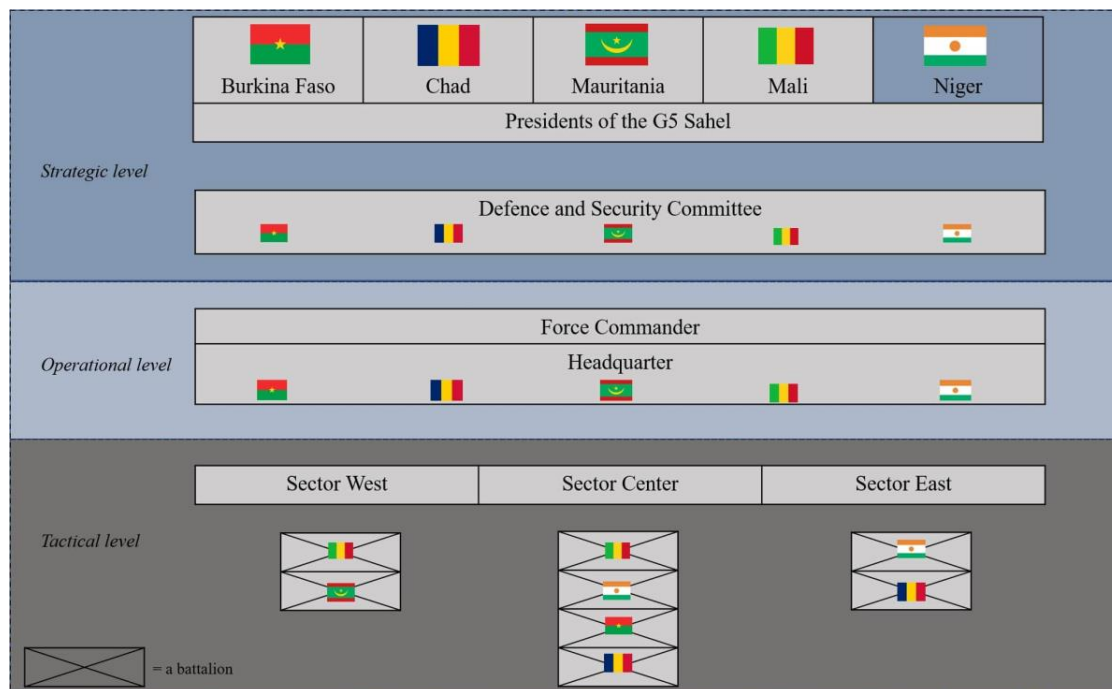


Figure 1: The chain of command of the G5S-JF.

The G5 Sahel member states' presidents constitute the political strategic level of the G5S-JF, and the defence and security committee constitutes the military strategic level. In this article, these are presented collectively as the strategic level. The political side of the strategic level deals with grand national strategies, where "the political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose" (von Clausewitz 1989, 99). Military strategy is about systematising the employment of power through combining different operational campaigns, meaning a series of interrelated military operations or battles (Ikpe 2014; Yarger 2010). The strategic level thus seeks to answer the question of how to win a war.

The operational level of the G5S-JF is based at its headquarters in Bamako, Mali. The operational level's main purpose is to translate the strategic level's objectives and aims into different building blocks, or campaigns, and deals with coordinating, planning and controlling the various campaigns. The operational level therefore "involves the formation and use of a conceptual and contextual framework as the foundation for campaign planning, joint operations order development, and subsequent execution of the campaign" (Allen and Cunningham 2010, 258).

The tactical level is carried out by the battalions in the battlefield as well as at the sector headquarters in Sector West on the Mali-Mauritania border, Sector Centre at the tri-border area between Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, and Sector East on the Niger-Chad border. The tactical level deals with the planning and conduct of specific military operations, which means preparing for battle and leading a unit in battle. The first is an analytical activity which aims to choose "the optimal action for success in an uncertain environment", whereas the second "involves managing and directing the action of one's unit, with the goal of enforcing one's demands and objective on the enemy" (Männiste, Pedaste, and Schimanski 2019, 398).

Although this framework separates the strategic, operational and tactical commands, these levels are highly connected meaning that the efficiency of the chain matters for the efficiency of the military. The three levels of war framework assumes that the chain of command belongs to one state and its military, and the G5S-JF is a coalition of five states, it constitutes a useful framework of analysis for thoroughly examining external involvement in the G5S-JF chain of command. The three levels therefore form the structure of the analysis in this article.

Efficiency in military coalitions

Working in a military coalition or acting jointly with other military actors have become dominant forms of military action (Finlan, Danielsson, and Lundqvist 2021). The academic debate on military coalitions has to a large extent focused on the reasons for their establishment (Henke 2017; Walt 1990) and their durability (Bennett 1997; Auerswald and Saideman 2014). Recently, scholars have also started to research how these coalitions actually operate and what this means for their efficiency (see for instance: Auerswald and Saideman 2014; Dijkstra 2010; Saideman 2016). Coalition efficiency is in this article understood as achieving maximum productivity in a well-organised and competent manner, which most often comes down to the coalition's chain of command (Hope 2008; Rice 1997). This article draws on and examines three elements in particular from the literature that can impact a coalition's efficiency: the coherency of its objectives; the clarity of its communication flows; and the dual chain of command for personnel.

First, a key challenge for the efficiency of a coalition's chain of command is that the sovereign states involved most often have varying objectives and goals, often rooted in diverging geopolitical interests. These vary not only from region to region, but also within a specific region, such as the Sahel (McInnis 2013). Various interests can make it difficult to agree on a coalition objective and to exhibit cohesion as a unit, and can ultimately pose challenges for the internal management of the coalition (Snyder 1997; Weitsman 2003). In the words of Van Dijk and Sloan: "an alliance that lacks a common political purpose will also differ on the threats faced by member states, and as a result fail to organise an effective defense" (van Dijk and Sloan 2020, 1016). A variety of objectives is therefore likely to complicate the process of agreeing on joint political and military objectives at the strategic level of a military coalition. This lack of coherence from above further trickles down to impact the efficiency at the operational and tactical levels.

Second, the efficiency of a military coalition also boils down to the efficiency and authority of information flow, such as through orderly communication channels, clear distribution of responsibility, and responsive authorities. In order to obtain or maintain effective command, Nilsson (2020) argues that there needs to be trust in command both horizontally and vertically and a shared understanding of the threat and the cooperation, both of which require strong information and communication flows. King (2021) shows how, increasingly, military

command needs to rely on collaborative decisions within a chain of command, which he calls a “command collective”, which contributes to a more dynamic and responsive chain of command. By this logic, distribution of responsibilities and assumed responsibility at various levels, rather than solely at the top, help avoid ‘bottle-necking’ in decision making. This combination of top-down and bottom-up communication enables a more efficient chain of command. Avoiding ‘bottle-necking’ in decision making and having an efficient chain of command further allows the troops on ground to react to security situations rapidly and effectively, allowing the troops to be more efficient. Coalition efficiency therefore also impacts military effectiveness on ground.

Third, military personnel in a coalition have to relate to a dual chain of command: the chain of command of the coalition and their respective state’s Ministry of Defence. McInnis calls this a “hybrid principal-agent relationship” (McInnis 2013, 85). It is the state that promotes and selects its military leaders for a coalition, and it is the state that sets the limitations and confers the authority of these personnel (Mello 2019). A coalition’s command might thus contradict a command given to military personnel from their own state, making the coalition chain of command less predictable and less effective as it may leave the personnel in an indecisive position, reducing responsiveness on ground. Understanding a partner’s authority within the command, but also the legitimacy of this command, thus becomes of great importance (Cragin 2020).

Balancing various objectives, communication channels, distributions of responsibility, and the hybrid principal-agent relationship are not new challenges to a coalition, nor are they unique. However, there are various efforts that reportedly reduce these elements’ impact on a coalition’s efficiency. Some theorists argue that having multiple voices in a coalition poses less of a challenge to efficiency in coalitions where you have one particularly strong member state, such as with the US in NATO (Marston 2021). This means that although there are divergences between “what the alliance purports to stand for and what certain member states practice” (van Dijk and Sloan 2020, 1015), the one strong member state can assume a determining role in the coalition’s decision-making. This argument aligns with hegemonic reasonings, which are discussed in the next section.

Power dynamics and military efficiency

Hegemonic theory takes a realist perspective on the world and assumes that the international system is anarchic in nature, that states are driven by self-interest and that they are competing for power (Mearsheimer 2001). Further, and of particular relevance to this analysis, hegemonic theory argues that a hegemonic system creates stability: when one actor dominates the capacity, resources and capability in a system, it also holds power over other actors, which creates stability (Webb and Krasner 1989). Hegemonic theory therefore speaks to dynamics in a relationship, and specifically advocate an asymmetry of power in a relationship. This asymmetry creates dependency between the actors in the relationship, and this dependency ultimately creates stability. This theory is therefore often used to explain the efficiency of NATO through the hegemonic role of the US, which dominates resources and capacity in the coalition, and therefore takes a leading role also within decision-making (Layne 2000; M. Nilsson 2008; Kreps 2011).

This would mean that the challenges of divergent objectives and unclear command may be even more prominent in coalitions where the states are similar in contributions and strengths than in coalitions where there is one leading state. Within the G5S-JF, there is no clear hegemonic or leading member state of the coalition. However, the role external actors play for the G5S-JF is often characterised as pivotal, leading or hegemonic in nature (Welz 2022a; Dieng, Onguny, and Mfondi 2020). The analysis in this article therefore examines external actors' impact on the efficiency of the G5S-JF's chain of command through a hegemonic/leadership perspective, and further discusses what this means for the power dynamics between the joint force and external actors. Through this, the article addresses the impact external actors have on the G5S-JF's military efficiency, the implications of having leading actors from outside the G5S-JF structure, and the limitations of understanding the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors as hegemonic in nature.

The analysis builds on data from 45 semi-structured interviews conducted in Nigeria, Mali and France in 2019, 2020 and 2021, respectively.¹ In addition to the interviews, I rely on mandates and official reports from the G5S-JF, the EUTM and Barkhane to understand the dynamics at the various levels. To provide a structured, rich and detailed account of my data, I

¹ Ethics approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data, case number 877186. The interviews were done anonymously, but I have classified the interviews in five categories: 1) external security personnel (in the Sahel, but outside the G5 structure), 2) external political personnel (in the Sahel, but outside the G5 structure), 3) internal security personnel (within the G5 structure), 4) internal political personnel (within the G5 structure), and 5) observer (organizational, academic or others operating in the Sahel).

analyse my data thematically. This is particularly useful for comparing and contrasting perspectives from various interviewees (Braun and Clarke 2006; King 2004). I look for themes of internal dynamics, external influence and military efficiency. Following the analysis, I discuss the limitations of a hegemonic perspective on the relationship between external actors and the G5S-JF and encourage a more nuanced understanding of their relationship.

The strategic level of the G5 Sahel Joint Force

The headquarters of the G5 Sahel organisation, which constitutes the political strategic level of the G5S-JF, is based in Nouakchott, Mauritania. It includes a permanent secretariat, a council of ministers and the heads of state, and it is the heads of state that “set the main directions and strategic options”.² The permanent secretariat manages the strategic interfaces and administers logistics and finances. However, it is the defence and security committee, also based at these headquarters, that has direct contact with the G5S-JF, and thus represents the military strategic level. The defence and security committee brings together the chiefs of staff and other officials from the G5 member states and this is where decisions on military cooperation and dialogues take place.³

Internal dynamics

Within a coalition, a key challenge is merging the interests of member states and establishing a common ground, which at the strategic level involves defining objectives and strategic concepts. Several interviewees point out that the decision to establish the G5 Sahel organisation, and not least the G5S-JF, is significant in itself, as it has created a space for dialogue between neighbouring states which previously had not engaged in significant cooperation.⁴ However, several interviewees also point out that although there are regional interests at stake, and regional threats to respond to, it is difficult for the G5 member states to come to agreement on priorities, as most member states want to prioritise responding to threats in their own country.⁵ An

² Author’s translation from: (G5 Sahel 2021)

³ Interview 6 with external political personnel, January 10, 2020, France; Interview 13 with internal security personnel, February 6, 2020, Mali.

⁴ Interview 6; Interview 7 with external political personnel, January 14, 2020, France; Interview 40 with internal political personnel, March 19, 2021, Mali; Interview 44 with internal security personnel, 25 March, Mali. See also: (Lacher 2013).

⁵ Interview 34 with external security personnel, March 6, 2021, Mali; Interview 35 with observer, March 9, 2021; Interview 37 with external security personnel, March 16, 2021, Mali; Interview 40; Interview 41 with observer, March 20, 2021, Mali.

interviewee claimed that the “political will isn’t there, because state interests are their individual national interests”.⁶ This indicates that the national interests of the G5 member states present obstacles to agreeing on regional strategic interests, as a European security officer claimed:

“I think that’s the key problem of the military structure as a whole. Since, yes it exists, and on paper it looks like the military structure and therefore command is autonomous [...] but in the end, they are not allowing the structure at all, because they tend to keep all they are holding on to the national with regards to military operations [...]. It doesn’t enable community of effort in order to achieve effect.”⁷

The challenge of uniting a coalition is nothing new, as the literature attests, but through the eyes of my interviewee, it is evident that this has an impact on the efficiency of the G5S-JF’s chain of command, starting at the strategic level.⁸ The presence of various national interests at this level and the seeming lack of a clear leader of the coalition thus has implications for the coalition’s efficiency. Furthermore, the lack of a strong leader’s voice or a solid coherence amongst the G5 member states at the strategic level may leave it prone to other strong voices, such as through the influence from external actors.

The role of external actors

Agreeing on mandates, objectives and concepts at the G5S-JF’s strategic level is further complicated by the strong involvement of external partners. Stating that “international actors came with their own plan and ideas”, an interviewee alluded to the fact that the strategy of the military response in the Sahel is characterised by pressure from external actors.⁹ Another interviewee specifically claimed that the enemy is defined by France and the EU,¹⁰ which is brought out in other reports too (Dieng, Onguny, and Mfondi 2020; Welz 2022a). Once the enemy is defined, this impacts most other strategic tasks such as planning the area of operation, defining objectives, and distributing resources. This would suggest a strong level of external influence on the strategic level of the G5S-JF’s chain of command.

⁶ Interview 36 with observer, March 11, 2021, Mali.

⁷ Interview 37.

⁸ See also: (Welz 2022b; UN Security Council 2021a; Gasinska and Bohman 2017)

⁹ Interview 36.

¹⁰ Interview 34.

France's role at the G5S-JF's strategic level appears to be more fundamentally embedded than that of the EU. This is likely due to France's colonial legacy in the Sahel region (Charbonneau and Chafer 2014). With statements such as "this [Sahel] is the backyard of the French, still today"¹¹ and "the G5 Sahel consists of five states, five Francophone states that France can still control",¹² several interviewees argued that the relations between France and Sahelian states, while perhaps disputed, nevertheless remain strong. In fact, when a French official was asked why the G5S-JF was established in the first place, she said: "It is considered a useful tool for political long-term engagement, both for France and the EU. The G5 Sahel is now on the map as one of the main actors in the Sahel region. External actors need a recipient, and the G5 is useful for this."¹³ Amongst external actors in the Sahel, there appears to be a concern about the strong French involvement in the G5S-JF.¹⁴ One observer simply stated that "the problem is that it is too French",¹⁵ suggesting that France's involvement is rather hegemonic in nature. A European interviewee who participated in meetings of the defence and security committee during the establishment of the G5S-JF claimed that, at the end of every meeting, everyone would be sent out of the room except for the G5 and French officials, who would then finalise decisions behind closed doors.¹⁶ Thus, France appears to have influence on the decision-making in the G5S-JF through providing a strong, leading voice. If so, the literature on hegemonic theory would argue that this could improve the efficiency of the G5S-JF.

The strategic level in a military's chain of command is also in charge of distributing resources, including weapons and finances. This responsibility is, however, highly influenced by external actors due to the G5S-JF's dependency on financial and material support. The majority of the G5S-JF's resources come from external actors, such as France and the EU. However, the resources donated to the G5S-JF are provided bilaterally. This means that it is the donors and the individual G5 member states, and not the G5S-JF's strategic level, who distribute these resources (UN Security Council 2021b; 2022). Whilst the decision-making responsibility for resource distribution typically belongs to the strategic level of military actors, we see here that the resource system for the G5S-JF is found outside the coalition structure. When the decision-

¹¹ Interview 2 with external political personnel, October 2, 2019, Nigeria.

¹² Interview 4 with observer, October 2, 2019, Nigeria.

¹³ Interview 7.

¹⁴ Interview 33 with observer, March 4, 2021, Mali; Interview 36; Interview 37.

¹⁵ Interview 33.

¹⁶ Interview 39 with external security personnel, March 18, 2021, Mali.

making responsibility for resource distribution is removed from the strategic level of the G5S-JF, so is some of the joint force's ownership over its decision-making. One could also assume that the bilateral dealings with donors for resources to the G5S-JF could foster some sort of competition between the G5 member states, and therefore also might make it harder to reach common objectives and priorities at the strategic level.

Thus far, the internal dynamics at the strategic level of the G5S-JF demonstrate that divergences in the perceived security threats and national interests of the member states present challenges for a united approach and a strong voice taking the lead. The external influence on the strategic level of the G5S-JF would likely be there either way due to the objectives and interests of France and the EU, but the lack of a clear leading voice within the strategic level of the G5S-JF appears to leave the joint force even more open to external influence than a coalition would otherwise be. It appears that external actors have a leading voice at the G5S-JF's strategic level, which could suggest that the role external actors play in the relationship between the joint force and external actors is hegemonic in nature.

The operational level of the G5 Sahel Joint Force

The G5S-JF's headquarters are based in Bamako, Mali, and constitute the main arena for the operational level. The G5S-JF also holds three sector headquarters – one in Sector West, one in Sector Central, and one in Sector East – which engage partly with operational planning, but mainly with tactical planning.

Internal dynamics

One of the main tasks at the operational level is to coordinate and plan operations. This appears to have been one of the key challenges for the G5S-JF since its establishment due to the internal structure of force (UN Security Council 2021a).¹⁷ At the operational level, the force commander of the G5S-JF plays a critical role as all decisions must be approved by him.¹⁸ The reason why the centralised power of the chief commander impacts the efficiency of the force is because it goes against the idea of delegation of responsibility, and thus leaves the rest of the joint force without much leverage to make decisions. Sector headquarters thereby need to await the force commander's orders to be able to do anything, which appears to have made the communication

¹⁷ Interview 6; Interview 7; Interview 13; Interview 37.

¹⁸ Interview 29 with internal security personnel, February 23, 2020, Mali; Interview 37; Interview 44.

and chain of command slow (Gasinska and Bohman 2017).¹⁹ With an operational and tactical theatre constantly in flux with newly emerging threats and needs to respond to, the battalions of the G5S-JF require the force commander to be present and available at all times for them to operate smoothly. This appears to have constituted an obstacle to efficiency under the second mandate of the force,²⁰ though it seems to have improved under the third mandate, which has been largely accredited to the force commander.²¹ This could suggest that the force commander of the G5S-JF has the potential of assuming a leading voice in the coalition, which could improve the coalition's efficiency. However, this appears to depend on the personal characteristic of the commander, rather than the system of the chain of command itself (UN Security Council 2020).

An external military interviewee claimed that some of the inefficiency seen in the first two mandates of the force can be explained through the notion that “the G5 states want to keep their best officers in their own country”.²² This state of affairs has allegedly improved during the current, third mandate of the G5S-JF, where the force commander delegates more responsibility and other staff officers appear better equipped to deal with such responsibility.²³ Another military interviewee stated that “I almost want to believe that, as we were moving towards the third mandate, somebody said ‘hey, you don’t send us duds, send us your A-team’. I have no proof or evidence of that, but it’s hard to explain how we went from having a completely ineffective staff to a pretty good working staff”.²⁴ This could stem from an initial hesitation by the G5 member states to send their best personnel abroad, due to the risk of not having such resources available for use in internal affairs (Welz 2022a). The internal dynamics of the G5S-JF’s operational level thus demonstrate the importance of the chief commander and the related risks of inefficiency due to the centralised power of command, but also how the larger division of responsibility appears to be improving overall, though this appears to remain commander-dependent.

The role of external actors

¹⁹ Interview 6; Interview 13.

²⁰ Interview 10 with external security personnel, January 15, 2020, France; Interview 13; Interview 37.

²¹ Interview 13; Interview 37; Interview 42 with internal security personnel, March 24, 2021, Mali; Interview 44.

²² Interview 10.

²³ Interview 13.

²⁴ Ibid.

There is also a strong presence of external actors at the operational level of the G5S-JF. At the G5S-JF's headquarters, the EUTM advises with a permanent delegation, and experts are brought in for various courses and tasks.²⁵ In addition, Barkhane have three to four permanent personnel at the joint force's headquarters, alongside a representative from the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM).

Since the G5S-JF was established, the EUTM has advised and assisted at the G5S-JF's headquarters in Bamako and has also provided pre-deployment training for those working at the headquarters (European Council 2020).²⁶ Although EUTM personnel do not participate in operational planning themselves, they provide the personnel at headquarters with theoretical training on how to plan operations,²⁷ which indicates that one of the key tasks of the operational level – planning campaigns and operations – is shaped by the EUTM. The EUTM also administers various tasks for the G5S-JF's headquarters in Bamako, such as submitting support requests from the G5S-JF to the EU, and paying per diem for G5S-JF personnel (EUCAP Sahel 2019).²⁸ The EUTM's presence and influence appears to enhance the efficiency and operationalisation of the joint force's operational level. The EUTM's role in the G5S-JF thus far matches their intention of advising and assisting, but does not seem to facilitate the handover of administrative responsibility to the G5S-JF. An interviewee expressed that the EUTM is “creating that environment in which the system is able to stay operational even though it hasn't got the ability to stay operational by itself”,²⁹ which suggests that the EUTM's presence at the G5S-JF's operational level has become indispensable for the joint force's headquarters to be efficient, which raises questions concerning the sustainability of such efficiency.

The G5S-JF entered into a shared command structure with Barkhane in 2020 (Kelly 2020), which reportedly consists of 12 senior officers from Barkhane and 12 senior officers from the G5S-JF.³⁰ These are placed at separate headquarters in Niamey, Niger, where all joint operations between the G5S-JF and Barkhane are planned. These headquarters are mainly concerned with the operational level, though they are sometimes also involved with strategic

²⁵ Interview 29.

²⁶ Interview 29; Interview 42.

²⁷ Interview 42.

²⁸ Interview 29.

²⁹ Interview 37.

³⁰ Interview 40.

planning. Several interviewees expressed that there has been a noticeable change in the G5S-JF's effectiveness as a response to the shared command, pointing in particular to more efficiency in the chain of command and greater results in their combat against violent extremist groups in the central sector.³¹ This would suggest that French military assistance has a positive effect on the joint force's military efficiency.

The French objective of this shared command has been to make the G5S-JF more autonomous.³² However, many interviewees and published reports explain that the joint force has become more dependent on the French than autonomous (Welz 2022a; Dieng, Onguny, and Mfondi 2020; Sandnes 2022). An interviewee expressed that “they [France] might have sold it as a basic idea to give more responsibility to the joint force, however, I explain it more or less as an opportunity to take control, although it sounds very negative, and it might be negative, but to take control over another military element in the broader region”.³³ The same interviewee further expressed that other European actors seem less critical to the G5S-JF under the shared command because France “assure[s] a certain operational tempo and therefore operational effectiveness of the force”³⁴.

One of the key features of the shared command between Barkhane and the G5S-JF is a joint intelligence cell. This joint intelligence cell has allegedly improved the sharing of intelligence within the G5S-JF, which previously had reportedly been relatively limited.³⁵ Amongst the interviewees, there was a consensus that the G5S-JF gathers intelligence to some extent, but that it is Barkhane who provides the majority of electronic intelligence, such as listening to phones and use of drones.³⁶ As a result, it is Barkhane who “decide[s] what kind of information Barkhane will share before they have an operation, with for example the G5 Sahel partners”,³⁷ suggesting that Barkhane dominates the gathering of intelligence (UN Security Council 2021a). Intelligence sharing is ultimately another element that illustrates how the G5S-

³¹ Interview 34; Interview 37; Interview 40.

³² Interview 27 with external security personnel, February 22, 2020, Mali; Interview 37; Interview 44;

³³ Interview 37.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Interview 26 with observer, February 19, 2020, Mali; Interview 40.

³⁶ Interview 26; Interview 31 with external security personnel, February 24, 2021, Mali; Interview 34; Interview 37; Interview 40.

³⁷ Interview 37.

JF has operated more efficiently with Barkhane than alone, thereby also demonstrating how Barkhane has a significant degree of leadership over the joint force at the operational level.

We see that the operational level of the G5S-JF is characterised by a high presence of external actors. Further, the level of efficiency at this level, which was reported to be low during the first two mandates, appears to be increasing. The leading role external actors have taken within the chain would suggest that improved efficiency at the operational level does not necessarily come from within the G5S-JF structure, but from the external involvement in this structure. Furthermore, there are no significant findings to suggest that external actors are transferring their current responsibilities and decision-making powers over to the G5S-JF. The shared command between the G5S-JF and Barkhane therefore poses a dilemma: the joint force appears to have improved in its efficiency under the French leadership of the shared command, but it relies extensively on the French Barkhane to be this efficient, which raises questions regarding the sustainability of this efficiency, particularly given the French announcement to withdraw its troops from the Sahel in November 2022 (Vincent 2022).

The tactical level of the G5 Sahel Joint Force

The tactical level of the G5S-JF is found at its three sectors' headquarters and initially consisted of seven battalions: on the Mali-Mauritania border, there is one battalion from Mauritania and one from Mali; on the tri-border area of Mali-Niger-Burkina Faso, there is one battalion from Mali, one from Niger and one from Burkina Faso; and, on the Niger-Chad border, there is one battalion from Niger and one from Chad. In 2021, Chad also deployed an eighth battalion to the joint force to operate in the tri-border area, which brought the joint force's number up from 5,000 to 5,600.

Internal dynamics

The internal dynamics of the G5S-JF's tactical level are complex and somewhat confusing. Although on paper, each of the battalions consists of approximately 650–700 personnel, “on the ground we don't really know how many soldiers there are in each battalion”.³⁸ This might have to do with the fact that the soldiers each country has pledged to the G5 are not fixed, which means that they are shifting, further making it difficult to get a full overview of the G5 soldiers

³⁸ Interview 28 with internal security personnel, February 22, 2020, Mali.

(Gasinska and Bohman 2017; Relief Web 2017; Welz 2022b).³⁹ In addition to this lack of an overview over the joint force's soldiers, there also appears to be a lack of standardisation of training among the soldiers, meaning that the battalions vary in their skill sets. The G5S-JF's battalions come from different states, which also have different military traditions and trainings. Referring to G5S-JF troops, an interviewee claimed that there is a "huge gap between the brilliant one and the worst one".⁴⁰ This makes delegation of responsibility and decision-making on the ground rather unpredictable, where you have some who are trained and equipped to take initiative, and others who keep a "low profile".⁴¹

This is further linked to the "hybrid principal-agent relationship" occurring for troops between the G5 chain of command and their national chain of command, which appears to be an obstacle to unity also at the tactical level. Interviewees suggest that troops probably hold more allegiance to the national chain of command than the G5 chain of command due to the set-up of national battalions also being stationed at their home-state.⁴² This may be a little different for the Chadian battalion in Sector Central, because this is the only battalion stationed outside its own state. Thus, the varying degrees of training, capacity and, not least, command allegiance of the G5 troops illustrate the challenges for consistency and efficiency on the ground.

The decision-making at the tactical level revolves around planning specific actions and responding to situations in battle. Interviewees suggested that there is "lack of commanding" and "lack of reporting" within and from the tactical level of the G5S-JF.⁴³ This suggests either a lack of apparent communications channels, or a lack of appreciation of these channels (Gasinska and Bohman 2017). An interviewee stated that one of the issues is that there are not enough people with higher ranks deployed, which leaves troops without much disciplinary guidance once in the field.⁴⁴ In fact, an interviewee stated that the military culture of the joint force resembles the principle of "all men for themselves", which does not bode well for either unity or efficiency. This lack of unity and clear commanding at the tactical level leaves limited room for enhancing the military prowess of the force. However, when external actors collaborate with the troops,

³⁹ Interview 10.

⁴⁰ Interview 29.

⁴¹ Interview 29.

⁴² Interview 6; Interview 37; Interview 40.

⁴³ Interview 29.

⁴⁴ Interview 32 with external security personnel, February 25, 2021, Mali.

they appear to operate more coherently and more efficiently, largely due to the clarity of leadership external actors provide.⁴⁵

The role of external actors

In 2020, the EUTM was mandated to “provide military assistance to the G5 Sahel Joint Force and to national armed forces in the G5 Sahel countries through military advice, training and mentoring” (European Council 2020). As of March 2021, the EUTM had allegedly not trained any particular G5S-JF unit, but had brought in G5S-JF personnel from the three sectors to Bamako for specific training sessions, such as countering improvised explosive devices, which is a tactical-level skill set.⁴⁶ According to a European military interviewee, the courses that the EUTM offers are decided based on consultations with Barkhane, as Barkhane operates with the joint force in the field and therefore may identify needs better than the EUTM.⁴⁷ The training that the EUTM offers to the tactical level of the G5S-JF appears therefore to be formed by Barkhane’s perspective, which raises questions about how much the G5S-JF’s own perceived needs are taken into consideration. An interviewee expressed that the EUTM has its own ideology of how to do things, which might not match the culture of the G5S-JF.⁴⁸ Another specified that the EUTM only trains through their system and with their weapons, which again does not stem from or directly respond to what the G5S-JF needs, or indeed correspond with what weapons the troops of the joint force actually has access to, on the tactical level.⁴⁹ The analysis of the tactical level thus suggests that the EUTM decides what type of assistance the joint force receives, and thereby influences the capacity and capability of the forces, yet without perhaps being certain of the needs from the perspective of the joint force itself.

Barkhane is the main collaboration partner to the G5S-JF in the field, and most of the G5S-JF’s operations carried out in the central sector are conducted jointly with Barkhane. Several interviewees argued that the G5S-JF’s troops operate more efficiently and effectively when conducting joint operations with Barkhane, whereas when they plan and operate on their own, they conduct only minor operations.⁵⁰ An interviewee expressed that one of the reasons for

⁴⁵ Interview 11; Interview 13; Interview 27.

⁴⁶ Interview 42.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Interview 36.

⁴⁹ Interview 34.

⁵⁰ Interview 32; Interview 37; Interview 39; Interview 40; Interview 42. See also: (UN Security Council 2020).

this is because the G5S-JF's troops then have more assertive and senior officers to relate to than when operating alone.⁵¹ Another interviewee also stated that this is because there is a general perception within the G5S-JF that "Westerners know best".⁵² France has thus assumed a leading role also at the tactical level of the G5S-JF when conducting joint operations, and this subsequently improves the joint force's efficiency. Furthermore, it facilitates the joint force's involvement in larger military operations, thus also suggesting it improves the military aptitude of the joint force.

The tactical level of the G5S-JF shows that there is a lack of unity, coherence and perhaps clear leadership within the joint force when operating in the field. It is therefore not surprising that the joint force improves in efficiency and success in operations when operating with Barkhane, which indeed has very clear leadership, expectations and discipline. However, this also means that for the tactical level of the G5S-JF to be efficient, a high level of cooperation with – or leadership from – Barkhane is needed.

External leadership and military efficiency

The literature presented previously argues that coalitions face challenges for their efficiency due to multiple and diverging objectives and perspectives amongst its member states, which causes disunity and subsequently inefficiency. This can be clearly seen in the case of the G5S-JF: although Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso have shared concerns regarding the spread of al Qaeda and Islamic State groups in their border regions, Chad is concerned with rebel activities in the north and east of the country, Chad and Niger are involved in the fight against Boko Haram, and Mauritania claims its current internal threats are more associated with socio-political tension and corruption than the terror threat the G5S-JF is mandated to combat. Security threats are therefore understood and defined differently amongst member states.

The literature also brings out the challenge of the hybrid principal-agent relationship of the military personnel's dual chain of command, which seems a particular challenge for the G5S-JF due to its troops primarily being deployed in their home states. The G5S-JF thus appears to face many of the challenges brought out in the literature on military coalitions. However, the literature on military efficiency and coalitions also argues that a coalition with a clear hegemonic

⁵¹ Interview 32.

⁵² Interview 40.

leader limits the aforementioned challenges for a coalition and indeed increases a coalition's efficiency (Dijk and Sloan 2020). And although the G5S-JF does not have a clear hegemonic leader within, the analysis demonstrates how external actors have assumed such a leading role for the coalition.

The analysis suggests that the form of security assistance that the EUTM and Barkhane provide enhances the G5S-JF's operational and tactical efficiency in particular. The involvement of external actors within the G5S-JF's chain of command comes in many forms: political influence and pressure; administrative control; distribution of resources; training; mentoring; joint operations; and intelligence gathering and sharing, all of which largely reflect hand-holding activities from external actors. In other words, external actors not only have more resources and military capacity, they also partake in important decision-making within the G5S-JF, thereby assuming a somewhat hegemonic position towards the G5 member states. The EUTM's administrative tasks within the G5S-JF's headquarters have improved the joint force's administrative efficiency, and its pre-deployment training of headquarter personnel appears to contribute to a sense of unity and standardisation of skills, which makes the cooperation at the headquarters more efficient. Barkhane's leadership through the shared command with the joint force and during operations has clearly had a positive impact on both the sophistication and the intensity of the joint force's operations, which has been recognised both in reports and in the interviews conducted for this research. This speaks to a strain of literature on security force assistance, which predominantly is rather critical of the impact such assistance can have (see for instance: Biddle, Macdonald, and Baker 2018; Livingston 2011; Shurkin et al. 2017; Bartels et al. 2019; Matissek and Fowler 2020; Marsh and Rolandsen 2021). The case of the G5S-JF demonstrates that the hand-holding type of external assistance can improve the efficiency of a force's chain of command and intensify its military operations.

However, a significant part of the external support consists of external actors assuming responsibility and conducting various tasks themselves. By taking matters into their own hands in this manner, they are contributing to an increase in efficiency. But, it ought to be expressed here that it is not necessarily the G5S-JF's own efficiency that increases, as the capacity for the increased efficiency still seems to depend on the external actors' presence. This raises serious questions about the sustainability – and, ultimately, the stability – of operational efficiency when the actors assuring this are not officially part of the coalition.

The leading role of external actors for the operational efficiency of the G5S-JF suggests that this increased efficiency is unsustainable. When the assistance consists of explaining things in theory and doing tasks *for* the G5S-JF, such as on the operational level, but not jointly exercising these responsibilities *with* the G5S-JF, and without active efforts from both sides to transfer this responsibility, the result will rarely be self-sufficient or sustainable. Interviewees agree that although the G5S-JF is demonstrating increased efficiency, it is not becoming more responsible for, nor autonomous in, its own tasks.⁵³ In fact, an interviewee stated that France and the EUTM's assistance to the G5S-JF is formed in a way where "you 'deresponsibilise' more and more".⁵⁴ For the G5S-JF's chain of command to be independent and sustainable, there needs to be an end goal of transfer of responsibility. If there is no such transfer of responsibility, the G5S-JF will end up in an endless dependency position.

Concluding remarks: Military efficiency at what cost and for how long?

The leading role of external actors, and particularly France, would suggest a hegemonic relationship between these external actors and the joint force, and accredit the improved military efficiency to this power structure. However, there are limitations to a hegemonic understanding of this relationship. This is first because such a logic does not take into account the agency of the joint force, and second because the external actors have not created stability for the G5S-JF, which is the logic of hegemonic leadership.

At the strategic level, it is not unreasonable to expect that the G5S-JF benefits significantly from aligning its objectives with those of external actors. According to Bayart and Ellis, African states often align their interests to those of external actors in order to make themselves relevant and important to external actors (Bayart and Ellis 2000). By attracting external support, African states somewhat manage whatever dependency they have on external actors, and benefit – as this article has demonstrated – through significant financial support and provided resources. At the operational and tactical levels, the G5S-JF expresses agency through for instance choosing what support and training to accept from the EUTM, and not least it benefits significantly from shared accountability and shared burden when conducting joint operations. Although the relationship between external actors and the G5S-JF is distinctly

⁵³ Interview 11; Interview 37; Interview 42.

⁵⁴ Interview 11.

asymmetric in nature, the manner in which the joint force expresses its agency towards external actors should not be neglected.⁵⁵

In an international system, hegemonic theory argues that a hegemonic power relationship provides stability for said system. However, in the case of the G5S-JF, such a hegemonic relationship speaks more to a contingent efficiency – as it remains dependent on external actors – rather than a sustainable efficiency or stable system for the G5S-JF. This is linked to the agency of the G5S-JF and its member states. In May 2022, Mali announced that it would withdraw from the G5S-JF with immediate effect. This came after months of political disputes and quarrelling between Malian and French officials. In the official statement from the Government of Mali, the reason for withdrawing was twofold: first, because Chad refused to transfer the seat of the presidency within the G5 Sahel to Mali due to the Malian military interim government, and second, due to the external interference in and control over the G5S-JF, where Mali alluded particularly to the role of France (France 24 2022). This would suggest that Mali partly withdrew because external actors, particularly France, had assumed such a leading role within the G5S-JF. Mali's withdrawal from the G5S-JF has caused instability for the coalition and ultimately also inefficiency, which would disprove the logic of a hegemon creating stability, at least when the hegemon has an external identity. This instability and inefficiency stems from the fact, through its withdrawal, Mali removes itself as the geographical epicenter of the Sahelian security threats from the coalition's area of operation; removes resources, including two battalions to the joint force; and enforces a relocation of the joint force's headquarters, amongst other challenges.

To conclude, while the logic of hegemony may be useful for understanding the increased efficiency that the G5S-JF has experienced through the assistance from external actors, it speaks more to an efficiency that remains dependent on external support rather than a sustainable efficiency for the G5S-JF. This logic also falls short in explaining the developing power relationship between the external actors and the G5S-JF over time, because it does not address the agency of the G5S-JF. In fact, as things have developed, the hegemonic stability logic appears to have been proven wrong in the case of the G5S-JF, as the strong leading role of external actors was in fact part of the cause for Mali's departure and the resultant instability in the joint force. This may be due to the leading role being assumed by external actors and not by

⁵⁵ For research on how Sahelian states expresses agency towards external actors, see for instance: (Frowd 2021; Cold-Ravnkilde 2021; Sandnes 2022)

an internal state to the G5S-JF, which provides an important lesson for future and other military cooperation, particularly regarding contexts where states provide security assistance to other states. Indeed, this article suggests that if the external actors had a hegemonic grip on the G5S-JF, the joint force's efficiency might have continued. However, the continued efficiency would have required an endless assistance from these external actors, which is both unrealistic and unsustainable for them.

Finally, the article further suggests that for such external assistance to have a long-term impact, there needs to be an active effort from both sides to gradually transfer responsibility and accountability to the receiving side. If this is not possible, external assistance may only improve situations in the short-term and, on top of that, create challenging dependencies with long-term implications for the receiving end. More research should be encouraged in other complex conflict situations where militaries are required to work together through both coordination and direct cooperation, to understand the workings of the chain of command. Moreover, further research should also look at various dynamics of such military cooperation, both in situations where there is a colonial history with collaboration partners and where there is not. Such studies also outside the Sahel would be useful in order to understand what happens to a military's chain of command and military efficiency when external actors become involved.

Bibliography

- Allen, Charles D., and Glenn K. Cunningham. 2010. 'System Thinking in Campaign Design'. In *The U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security Issues*, edited by J. Boone Bartholomees, 4th ed, 253–62. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College.
- AU Peace and Security Council. 2017. 'Communiqué'. African Union. PSC/PR/COMM(DCLXXIX). 679th meeting.
- Auerswald, David P., and Stephen M. Saideman. 2014. *NATO in Afghanistan: Fighting Together, Fighting Alone*. *NATO in Afghanistan*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Bartels, Elizabeth M., Christopher S. Chivvis, Adam R. Grissom, and Stacie L. Pettyjohn. 2019. *Conceptual Design for a Multiplayer Security Force Assistance Strategy Game*. RAND Corporation.
- Bayart, Jean-François, and Stephen Ellis. 2000. 'Africa in the World: A History of Extraversion'. *African Affairs* 99 (395): 217–67. Doi: 723809.
- Bennett, D. Scott. 1997. 'Testing Alternative Models of Alliance Duration, 1816-1984'. *American Journal of Political Science* 41 (3): 846–78. Doi: 10.2307/2111677.
- Biddle, Stephen, Julia Macdonald, and Ryan Baker. 2018. 'Small Footprint, Small Payoff: The Military Effectiveness of Security Force Assistance'. *Journal of Strategic Studies* 41 (1–2): 89–142. Doi: 10.1080/01402390.2017.1307745.

- Braun, Virginia, and Victoria Clarke. 2006. 'Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology'. *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3 (2): 77–101. Doi: 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.
- Charbonneau, Bruno, and Tony Chafer, eds. 2014. *Peace Operations in the Francophone World: Global Governance Meets Post-Colonialism*. New York: Routledge.
- Clausewitz, Carl von. 1989. *On War*. Edited by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Princeton University Press.
- Cold-Ravnkilde, Signe Marie. 2018. 'A Fragile Military Response: International Support of the G5 Sahel Joint Force'. *Danish Institute for International Studies*. <https://www.diis.dk/en/research/a-fragile-military-response>.
- . 2021. 'Borderwork in the Grey Zone: Everyday Resistance within European Border Control Initiatives in Mali'. *Geopolitics*, May, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2021.1919627>.
- Cragin, R. Kim. 2020. 'Tactical Partnerships for Strategic Effects: Recent Experiences of US Forces Working by, with, and through Surrogates in Syria and Libya'. *Defence Studies* 20 (4): 318–35. Doi:10.1080/14702436.2020.1807338.
- Dieng, Moda, Philip Onguny, and Ghouenzen Mfondi. 2020. 'Leadership without Membership : France and the G5 Sahel Joint Force'. *African Journal of Terrorism and Insurgency Research* 1 (2). Doi: 10.31920/2732-5008/2020/v1n2a2.
- Dijk, Ruud van, and Stanley R. Sloan. 2020. 'NATO's Inherent Dilemma: Strategic Imperatives vs. Value Foundations'. *Journal of Strategic Studies* 43 (6–7): 1014–38. Doi: 10.1080/01402390.2020.1824869.
- Dijkstra, Hylke. 2010. 'The Military Operation of the EU in Chad and the Central African Republic: Good Policy, Bad Politics'. *International Peacekeeping* 17 (3): 395–407. Doi: 10.1080/13533312.2010.500150.
- EUCAP Sahel. 2019. 'The European Union's Partnership with the G5 Sahel Countries'. *EEAS*. https://www.eucap-sahel.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/factsheet_eu_g5_sahel_july-2019.pdf.
- European Council. 2020. *EUTM Mali: Council Extends Training Mission with Broadened Mandate and Increased Budget*. 23 March. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/03/23/eutm-mali-council-extends-training-mission-with-broadened-mandate-and-increased-budget/>.
- Finlan, Alastair, Anna Danielsson, and Stefan Lundqvist. 2021. 'Critically Engaging the Concept of Joint Operations: Origins, Reflexivity and the Case of Sweden'. *Defence Studies* 21 (3): 356–74. Doi: 10.1080/14702436.2021.1932476.
- France 24. 2022. 'Mali Withdraws from G5 Sahel Regional Anti-Jihadist Force'. *France 24*, 16 May. <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20220515-mali-withdraws-from-g5-sahel-regional-anti-jihadist-force>.
- Frowd, Philippe M. 2021. 'Borderwork Creep in West Africa's Sahel'. *Geopolitics*, March: 1–21. Doi:10.1080/14650045.2021.1901082.
- G5 Sahel. 2021. 'Le Dispositif de Pilotage Du G5 Sahel'. *G5 Sahel Executive Secretariat*, 14 March. <https://www.g5sahel.org/le-dispositif-de-pilotage-du-g5-sahel/>.
- Gasinska, Karolina, and Elias Bohman. 2017. 'Joint Force of the Group of Five: A Review of Multiple Challenges'. *Totalförsvarets forskningsinstitut*. FOI-R-4548-SE.
- Henke, Marina E. 2017. 'The Politics of Diplomacy: How the United States Builds Multilateral Military Coalitions'. *International Studies Quarterly* 61 (2): 410–24. Doi: 10.1093/isq/sqx017.
- Hope, Col. Ian. 2008. 'Unity of Command in Afghanistan: A Forsaken Principle of War'. Carlisle PA: Strategic Studies Institute.
- Ikpe, Ibanga B. 2014. 'Reasoning and the Military Decision Making Process'. *Journal of Cognition and Neuroethics*, 2 (1): 143–60. http://jcn.cognethic.org/jcnv2i1_Ikpe.pdf
- International Crisis Group. 2017. 'Finding the Right Role for the G5 Sahel Joint Force'. *International Crisis Group*, no. 258. <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/258-finding-the-right-role-for-the-g5-sahel-joint-force.pdf>.

- Kelly, Fergus. 2020. 'Sahel Coalition: G5 and France Agree New Joint Command, Will Prioritize Fight against Islamic State'. *The Defense Post* (blog). 14 January 2020. <https://www.thedefensepost.com/2020/01/14/sahel-coalition-france-g5-islamic-state/>.
- King, Anthony. 2021. 'Operation Moshtarak: Counter-Insurgency Command in Kandahar 2009-10'. *Journal of Strategic Studies* 44 (1): 36–62. Doi:10.1080/01402390.2019.1672160.
- King, Nigel. 2004. 'Using Templates in the Thematic Analysis of Text'. In *Essential Guide to Qualitative Methods in Organizational Research*, edited by Catherine Cassell and Gillian Symon, 256–70. London: SAGE Publication.
- Kreps, Sarah E. 2011. *Coalitions of Convenience: United States Military Interventions after the Cold War*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lacher, Wolfram. 2013. 'The Malian Crisis and the Challenge of Regional Cooperation'. *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 2 (2): Art. 18. Doi: 10.5334/sta.bg.
- Layne, Christopher. 2000. 'US Hegemony and the Perpetuation of NATO'. *Journal of Strategic Studies* 23 (3): 59–91. Doi: 10.1080/01402390008437800.
- Livingston, Thomas K. 2011. *Building the Capacity of Partner States Through Security Force Assistance*. Congressional Research Service.
- Lutsch, Andreas. 2020. 'The Zero Option and NATO's Dual-Track Decision: Rethinking the Paradox'. *Journal of Strategic Studies* 43 (6–7): 957–89. Doi: 10.1080/01402390.2020.1814259.
- Männiste, Tõnis, Margus Pedaste, and Roland Schimanski. 2019. 'Review of Instruments Measuring Decision Making Performance in Military Tactical Level Battle Situation Context'. *Military Psychology* 31 (5): 397–411. Doi: 10.1080/08995605.2019.1645538.
- Marsh, Nicholas, and Øystein H. Rolandsen. 2021. 'Fragmented We Fall: Security Sector Cohesion and the Impact of Foreign Security Force Assistance in Mali'. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 0 (0): 1–16. Doi: 10.1080/17502977.2021.1988226.
- Marston, Daniel Patrick. 2021. 'Operation TELIC VIII to XI: Difficulties of Twenty-First-Century Command'. *Journal of Strategic Studies* 44 (1): 63–90. Doi: 10.1080/01402390.2019.1672161.
- Matisek, Jahara, and Michael W. Fowler. 2020. 'The Paradox of Security Force Assistance after the Rise and Fall of the Islamic State in Syria–Iraq'. *Special Operations Journal* 6 (2): 118–38. Doi: 10.1080/23296151.2020.1820139.
- McInnis, Kathleen J. 2013. 'Lessons in Coalition Warfare: Past, Present and Implications for the Future'. *International Politics Reviews* 1 (2): 78–90. Doi: 10.1057/ipr.2013.8.
- Mearsheimer, John J. 2001. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: Norton.
- Mello, Patrick A. 2019. 'National Restrictions in Multinational Military Operations: A Conceptual Framework'. *Contemporary Security Policy* 40 (1): 38–55. Doi: 10.1080/13523260.2018.1503438.
- Nilsson, Mikael. 2008. 'The Power of Technology: U.S. Hegemony and the Transfer of Guided Missiles to NATO during the Cold War, 1953–1962'. *Comparative Technology Transfer and Society* 6 (2): 127–49. Doi: 10.1353/ctt.0.0007.
- Nilsson, Niklas. 2020. 'Practicing Mission Command for Future Battlefield Challenges: The Case of the Swedish Army'. *Defence Studies* 20 (4): 436–52. Doi: 10.1080/14702436.2020.1828870.
- Oliveira, Ricardo Soares de, and Harry Verhoeven. 2018. 'Taming Intervention: Sovereignty, Statehood and Political Order in Africa'. *Survival* 60 (2): 7–32. Doi: 10.1080/00396338.2018.1448558.
- Relief Web. 2017. 'Challenges and Opportunities for the G5 Sahel Force'. *Relief Web*, 7 July. <https://reliefweb.int/report/mali/challenges-and-opportunities-g5-sahel-force>.
- Rice, Anthony J. 1997. 'Command and Control: The Essence of Coalition Warfare'. *Parameters* 27 (1). Doi: 10.55540/0031-1723.1817.
- Saideman, Stephen M. 2016. 'The Ambivalent Coalition: Doing the Least One Can Do against the Islamic State'. *Contemporary Security Policy* 37 (2): 289–305. Doi: 10.1080/13523260.2016.1183414.

- Sandnes, Marie. 2022. 'The Relationship between the G5 Sahel Joint Force and External Actors: A Discursive Interpretation'. *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne Des Études Africaines* 0 (0): 1–20. Doi: 10.1080/00083968.2022.2058572.
- Shurkin, Michael, John IV Gordon, Bryan Frederick, and Christopher G. Pernin. 2017. *Building Armies, Building Nations: Toward a New Approach to Security Force Assistance*. RAND Corporation.
- Snyder, Glenn H. 1997. *Alliance Politics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- UN Security Council. 2020. 'Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel: Report of the Secretary-General'. S/2020/1074. UN Security Council.
- . 2021a. 'Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel: Report of the Secretary-General'. UN Security Council. S/2021/442.
- . 2021b. 'Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel: Report of the Secretary-General'. UN Security Council. S/2021/442.
- . 2022. 'Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel: Report of the Secretary-General.' UN Security Council. S/2022/382.
- Vincent, Elise. 2022. 'After Ten Years, France to End Military Operation Barkhane in Sahel'. *Le Monde*, 9 November. https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2022/11/09/after-ten-years-france-to-end-military-operation-barkhane-in-sahel_6003575_4.html.
- Walt, Stephen M. 1990. *The Origins of Alliances*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
- Webb, Michael C., and Stephen D. Krasner. 1989. 'Hegemonic Stability Theory: An Empirical Assessment'. *Review of International Studies* 15 (2): 183–98. Doi: 10.1017/S0260210500112999.
- Weitsman, Patricia A. 2003. 'Alliance Cohesion and Coalition Warfare: The Central Powers and Triple Entente'. *Security Studies* 12 (3): 79–113. Doi: 10.1080/09636410390443062.
- Welz, Martin. 2022a. 'Institutional Choice, Risk, and Control: The G5 Sahel and Conflict Management in the Sahel'. *International Peacekeeping* 29 (2): 235–57. Doi: 10.1080/13533312.2022.2031993.
- . 2022b. 'Setting up the G5 Sahel: Why an Option That Seemed Unlikely Came into Being'. *The Conversation*, 11 April. <http://theconversation.com/setting-up-the-g5-sahel-why-an-option-that-seemed-unlikely-came-into-being-180422>.
- Yarger, Richard H. 2010. 'Towards a Theory of Strategy: Art Lykke and the US Army War College Strategy Model'. In *The U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security Issues*, edited by J. Boone Bartholomees, 4th ed, 45–52. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute.

**ARTICLE 3: BILATERAL DONATIONS TO A MULTILATERAL
COALITION: THE ROLE OF THE MIDDLE MEN IN THE CASE OF
THE G5 SAHEL JOINT FORCE.**

Submitted to the Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding.

III

ARTICLE 4: THE EFFECT OF ASYMMETRIC INTERDEPENDENCE ON THE OUTCOMES OF MILITARY COOPERATION IN THE SAHEL

Re-submitted to the journal of Cooperation and Conflict.

The effect of asymmetric interdependence on the outcomes of military cooperation in the Sahel

Marie Sandnes, Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)

Re-submitted to a peer-reviewed international journal.

Abstract:

In this article, I make a case for studying the outcome of security cooperation between external and host forces through the lens of their relationship. This is because in order for such military cooperation to have a sustainable effect, the host needs to develop ownership and autonomy over its own security responses. This article sets out from the observation that there is an evident discrepancy between the stated intent and the actual outcome of the cooperation between the G5 Sahel Joint Force (G5S-JF) and external actors. Building on insights from peacebuilding and security force assistance (SFA) literature, I argue that the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors is best characterised as one of asymmetric interdependence and that this asymmetric interdependence can explain why the G5S-JF never developed into an autonomous force with ownership over its security responses. The concept of asymmetric interdependence provides a new lens through which to research SFA and can potentially shed light on other relationships between international, regional, national, and local actors more generally.

Key words: military cooperation, Sahel, asymmetric interdependence, security force assistance

Introduction

In today's globalised world, most responses to violent conflict require continuous interaction between the international, regional, national and local levels. Within peacebuilding, there has been an attempt to localise efforts, meaning engaging local actors in externally driven peacebuilding efforts in order to obtain sustainable outcomes. Within military cooperation and interventions, external actors have increasingly engaged in capacity-building of local or national military forces, with the ultimate aim being that these forces themselves can assume ownership of the response to the security situation. These spheres of engagement between the external and the host in volatile settings have sparked scholarly debates on the successes and failures of external support, often with the aim of explaining why such interventions tend to be ineffective.

This article studies the interaction and cooperation between the G5 Sahel Joint Force (G5S-JF) and external military actors in the Sahel region who have provided support to the joint force.⁶⁰ Within the military aspect of such external capacity-building and security force assistance (SFA), scholars often point to the characteristics, approach or nature of either the external or the host to explain why there is commonly a discrepancy between the goal and the outcome of SFA (Biddle, Macdonald and Baker, 2018; Knowles and Matisek, 2019; Tull, 2020; Marsh and Rolandsen, 2021). In this article, I make a case for studying the outcome of security cooperation between external and host forces through the lens of their relationship, more so than their individual characteristics in and of themselves. I argue that the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors is best characterised as asymmetric interdependence. This is because in order for such military cooperation to have a sustainable effect, the host needs to develop ownership and autonomy over its own security responses. While examining the nature of the provider or the recipient may explain effects of SFA, what determined the eventual autonomy of the host force is the *relationship dynamics* between the intervener and the host. The concept of asymmetric interdependence provides a new lens through which to research SFA and can potentially shed light on other relationships between international, regional, national, and local actors more generally.

⁶⁰ Since Mali's withdrawal from the G5S-JF in May 2022, the G5 Sahel has now become the G4 Sahel. As this research was conducted prior to Mali's withdrawal (2019-2021), covering the years from 2017 to the end of 2021, this paper refers to the coalition as the G5S-JF.

The G5S-JF was established in 2017 as the military branch of the G5 Sahel organisation, by and for the member states of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania, Mali and Niger. The joint force was tasked with combatting terrorism, illicit trafficking and transnational crime (AU Peace and Security Council, 2017). When the G5S-JF was established, it was presented as a regional initiative, with a regional mandate and ownership. Following its establishment, it gained significant attention from the international community: by February 2018, over \$400 million had been pledged to support the G5S-JF (African Center for Strategic Studies, 2018). The French-led counter-terror operation Barkhane in the Sahel has trained and mentored the G5S-JF troops. In 2020, Barkhane and the G5S-JF entered into a shared command, establishing a joint headquarters and a joint intelligence fusion cell, both based in Niamey in Niger. The European Union Training Mission in Mali (EUTM) initially provided advice and assistance to the G5S-JF headquarters and was in 2020 also mandated to train the military troops of the joint force. The rationale behind the support to the G5S-JF, and thus the military cooperation between the G5S-JF (the host) and Barkhane and EUTM (the external), was to strengthen the joint force's capacity to combat security threats in the region independently. However, what we see today is not an autonomous or independent G5S-JF. When Mali withdrew from the G5S-JF in May 2022, it became clear that the G5S-JF and the support it had received from external actors had not worked as intended. Also up until that point, it was rather clear that the G5S-JF remained highly dependent on external assistance, finance, training and resources.

This article sets out from the observation that there is an evident discrepancy between the stated intent and the actual outcome of the cooperation between the G5S-JF and external actors. The article asks the question: *what can the relational power dynamic between the G5S-JF and external actors tell us about the outcomes of this military cooperation?* I argue that the G5S-JF and external actors existed in a relationship of asymmetric interdependence and that this dynamic explains why the support external actors provided to the joint force did not result in an autonomous joint force. Through examining the dynamics between external actors and Sahelian actors through the lens of asymmetric interdependence, this article also sheds light on recent changes in the Sahel, in particular the withdrawal of Barkhane from Mali, Mali's deployment of the Russian private security company Wagner Group, and ultimately Mali's withdrawal from the G5S-JF.

The methodology for this article derives from three years of research on the G5S-JF and relies on official documents, resolutions and statements from the G5 Sahel organisation, G5 Sahel member states, French ministries, the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN). It also includes material from 49 semi-structured elite interviews conducted in Bamako (Mali), Paris (France) and Abuja (Nigeria) conducted between 2019 and 2021.⁶¹ A few of these interviews have also been conducted remotely.

In the following, I commence by introducing scholarly debates on peacebuilding, capacity-building and SFA, and aim to particularly draw out the debates of how external and host actors interact. I then discuss relational power dynamics and provide a conceptualisation of asymmetric interdependence. Next, I analyse the differences between the stated intentions and the actual outcomes of the G5S-JF and its cooperation with external actors, where I focus particularly on regionality and autonomy. I continue by discussing the consequences of the asymmetric interdependence between the G5S-JF and the external actors, and how such power dynamics in a relationship are subject to change according to context. Specifically, I demonstrate how the asymmetric interdependence between European actors and Sahelian actors has seen a shift following the tensions between Mali and France in 2021/22. I conclude by calling for further research on the relationship between external and host forces in other contexts through the lens of asymmetric interdependence.

Relational aspects of the external and the host

There is a wide range of literature from peace and conflict studies, political science, and international relations that relates to the concept of external and host actors.⁶² Within military

⁶¹ The interviews were made anonymously, but I have classified the interviewees into five categories: 1) external security personnel (in the Sahel, but outside the G5 structure), 2) external political personnel (in the Sahel, but outside the G5 structure), 3) internal security personnel (within the G5 structure), 4) internal political personnel (within the G5 structure), and 5) observer (organisational, academic or others operating in the Sahel).

⁶² Depending on the strain of literature, external and host may also be referred to as external and internal, and international and local, amongst other concepts. Though these concepts are touched upon in the literature review, I utilise 'external' and 'host' when referring to the G5S-JF and external actors supporting the joint force.

cooperation and hard security issues, the topic of SFA has become particularly prominent in academic debates.

SFA is a form of military foreign policy where external forces engage in “training and equipping military and civilian security forces to enhance professionalism and operational capacity” (Marsh et al., 2020: 6). The intent of providing SFA is to strengthen an ally or a partner-state’s military capacities. Such support is often provided due to a particular security threat that the partner-state is facing, such as terrorism (Shurkin et al., 2017; Bartels et al., 2019). SFA allows the provider to “pursue certain objectives without large-scale commitments” (Bartels et al., 2019: vii), because it requires only limited resources and use of personnel from the providing side. In this sense, SFA is often viewed as a cheaper and safer engagement for external actors in conflicts than full-scale military interventions. External forces thus work with host nations’ forces through training and advising, with the aim that the host military will one day be able to operate independently and take ownership of the required military efforts (Livingston, 2011). The intention of SFA is thus quite clear: its purpose is to strengthen a military force to the extent where it can assume responsibility and ownership of its respective security situation.

However, the outcomes of SFA and the consequences of such support have received significant attention in academic research over the past years. This is largely because the objective of building a partner’s capacity to the extent where it can assume ownership over military efforts rarely appears to succeed as an end-goal, which the US withdrawal from Afghanistan and the subsequent collapse of the Afghan army in 2021 can attest to.

There are multiple explanations as to why SFA may not always succeed in building the capacity and efficiency of a host force. Matissek and Reno (2019) point to diverging expectations and practices between the provider and the recipient, where the provider often has to navigate ad hoc relationships on the ground due to the often-fragmented government and military actors. At the core of this divergence, as Matissek and Fowler (2020) argue, is that the provider often fails to fully appreciate and recognise the local context of civil-military relations due to the variations of this from state to state. Shurkin et al. (2017) argue that it is critical for a military to be engrained into a nation-building process, and hence that a shared sense of national identity needs to be in place – or, at the very least, the seeds of a national ideology need to be sown – in order for a

military to cohesively unite and operate together, which is a prerequisite for military effectiveness. However, in many so-called “fragile” contexts and states, a unified national identity or ideology is often contested, and SFA is typically provided in such fragile contexts, which means that the prerequisites for success are arguably weak from the get-go. Marsh and Rolandsen (2021) argue that the fragmentation amongst the recipients and the lack of coordination among the providers of SFA may exacerbate security issues more than solving them. Biddle, Macdonald and Baker (2018) point to diverging interests amongst providers and recipients as an obstacle to the effectiveness of SFA missions. Ultimately, the SFA literature argues that the outcome of SFA is often unsuccessful.

Whereas the SFA literature predominantly points to shortcomings in either of the sides of SFA,⁶³ such as the providers’ approach to the recipient and context, or the nature of the recipients’ military culture, this article wants to direct the focus towards the characteristics of *the relationship* that develops between the external and the host. Analysing the relational power dynamics between these actors reveals the levels of each agent’s ownership and autonomy, concepts explored in the peacebuilding literature.

Since the 1990s, the concept of local ownership has come to the forefront of peacebuilding efforts, and academic literature has raised questions about how it is understood and how it is used. Some argue that the focus on local ownership has been used by external actors to justify their interventions and that the concept of local ownership is therefore more of a buzzword than a peacebuilding approach whose implementation holds any real success (Pietz and Carlowitz, 2007). Others argue that the dominant narrative of ‘local ownership’ in peacebuilding initiatives is inherently based on Western assumptions and values and does not in fact represent the ‘local’ of where the peacebuilding is taking place (Paris, 1997; Ignatieff, 2004; Richmond, 2006; Lee, 2011). A third strain problematises the transferring of ownership of peacebuilding programmes to local populations, given that not all local cultures necessarily provide a good foundation for building a sustainable peace (Futamura and Notaras, 2011; Ginty, 2011).

⁶³ There are a few exceptions to this: see for instance Wilén (2021).

Finally, a large literature on the localisation of peacebuilding focuses on how both ‘local’ and ‘ownership’ can be interpreted in various ways, first through questioning who the locals are – population, elite, or others – and further by asking what ownership means – a maximalist understanding which entails full control and autonomy in decisions (Edomwonyi, 2003), or a more moderate understanding where local perspectives and views are more directly reflected in the peacebuilding programmes (Reich, 2006). This boils down to how the relationship between the external and the host develops, to what degree the host has agency in this relationship, and not least when and to what degree the host is able and willing to assume ownership over the efforts, given that the external actors will one day withdraw.

Indeed, within the peacebuilding literature, several scholars have pointed to the relationship that occurs between the external and the host. Donais (2009) for instance points to the considerable power imbalance between externals and internals, both in terms of resources and decision-making. This imbalance is interesting because, as Paffenholz (2015) argues, ‘external’ and ‘internal’ are not binary opposites, despite often being conceptualised as such within the literature. Rather, there is a collaboration taking place, where it is difficult to identify where the external ends and the internal begins (Richmond, 2015). This perspective on the localisation of peacebuilding has brought about a discussion on hybridity of peacebuilding. Hybridity here attempts to move away from the idea of external and internal as opposites, and therefore refers to the consolidation between external and internal frameworks and the engagement and encounters between the local and the international actors (Björkdahl and Höglund, 2013; Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2013). The question then becomes how best to examine, understand and explain the relationship that occurs between external and host actors. Tsing (2005) uses the metaphor of friction to understand how this hybridity reflects a relationship of imbalance and asymmetry between the external and the internal.

Hybridity and friction speak to the context in which there is interaction between external and host, but as concepts in and of themselves, they do not explain what results from the hybridity or friction. This article draws on these relational perspectives from the peacebuilding literature as a means to understand why SFA to, and external cooperation with, the G5S-JF has not succeeded. Building on these perspectives, this article makes a case for understanding this relationship through the concept of asymmetric interdependence.

Conceptualising asymmetric interdependence

In this article, the term ‘externals’ refers to states that chose to intervene in another state or region militarily with the intent of assisting the host with its security challenges. The ‘host’ is considered the actor operating in its own geographical domain that receives military assistance from external actors, due to an inability to successfully combat domestic or transnational security threats on its own. The differentiating concepts of ‘the external’ and ‘the host’ have similar conceptual counterparts in other literatures, such as those on fragile states and strong states, the North and the South, and international and local, which are built on divisive discourses that reduce complex power dynamics into binary categories.

These binary divisions in the literature would suggest that what I here refer to as *the external* actor is often considered a more powerful actor, whereas what I refer to as *the host* is considered in need of power. However, we need to nuance these assumptions, as well as the assumptions of what constitutes power, as one should not neglect the role of mutual influence, and the social and relational ways of exercising power. Baldwin (2016) demonstrates how power holds many dimensions, and therefore argue that it is an oversimplification to speak of ‘the strong’ and ‘the weak’ in a relationship, as an actor may be strong in one dimension of power, but weak in another. In this article, I build on this perspective and argue that the division into a powerful and a less-powerful side is indeed too simplistic a way of understanding the dynamics between the external and the host when it comes to military cooperation.

I therefore approach this analysis through a relational understanding of power. Power is thus something that occurs when it relates to someone or something else: it exists *between* agents as a social phenomenon (Barnett and Duvall, 2005). In this manner, power is therefore not purely a possession, nor is it only the ability to determine an outcome; power is something that occurs and can be studied in interactions and relationships (Guzzini, 2013; Baldwin, 2016). With regard to the literature on relations between external and host actors, this speaks to how the hybridity of the interactions between the external and the host plays out in terms of power dynamics. The analysis in this article examines how each agent expresses agency, ownership, autonomy and dependence in these interactions, which as per Baldwin’s logic can be expressed and played out

in various forms. The analysis reveals the power dynamic of this relationship to be one of asymmetric interdependence. I will first introduce the concepts of interdependence and asymmetry separately, before bringing them together.

An *interdependent* relationship consists of two or more different agents who to some extent rely and depend on each other. In this relationship, there is often a negotiated commitment from each side, which creates dependency in both directions. Interdependence is directly linked to a relational understanding of power, as according to Keohane and Nye (1989: 9): “interdependent relationships will always involve costs since interdependence restricts autonomy”. This does not only go in one direction, but is true for both (or all) parties of the relationship. Power dependence theory suggests that “one actor’s dependence is considered the source of the other actor’s power” (Rouhana and Fiske, 1995: 52). For military partners, this would suggest that the party who relies more on the other has less agency in the relationship and hence that the military with the most independence and autonomy also holds more power. The nature of this interdependence has implications for each agent’s ownership of the response to the security situation. Although an interdependent relationship reduces the agents’ autonomy and independence, the level of these may vary, making one side more dependent than the other.

An *asymmetric* relationship essentially consists of two or more agents who are, per definition, unequal in a relationship. The asymmetry of such relationships can play out in various ways, for instance between two states with different military capability, between two people with different kinds or degrees of power, or between two agents that exert different levels of influence on each other. In the relationship between two agents, Womack (2015) argues that asymmetry occurs when the relationship “is founded on reciprocal but different commitments by each side”. This means that even though the asymmetric relationship may be unequal, it does not necessarily represent an order of pure domination (Efremova, 2019). In order for asymmetric relations to be fruitful, there needs to be a mutual recognition of the asymmetry and the different kinds and degrees of power, capacity and ability that the agents possess, because it “facilitates clearer expectations about what constitutes the sphere of ‘reasonable’ solutions based on the existing power balance” (Deutsch, 1973: 46). Asymmetry thus deals with relational power. In military partnerships between an external and a host, this would for instance mean that the external agrees

to provide resources and training and the host agrees to provide intelligence, allegiance to the provider, or simply commitment to the external's programme.

Combining these two concepts – not as asymmetry *and* interdependence, but to constitute *asymmetric interdependence* – thereby describes a relationship where two or more agents depend on each other, but to a different degree. Their commitments to each other differ, and one agent is more dependent on the other than vice versa: they are interdependent, but the level of dependency is asymmetric. This article thus challenges the theoretical assumptions of the divisive logic of the strong versus the fragile, such as in the North-South discourse, and makes a case for understanding such dynamics through the lens of asymmetric interdependence.

I also recognise that power is contextual and that the power dynamics of a relationship can therefore change depending on context. This context may for instance refer to the security situation in the Sahel, political leadership changes amongst any of the parties, or new forms of cooperation, which all may impact the relationship between the external and the host actors. Such changes in context may consequentially change the leverage that the various agents hold at different times in their relationship.

Disentangling the intent and outcome of the security cooperation between the G5S-JF and external actors

The regional nature of the G5S-JF and the aim of assisting the joint force to become an independent and autonomous security actor in the Sahel were at the forefront of the official discourse when the G5S-JF was established (Sandnes, 2022). This section will advance by shedding light on the discrepancy between the intention and the outcome of the SFA, through focusing on the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors. It will pay particular attention to first the aspects of regionality and regional ownership, and second those of autonomy and dependence. Disentangling 'the regional' is critical for understanding the break with – or the continuation of – the asymmetric bilateral relations that have existed between European and Sahelian actors for decades. Autonomy is a key element in the conceptual understanding of interdependence and is thus critical to examine in the context of the G5S-JF and external actors.

The regional versus the national and bilateral

When the G5S-JF was established, it gained significant attention due to its regional mandate and regional focus. The African Union (AU) was one of the first to highlight “the innovative nature of the regional initiatives such as the one of the G5 Sahel” (AU Peace and Security Council, 2017). Prior to the joint force, most external efforts in the Sahel remained nationally focused with bilateral arrangements. A number of external actors were particularly keen to highlight the new regional focus in relation to the establishment of the G5S-JF. In 2017, the UN commended the “regional security initiatives, notably the coordination with the G5 Sahel” (UN Security Council, 2017: 11). Also the EU commended the “efforts by the G5 Sahel and ECOWAS to reinforce regional cooperation to address the threats of terrorism and organized crime” (European Council, 2018a). President Macron stated that, since 2013, France has also “regionalised our approach” to the Sahelian security challenges, further claiming that “the cooperation dimension, as I was saying, will be strengthened and will be based in particular on the mechanism of existing operational military partnership at the regional level of West Africa” (Macron, 2021). The international community thus gave particular focus to the regional level of the Sahel.

The G5 Sahel organisation and its member states have also emphasised the regional nature of the G5S-JF, and not least the importance of a regional focus as opposed to only national efforts. The G5 Sahel strategy for development and security emphasises that its purpose is to “strengthen intra-regional cooperation in the areas of defence and security” (G5 Sahel Secretariat, 2016: 22).⁶⁴ The previous executive secretary of the G5 Sahel organisation, Maman Sambo Sidikou, claimed that “since the fall of the Songhai Empire (1591), our region has never seen such promising joint cooperation” (G5 Sahel, 2018).⁶⁵ The previous president of Burkina Faso, Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, also stated in the UN national assembly that terrorism calls for “an effective collective response, made up of solidarity and pooling our efforts and resources. This is the *raison d’être* of the G5 Sahel” (Kaboré, 2017: 3). In other words, the official expectations of the G5 Sahel and the G5S-JF was of a regional nature and regional ownership, both from the G5 Sahel member states and from external actors in their support. However, there

⁶⁴ Freely translated by author.

⁶⁵ Freely translated by author.

are many aspects of the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors that have called into question the regional nature of the G5S-JF and the alleged regional support from external actors.

The G5S-JF battalions, which have been divided along national lines, have been based in their own state and have operated predominantly on their own territory. The exception to this is the eighth battalion of the G5S-JF that was deployed by Chad in Niger, near the border areas of Mali and Burkina Faso. In any multilateral coalition, there is a tension between the coalition's chain of command and the troops' national chain of command. For the G5S-JF, the national lines appear to be particularly strong because most of the G5S-JF troops are also stationed in their own state,⁶⁶ with the exception of the eighth Chadian battalion. This is a way for the G5 member states to maintain control, first over their own troops and their actions, but also in that it maintains a national structure that allows for the member states to control how external actors engage with the G5S-JF troops.

France's engagement in the Sahel has historically been focused on bilateral agreements and assistance, where France's colonial history and domination has established asymmetry in these relations (Charbonneau and Chafer, 2014; Mann, 2021). Indeed, Francophone Africa has been known as France's "pré carré", which can be loosely interpreted as a specific area of influence. This influence has included political, military, economic and cultural ties where France has expressed and demonstrated its preponderant power. This colonial legacy is an important backdrop when analysing the more recent relations between the G5S-JF and external actors. Although France has attempted to take a more multilateral approach to its previous colonies – presumably largely to avoid neo-colonial criticism – and has instead been cooperating with the UN or the EU, French bilateral policy towards its previous colonies has remained strong.⁶⁷ The establishment of the G5S-JF suggested a more regional response and approach, but bilateral relations have still dominated. The legality of Barkhane's operational presence in the Sahel has first and foremost been based on bilateral agreements, which means that the

⁶⁶ Interview 6 with external political personnel, January 10, 2020, France; Interview 37 with external security personnel, March 16, 2021, Mali; Interview 41 with observer, March 20, 2021, Mali.

⁶⁷ Interview 2 with external political personnel, October 2, 2019, Nigeria.

relationship between Barkhane and the G5S-JF has also been based on bilateral arrangements with the G5 Sahel member states.

The EUTM also pushed its regional approach to the security threat in the Sahel, but has continued to operate through national lines. Even though the EUTM's mandate has been to train and assist the G5S-JF troops, its dominant activity has been to train the Malian national army, and as of 2021 also that of Burkina Faso. Support to national armies can be claimed to support the G5S-JF down the line, but the joint force is nevertheless not the initial target.⁶⁸ Indeed, the EUTM system has facilitated the training of national armies, which may or may not have included training of personnel that operate under the G5S-JF flag. The exception to this has been some training courses that the EUTM has held in Bamako, Mali, where it has brought in personnel from the G5S-JF, but this has remained rather limited compared to the national-lined efforts of the EUTM. The G5 Sahel member states have therefore managed external actors' engagement with the G5S-JF to a large degree. This facilitated a continuation of the bilateral asymmetry between Europe and Sahelian states that has existed over the past decades (Gegout, 2019), which has given the G5 Sahel member states some more leverage than before, but which has also had implications for the alleged regional approach to the G5S-JF and the Sahel. Ultimately, this means that external actors have depended on bilateral relations with the G5 member states in order to support the regional G5S-JF. However, prioritising the national lines over the regional lines has had implications for the G5S-JF's ability to take responsibility for managing the security situation at the regional level, which has ultimately impacted the autonomy of the joint force.

Furthermore, the majority of financial and resource support to the G5S-JF has been channelled bilaterally through the G5 Sahel member states. It has thus been the member states that have become legal owners of the resources and not the G5 Sahel organisation nor the G5S-JF. Although this support is earmarked for the G5S-JF – and there has been an understanding between donors and the G5 Sahel member states that the member states will distribute the earmarked support to the G5S-JF battalions – the financial support to the regional joint force

⁶⁸ Interview 28 with internal security personnel, February 22, 2020, Mali; Interview 37.

goes through bilateral channels.⁶⁹ The G5 Sahel member states therefore have gained leverage towards donors through the bilateral system of donations to the G5S-JF.

The national and bilateral lines have implications for the purportedly regional nature of the G5S-JF. Disentangling the alleged regional focus of the G5S-JF thus reveals that the national lines of cooperation remained significant to the G5S-JF and its relations with external actors. This suggests a continuation of prior efforts in the Sahel region and not an actual shift towards a regional focus as officially suggested, but the bilateral lines to the G5S-JF have been a manner in which the G5 Sahel member states have managed their relations with external actors. In fact, Welz (2022) points to the bilateral nature of the G5S-JF as an intentional structure as it has allowed the G5 Sahel member states to maintain control of and sovereignty over the regional efforts, as opposed to what their level of control would have been if other regional forces, such as the ECOWAS Standby Force, were involved. External actors might also have viewed it as beneficial to work with a smaller regional unit in the Sahel, as a smaller unit might be more prone to external influence than a larger body, such as ECOWAS. Nevertheless, there was no assurance that a strengthening of one G5 Sahel member state's national capacities would also strengthen the collective regional capacity. An informant claims that "the G5 Sahel Joint Force is a tool for external actors to strengthen Sahelian armies",⁷⁰ which suggests that despite the agency G5 member states express towards external actors, the G5S-JF has remained dependent on external support, indicating an asymmetric relationship between them. Indeed, the system of aiding the G5S-JF has not deviated significantly from what has been done for decades: bilateral military support, which has been highly asymmetric particularly due to France's colonial legacy in the Sahel region. Even in the post-colonial period, France maintained substantial military presence in the G5 Sahel member states, and the G5 Sahel member states have structured their security sector according to the French model (Charbonneau and Chafer, 2014).⁷¹ The relationship between France and its former colonies has therefore remained clearly asymmetric.

⁶⁹ Interview 11 with observer, February 4, 2020, Mali; Interview 13 with internal security personnel, February 6, 2020, Mali; Interview 16 with observer, February 11, 2020, Mali; Interview 28; Interview 32 with external security personnel, February 25, 2021, Mali; Interview 37; Interview 40 with internal political personnel, March 19, 2021, Mali.

⁷⁰ Interview 7 with external political personnel, January 14, 2020, France.

⁷¹ In addition to military forces and police forces with separate jurisdictions, there is also the gendarmerie, which is a military force in charge of law enforcement. It is therefore somewhat a blend of military and police roles.

Yet, the continuous worsening of the security situation has indeed discredited the effect of such bilateral support, be it due to corruption, lack of management of resources or other issues.

The bilateral nature of the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors therefore deviates from the official intent of regional cooperation. This is important because it is different from the way SFA was framed towards the G5S-JF: as an effort to increase *regional* cooperation. This raises questions of how this further implicated the interactions in the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors. Indeed, the reason the regional aspect of this analysis is important is because it not only demonstrates a continuation of already-existing asymmetry, but it also sheds light on the question of ownership of the response to the security situation in the Sahel, and the G5S-JF's independence and autonomy in assuming this ownership.

Autonomy and dependence

The G5S-JF was in its initial phase presented as homegrown and regional, with the aim of establishing a sustainable coalition that could ultimately assume the responsibility of providing security in its own region. These aspects were highly emphasised in setting the expectations of the joint force and its relations with external actors, particularly France. French president Emmanuel Macron stated at the UN General Assembly in 2017 that “we cannot succeed in our shared mission if the countries most concerned cannot assume their own responsibilities. This is why, since taking office, I have supported the deployment of the G5 Sahel joint force” (Macron, 2017b). In a speech in Burkina Faso's capital Ouagadougou that same year, he claimed that “this is a burden we share, and tomorrow it is a stronger more responsive organisation that will pick it up”, here referring to the G5S-JF (Macron, 2017a). Indeed, the French Ministry of Defence has claimed that Barkhane has aimed to “support the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel) partner countries in taking over the fight against armed terrorist groups” (France Ministere des Armees, 2020: 4). These statements have outwardly suggested that an end point in the relationship between the joint force and France is an autonomous G5S-JF. The EU has fed this official discourse, by claiming that there's a need for “reinforcing the region's countries' ownership of the military operations” (Fardel and Pichon, 2020: 4), and Macron has verified that “the future is in the construction of a sustainable cooperation between the five G5 Sahel countries” (UN News,

2019). The concepts of sustainability and ownership were thus used by external actors expressing their aim of engagement in the Sahel and especially with the G5S-JF.

The G5 Sahel states have also emphasised regional autonomy and ownership as end goals of this cooperation. This is evident in statements from the previous president of the G5 Sahel organisation, Maman Sambo Sidikou, who claimed that “as France is not intended to drag on military operations in Africa, the countries of the region must work together to face the challenges that the departure of the troops from Operation Barkhane could pose” (G5 Sahel, 2018). In 2020, the G5 Sahel heads of state collectively called for more “contributions to support the action of the national and regional forces of the G5 Sahel so that they acquire their autonomy and take ownership of the situation on ground” (Direction de l’information légale et administrative Français, 2020). Thus, also the G5 Sahel has emphasised the importance of regional cooperation with an end point of externals withdrawing. Nevertheless, studying the details of the relationship between external actors and the G5S-JF, there are several elements that have not corresponded with the stated aim of achieving autonomy for the G5S-JF. I will note a few examples that demonstrate this by pointing at the asymmetric interdependence between the joint force and external actors.

Since the establishment of the G5S-JF, the joint force has received operational assistance, mentoring and training from operation Barkhane. The operational assistance has related particularly to the military operations the G5S-JF carries out on its own, where Barkhane has provided air support and medical evacuation support.⁷² Mentoring relates to when the G5S-JF and Barkhane have conducted joint operations, of which there have been many. The training has predominantly related to preparing for battle. In 2020, Barkhane and the G5S-JF formalised their collaboration more substantially through establishing a joint headquarters alongside a joint fusion intelligence cell in Niamey, Niger (Sahel Coalition, 2020). Through the joint headquarters, the operations that Barkhane and the G5S-JF carried out were organised through a shared chain of command. Several interviewees have reflected that this was a way for France to

⁷² Interview 27 with external security personnel, February 22, 2020, Mali.

gain more control over the G5S-JF.⁷³ The shared command has reportedly improved the G5S-JF's efficiency and capacity in the field, though these improvements seem to have been strongly dependent on the involvement and capacity of Barkhane, rather than an increased capacity of the G5S-JF.

The EUTM has since the inception of the G5S-JF provided advice and assistance at the joint force's headquarters. This has included advising and training on strategic and operational matters, though in theory rather than practice (European Council, 2018b). It has also included assisting headquarters personnel in various administrative tasks and assisting G5S-JF personnel in sending financial and resource requests to the EU.⁷⁴ The EUTM has also trained headquarters personnel in a pre-deployment capacity prior to their deployment at the headquarters.⁷⁵ In 2020, the EUTM mandate was further expanded to include the training of G5S-JF troops. The G5S-JF has thus depended on the EUTM for administrative tasks and ultimately also for the efficiency of the joint force's headquarters. However, Barkhane and the EUTM's leverage of influence on the G5S-JF has also depended on the willingness of the joint force to accept support from them over potential support offered from other actors.

The strong interest from many external actors in the Sahel region has left the joint force with the option of choosing whose support to accept. The G5S-JF has been very aware of the strategic interest France and the EU have in the Sahel region. This interest has been particularly visible through the European fear of spill-overs from the Sahel to Europe with regards to both security threats and migration. For Europe to have a certain level of influence on the situation and some leverage on the developments in the region has remained critical for European foreign policy. The G5S-JF has thus held clear leverage in the face of France and the EU: the joint force has managed and used French and EU interests in the region to its benefit. France and the EU have depended on the G5S-JF's willingness to accept the needed support from them and not from other actors instead – particularly those who may have differing interests from France and

⁷³ Interview 11; Interview 27; Interview 36 with observer, March 11, 2021, Mali; Interview 37; Interview 44 with internal security personnel, 25 March, Mali.

⁷⁴ Interview 29 with internal security personnel, February 23, 2020, Mali; Interview 42 with internal security personnel, March 24, 2021, Mali

⁷⁵ Interview 29; Interview 37

its allies, such as Russia or China. This leverage has been used actively by Mali since 2021, which will be discussed further in the next section. Hence, although the G5S-JF has clearly depended on external actors for financial support, administrative assistance and capacity during military operations, there has been an interdependence that has gone both ways, which the G5S-JF has seemed to be both aware of and happy to utilise for burden-sharing in the Sahel security situation.

This interdependence stands in contrast to the stated aim of developing an autonomous G5S-JF. However, this interdependence is also asymmetric: the G5S-JF's dependency on external actors has been rather urgent in nature, as it has related to the joint force's efficiency and ultimately its operational capacity, whereas external actors' dependence on the G5S-JF has related more to influence in the region and control over what could potentially spread and threaten European territory in the future. Hence, the asymmetric interdependence that has increasingly manifested in the relationship between the G5S-JF and Barkhane thus suggests that the external public intent of strengthening the joint force to the extent where it can assume responsibility and ownership independently of French influence is flawed at best.

Ultimately, taking a closer look at the relationship between external actors and the G5S-JF reveals that they find themselves in a relationship of asymmetric interdependence. It is clear that the SFA provided to the G5S-JF is not particularly successful as it has not resulted in an increasingly independent joint force, nor a force that can assume ownership over the response to the security situation in the Sahel.

The context and outcomes of asymmetric interdependence

Looking at this SFA through the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors, which has emerged as one of asymmetric interdependence, reveals that these dynamics have not allowed for the development of an independent G5S-JF. This suggests that such a relationship has also not facilitated a successful endpoint for the cooperation between these actors. Indeed, the underlying dynamic and system that has existed between Europe and Sahelian states for decades only became more formalised over time.

Though not boding well for an autonomous G5S-JF, the asymmetric interdependence has also been viewed as beneficial to some of the parties involved. Oliveira and Verhoeven (2018) point at how many African states in fact seek out external intervention in order to benefit financially and politically through managing the external engagement, which can be seen in the case of the G5S-JF. The political elites in the G5 member states have indeed benefitted from external involvement in the region. This effective endorsement from external actors has helped endow these elites with legitimacy in the international community and the garnering of resources has also fostered support domestically. External involvement thus bolsters the political power and position of these elites. Furthermore, through emphasising the need for external involvement, Sahelian states also frame themselves as indispensable in this situation: Sahelian states and militaries need to combat these transnational threats, but they require external assistance to do so (Sandnes, 2022). Hence, the strong external involvement in the Sahel appears to have been a result of both external actors benefitting from influence in the region and Sahelian elites benefitting from external presence.

However, a critical element to the power that the G5S-JF and other Sahelian actors hold when facing external actors is the power of choosing which external actors they deem it fruitful to cooperate with. Thus far, the asymmetric interdependence between European actors and Sahelian actors has often been viewed as being in the European actors' favour. However, recent years have brought other external actors to the table who have increasingly carved out their role in the Sahel. In this regard, Russia has been – and remains – an important actor. Indeed, the concept of asymmetric interdependence can also help us further understand current developments in the region.

Power dynamics and relationships change as context changes. Since the inception of the G5S-JF in 2017 and its relations with external actors, the context in the Sahel has changed. Despite the strong presence of external actors in the Sahel since 2012, the security situation has continued to worsen drastically, which has fostered increasing dissatisfaction with external actors and the flourishing of conspiracy theories and disinformation campaigns in the region, particularly scapegoating France (Thurston, 2022). In addition, over the past few years, several G5 member states have experienced military coups or undemocratic changes of power. The deteriorating security situation, along with the loss of legitimacy and support for external actors

in the region, has somewhat diminished the importance of European support for the political elite to remain in power, as it had been in years prior to these coups. For instance, following the military coup in Mali in August 2020, and not least the subsequent coup-within-a-coup in May 2021, where vice president Assimi Goita (who had been the coup-leader in August 2020) assumed the role of president after having removed the interim civilian president of Bah N'daw, France announced a reconfiguration of Barkhane in the region (Salaün and Felix, 2021). This reconfiguration referred specifically to a retreat of about half of the Barkhane troops and a shift in areas of operation, though not a full retreat of the force.

Following this, it became clear that Mali had gone into dialogue with the Russian private security company Wagner Group, which resulted in the deployment of Wagner Group mercenaries by the beginning of 2022 (Paquette, 2022). Shortly after Wagner Group's deployment, the relationship between Mali and France soured to the extent where France decided to withdraw its troops from Mali; Mali then ended its 60-year-old defence agreement with France; and Mali ended up leaving the G5S-JF in May 2022, partly due to France's strong involvement in the joint force. This means that Mali exerted power and chose to engage with Russia as an external partner. Russia then constituted an opponent and obstacle to Europe for external influence in the Sahel region (Thompson, Doxsee and Bermudez, 2022). The shifting power dynamics and the consequences of the asymmetric interdependence between the G5S-JF and external actors became crystal clear when Mali in May 2022 announced its withdrawal from the G5S-JF, in part due to the strong involvement of external actors in the regional coalition (Ministère des Affaires Étrangères du Mali [@MaliMaeci], 2022).

Studying these developments through the concept of asymmetric interdependence reveals two things in particular: first that there was a shift in the asymmetry between France and the Malian state; and second that SFA and building an autonomous G5S-JF did not work precisely because of the dominant role external actors had taken in the relationship. Indeed, the leverage that Sahelian states hold of choosing which external partners they want to work with was strongly utilised by Mali as it turned towards Russia, in this way signalling a turn away from Europe. The response from European actors was that of condemnation (BBC News, 2021). This reaction was linked to the fear of misuse of violence by Wagner Group, as had been witnessed in the company's engagement in the Central African Republic, but the condemnation likely also

stemmed from the challenge Russia now poses to European influence in the Sahel (Lebovich, 2021). This donor competition was most likely strongly played by the authorities of Mali, proving the leverage and power Sahelian states hold when facing external actors. This means that as the context changed, so did the asymmetric interdependence between Mali and France, and this ultimately resulted in Mali's withdrawal from the G5S-JF.

Using the concept of asymmetric interdependence to understand current developments in the Sahel thus proves useful also beyond the study of the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors. Indeed, it provides an analytical angle that can explain a shift in the asymmetry of the relationship between Mali and France, which shows that the asymmetry values are not constant, but can change as context changes. Ultimately, this article demonstrates that utilising the concept of asymmetric interdependence when studying the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors allows for a productive analysis that can also be used to explain more current developments between host states in the Sahel and external actors.

Conclusion

This article has focused the spotlight on the relationship between external and host actors to understand the outcome of their cooperation. The intentions of the cooperation between the G5S-JF and external actors are rooted in the idea of the joint force having a regional approach and nature, with the aim of becoming an autonomous and sustainable actor combatting security threats in the region, ultimately also allowing for external actors to take a step back. However, what we see is that the relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors has been manifested in ways that reinforce a relationship of asymmetric interdependence between these actors. First, there is an inconsistency between the alleged regional approach of the G5S-JF and regional support from external actors, and the bilateral nature of many of the joint force's activities and relations with the external actors. This has allowed for a continuation of the asymmetry that has existed especially between France and Sahelian states for decades.

Second, there is a clear flaw in the intent to develop an autonomous G5S-JF, as it is highly dependent on external actors for its operationalisation through finances, training and resources. However, it is clear from the analysis that external actors also depend on the G5S-JF for influence in the region, where their strategic interests ultimately concern the prevention of

future threats or a spill-over of challenges to Europe. The relationship between the G5S-JF and external actors is thus highly characterised by interdependence. The asymmetry of this interdependence is evident in the G5S-JF's dependency relating to the very existence of the joint force, while external actors' dependency relates to a desire to influence and impact on the future potential of spreading threats.

This article has made a case for studying the outcome of cooperation between external and host forces through analysing their relationship, more so than their individual characteristics in and of themselves. The concept of asymmetric interdependence provides a new lens through which to research SFA. The asymmetric interdependence of the relationship between external and host suggests that it is difficult to reach an endpoint in this cooperation where the host – here the G5S-JF – gains autonomy to the extent that it may assume ownership of the security situation. Beyond this, power dynamics are not static and change according to shifts in context. This article shows how the concept of asymmetric interdependence is also a useful tool for understanding shifting dynamics in the Sahel. The concept of asymmetric interdependence is useful for understanding current developments between Mali and France, where the asymmetry indeed appears to have shifted due to the context of Mali's increasing alignment with Russia through the Wagner Group and ultimately its withdrawal from the G5S-JF. Future research should study these tendencies and the concept of asymmetric interdependence between external actors and host actors in other contexts, to verify the extent to which asymmetric interdependence can be generalised as a power dynamic between external and host forces on a theoretical scale. It would be particularly interesting to also evaluate the level of asymmetric interdependency in a context where pre-set colonial ties are either different from those between the Sahel and Europe, or non-existent.

Bibliography

- African Center for Strategic Studies. 2018. 'Term Limits for African Leaders Linked to Stability – Africa Center.' *Africa Center for Strategic Studies*, 23 February. <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/term-limits-for-african-leaders-linked-to-stability/>
- AU Peace and Security Council. 2017. 'Communiqué'. *African Union*. <https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/679th-com-g5sahel-13-04-2017.pdf>.
- Baldwin, D.A. 2016. *Power and International Relations: A Conceptual Approach*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Barnett, M. and Duvall, R. 2005. 'Power in International Politics', *International Organization*, 59(1), pp. 39–75. Doi: 10.1017/S0020818305050010.
- Bartels, E.M. et al. 2019. *Conceptual Design for a Multiplayer Security Force Assistance Strategy Game*. RAND Corporation.
- BBC News (2021) 'Mali: West condemns Russian mercenaries "deployment"', *BBC News*, 24 December. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-59777385>.
- Biddle, S., Macdonald, J. and Baker, R. 2018. 'Small footprint, small payoff: The military effectiveness of security force assistance', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 41(1–2), pp. 89–142. Available at: Doi: 10.1080/01402390.2017.1307745.
- Björkdahl, A. and Höglund, K. 2013. 'Precarious peacebuilding: friction in global–local encounters', *Peacebuilding*, 1(3), pp. 289–299. Doi: 10.1080/21647259.2013.813170.
- Charbonneau, B. and Chafer, T. (eds). 2014. *Peace Operations in the Francophone World: Global governance meets post-colonialism*. New York: Routledge.
- Deutsch, M. 1973. *The Resolution of Conflict: Constructive and Destructive Processes*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Direction de l'information légale et administrative Français. 2020. *Communiqué final du Sommet de Nouakchott, le 30 juin 2020*. <https://www.vie-publique.fr/discours/275521-presidence-de-la-republique-30062020-afrique>.
- Donais, T. 2009. 'Empowerment or Imposition? Dilemmas of Local Ownership in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding Processes', *Peace & Change*, 34(1), pp. 3–26. Doi: 10.1111/j.1468-0130.2009.00531.x.
- Edomwonyi, O. 2003. 'Rwanda : the importance of local ownership of the post-conflict reconstruction process : peacebuilding', *Conflict Trends*, 2003(4), pp. 43–47. Doi: 10.10520/EJC15807.
- Efremova, K. 2019. 'Small states in great power politics: Understanding the "buffer effect".' *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies* 13(1). <https://elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=41630318>.
- European Council. 2018a. *African Union - European Union relations: joint consultative meeting on peace and security*. European Council. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/10/23/african-union-european-union-relations-joint-consultative-meeting-on-peace-and-security/>.
- European Council. 2018b. *Council Decision: amending and extending Decision 2013/34/CFSP on a European Union military mission to contribute to the training of the Malian Armed Forces (EUTM Mali)*. 2018/716, 14 May. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018D0716&from=en>
- Fardel, T. and Pichon, E. 2020. *The G5 Sahel and the European Union: The challenges of security cooperation with a regional grouping*. European Parliament, Briefing.
- Futamura, M. and Notaras, M. 2011. 'Local Perspectives on International Peacebuilding - United Nations University', 7 June. Available at: <https://unu.edu/publications/articles/local-perspectives-on-international-peacebuilding.html#info> (Accessed: 3 January 2023).
- G5 Sahel. 2018. 'Maman Sidikou: «Nous avons surcommuniqué sur la dimension militaire du G5 Sahel» – Accueil Secrétariat exécutif du G5 Sahel', *G5 Sahel*, 19 June. <https://www.g5sahel.org/maman-sidikou-nous-avons-surcommunique-sur-la-dimension-militaire-du-g5-sahel/>.

- G5 Sahel Secretariat. 2016. *Strategie pour le Developpement et la Securité des Pays du G5 Sahel*. G5 Sahel. https://www.g5sahel.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/images_Docs_SDS_G5S_VF.pdf.
- Gegout, C. 2019. 'Realism, Neocolonialism and European Military Intervention in Africa'. In *Fear and Uncertainty in Europe: The Return to Realism?*, edited by Belloni, R., Della Sala, V., and Viotti, P., pp. 265–288. Cham: Springer International Publishing
- Ginty, R.M. 2011. *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance: Hybrid Forms of Peace*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Guzzini, S. 2013. *Power, Realism and Constructivism*. London: Routledge.
- Ignatieff, M. (2004) *Empire Lite : Nation Building in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan*. London: Vintage Books.
- Kaboré, R.M.C. 2017. 'Declaration de son excellence Monsieur Roch Marc Christian Kaboré'. UN General Assembly. https://www.un.int/burkinafaso/statements_speeches/declaration-de-son-excellence-monsieur-roch-marc-christian-kabore-president-du.
- Keohane, R.O. and Nye, J.S. 1989. *Power and Interdependence*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Knowles, E. and Matissek, J. 2019. 'Western Security Force Assistance in Weak States', *The RUSI Journal*, 164(3), pp. 10–21. Doi:10.1080/03071847.2019.1643258.
- Lebovich, A. 2021. 'Russia, Wagner Group, and Mali: How European fears weaken European policy – European Council on Foreign Relations', *ECFR*, 2 December. <https://ecfr.eu/article/russia-wagner-group-and-mali-how-european-fears-weaken-european-policy/>.
- Lee, S.Y. 2011. 'The limit of ethnocentric perceptions in civil war peace negotiations', *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, 28(3), pp. 349–373. Doi: 10.1002/crq.20027.
- Livingston, T.K. 2011. *Building the Capacity of Partner States Through Security Force Assistance*. Congressional Research Service Report for Congress.
- Mac Ginty, R. and Richmond, O.P. 2013. 'The Local Turn in Peace Building: a critical agenda for peace', *Third World Quarterly*, 34(5), pp. 763–783. Doi: 10.1080/01436597.2013.800750.
- Macron, E. 2017a. *Emmanuel Macron's Speech at the University of Ouagadougou*. Élysee France. <https://www.elysee.fr/front/pdf/elysee-module-829-fr.pdf>.
- Macron, E. 2017b. *United Nations General Assembly – Speech by M. Emmanuel Macron, President of the Republic, France Diplomacy - Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs*. <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/united-nations/news-and-events/united-nations-general-assembly/unga-s-72nd-session/article/united-nations-general-assembly-speech-by-m-emmanuel-macron-president-of-the>.
- Macron, E. 2021. *Conférence de presse à l'issue du Sommet du G5 Sahel*. G5 Sahel summit. <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2021/07/09/conference-de-presse-a-lissue-du-sommet-du-g5-sahel>.
- Mann, G. 2021. 'French Colonialism and the Making off the Modern Sahel.' In *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel*, edited by Villalòn, pp. 35–50. L.A. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Marsh, N. et al. 2020. *Compounding Fragmentation: Security force assistance to fragile states in the Sahel and Horn of Africa*. PRIO Report. Oslo: PRIO.
- Marsh, N. and Carrozza, I. 2021. *Human Rights Violations and the Security Forces in Mali and Niger*. PRIO Policy Brief. Oslo: PRIO.
- Matissek, J. and Fowler, M.W. 2020. 'The Paradox of Security Force Assistance after the Rise and Fall of the Islamic State in Syria–Iraq.' *Special Operations Journal* 6(2): 118–138. Doi:10.1080/23296151.2020.1820139.
- Matissek, J. and Reno, W. 2019. 'Getting American Security Force Assistance Right: Political Context Matters.' *Joint Force Quarterly* (92): 65–73. https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/jfq/jfq-92/jfq-92_65-73_Matissek-Reno.pdf
- Ministère des Affaires étrangères du Mali [@MaliMaeci]. 2022. 'Communiqué #30 du Gouvernement du Mali relatif au retrait du Mali de tous les organes et instances du G5-Sahel y compris la Force conjointe'. *Twitter*. <https://twitter.com/MaliMaeci/status/1525947931366506496>.

- de Oliveira, R.S. and Verhoeven, H. (2018) 'Taming Intervention: Sovereignty, Statehood and Political Order in Africa', *Survival*, 60(2), pp. 7–32. Doi: 10.1080/00396338.2018.1448558.
- Paffenholz, T. 2015. 'Unpacking the local turn in peacebuilding: a critical assessment towards an agenda for future research', *Third World Quarterly*, 36(5), pp. 857–874. Doi: 10.1080/01436597.2015.1029908.
- Paquette, D. 2022. 'Russian mercenaries have landed in West Africa, pushing Putin's goals as Kremlin is increasingly isolated'. *Washington Post*, 9 March. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/03/09/mali-russia-wagner/>.
- Paris, R. 1997. 'Peacebuilding and the Limits of Liberal Internationalism', *International Security*, 22(2), pp. 54–89. Doi: 10.2307/2539367.
- Pietz, T. and Carlowitz, L. von. 2007. *Local ownership in peacebuilding processes in failed states: approaches, experiences, and prerequisites for success*. Workshop report, Osnabrück: Deutsche Stiftung Friedensforschung.
- Reich, H. 2006. 'Local Ownership' in *Conflict Transformation Projects: Partnership, Participation or Patronage?* Berghof Foundation. <https://berghof-foundation.org/library/local-ownership-in-conflict-transformation-projects-partnership-participation-or-patronage>.
- Richmond, O.P. 2006. 'The problem of peace: understanding the "liberal peace"'. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 6(3): 291–314. Doi: 10.1080/14678800600933480.
- Richmond, O.P. 2015. 'The dilemmas of a hybrid peace: Negative or Positive?'. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 50(1): 50–68. Doi: 10.1177/0010836714537053.
- Rouhana, N.N. and Fiske, S.T. 1995. 'Perception of Power, Threat, and Conflict Intensity in Asymmetric Intergroup Conflict: Arab and Jewish Citizens of Israel'. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 39(1): 49–81. Doi: 10.1177/0022002795039001003.
- Sahel Coalition. 2020. *Six months after the Pau Summit, Coalition Sahel*. <https://www.coalition-sahel.org/six-months-after-the-pau-summit/?lang=en>.
- Salaün, T. and Felix, B. 2021. 'France to reshape troop presence in Sahel within weeks', *Reuters*, 9 July. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/france-reconfigure-military-presence-sahel-within-weeks-macron-2021-07-09/> (Accessed: 11 March 2022).
- Sandnes, M. 2022. 'The relationship between the G5 Sahel Joint Force and external actors: a discursive interpretation.' *Canadian Journal of African Studies*. Doi: 10.1080/00083968.2022.2058572.
- Shurkin, M. et al. 2017. *Building Armies, Building Nations: Toward a New Approach to Security Force Assistance*. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1832.html.
- Thompson, J., Doxsee, C. and Bermudez, J.S.Jr. 2022. *Tracking the Arrival of Russia's Wagner Group in Mali, Center for Strategic and International Studies*.
- Thurston, A. 2022. 'Who Are France's Sahelian Critics, and What Are They Saying?'. *Africa Up Close*, 6 July. <https://africaupclose.wilsoncenter.org/frances-sahelian-critics/>.
- Tsing, A.L. 2005. *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Tull, D. 2020. *The European Union training mission and the struggle for a new model army in Mali*. IRSEM Research Paper no.89, 11 February.
- UN News. 2019. 'At UN, France's Macron says more 'political courage' is needed to face global challenges'. *UN News*. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/09/1047352>.
- UN Security Council. 2017. *Resolution 2364*. UN Security Council. S/RES/2364.
- Welz, M. 2022. 'Institutional Choice, Risk, and Control: The G5 Sahel and Conflict Management in the Sahel', *International Peacekeeping*, 29(2), pp. 235–257. Doi: 10.1080/13533312.2022.2031993.
- Wilén, N. 2021. 'Analysing (In)formal Relations and Networks in Security Force Assistance: The Case of Niger', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, pp. 1–18. Doi: 10.1080/17502977.2021.1958546.
- Womack, B. 2015. *Asymmetry and International Relationships*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Navn kandidat: Marie Sandnes

Avhandlingstittel: Understanding power dynamics between intervening and host military forces: The case of the G5 Sahel Joint Force and external actors in the Sahel.

Side	Linje	Fotnote	Originaltekst	Type rettelse	Korrigert tekst
23		5	The Accra initiative ...	Cor	The Accra Initiative
122		2	Author's translation from: (G5 Sahel 2021)	Cor	Author's translation from: (G5 Sahel 2021).
123		8	... Gasinska and Bohman 2017)	Cor	... Gasinska and Bohman 2017).

Følgende endringer går på en feil i formatet, hvor nummeret på fotnotene fra artikkel 2 (side 112-139) har fortsatt i artikkel 3 (side 140-173) og artikkel 4 (side 174-201). Følgende liste er dermed nummer på fotnoter for artikkel 3 og 4 som skal endres.

Side	Linje	Originalt fotnotenummer	Type rettelse	Korrigert fotnotenummer
144		56	Celf	1
144		57	Celf	2
145		58	Celf	3
154		59	Celf	4
178		60	Celf	1
180		61	Celf	2
180		62	Celf	3
182		63	Celf	4
187		64	Celf	5
187		65	Celf	6
188		66	Celf	7
188		67	Celf	8
189		68	Celf	9
190		69	Celf	10
190		70	Celf	11
190		71	Celf	12
192		72	Celf	13
193		73	Celf	14
193		74	Celf	15
193		75	Celf	16