



Security in the Sahel: Two-Part Briefing

One year after French and African military intervention recaptured northern Mali from Islamist and separatist armed groups, Mali's stability is still heavily reliant on foreign troops and the wider Sahel region is a less safe place which has retained the capacity to threaten Europe.

In our two-part series 'Security in the Sahel', Richard Reeve assesses the challenges to stabilising Mali in the coming year and sheds light on military expansion by global powers across the Sahel, from Niger and Libya, to Djibouti and Mauritania. He argues that, as elsewhere, the western military approach to countering Islamist insurgency in the Sahel rests on very unsteady foundations and the potential to provoke wider alienation and radicalisation is strong.

Part I: Stabilising Mali in 2013-14

One year after French and African military intervention recaptured northern Mali from Islamist and separatist armed groups, Mali's stability is still heavily reliant on foreign troops. While the election of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta and his party in the second half of 2013 has established a relatively strong new government, progress in reintegrating and reconciling the north, internally and with the rest of Mali, has been partial. Apart from sporadic terrorist attacks, talks with Tuareg separatists have foundered, inter-communal violence and urban protests have flared, and one-third of the north's population, including many civil servants, still feel too insecure to return home. Part I of this two-part briefing analyses the challenges for stabilising Mali in 2014. [Read more](#)

Part II: Militarisation of the Sahel

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Whatever the benefits for Mali, the French-led eviction of jihadist groups from northern Mali may have made the wider Sahara a less safe place, without obviously impeding their capacity to threaten Europe. In 2014, France is implementing a major redeployment of its forces in Africa into the Sahel and Sahara. Securing Niger and monitoring southern Libya are particular concerns. Meanwhile, the US has been quietly extending its military reach from Djibouti to Mauritania. As elsewhere, the western military approach to countering Islamist insurgency in the Sahel rests on very unsteady foundations and the potential to provoke wider alienation and radicalisation is strong. Part II of this two-part briefing analyses the regional impact of intervention in Mali and the Sahel. [Read more »](#)

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Image: *Chadian UN peacekeepers stand at attention as Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Herve Ladsous arrives in Tessalit, North Mali* **Source:** *MINUSMA (Flickr)*

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