
FORUM

Military Assistance for the Malian Armed Forces by the German Bundeswehr. A Historical Perspective

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ABSTRACTS

German-Malian military cooperation has a long-standing tradition. However, Germany's large contribution to the European Union Training Mission in Mali (EUTM Mali) and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) has recently drawn academic attention mostly to these multinational participations. Until now, the bilateral military assistance of the German Bundeswehr to the Malian Armed Forces, which started at the end of the 1960s, has been largely neglected. Based on ministerial files from the West German Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) as well as the Ministry of Defence (MoD), this article provides a detailed overview of this relation. Upon request by the Malian authorities, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) sent equipment and instructors to Mali in order to train Malian engineers. Hereby, in times of the East-West conflict, the FRG tried to strengthen its influence in a country, in which it was competing especially with the German Democratic Republic (GDR) for political influence.

Die militärische Zusammenarbeit zwischen Deutschland und Mali hat eine lange Tradition. Der große deutsche Beitrag zur Ausbildungsmission der Europäischen Union in Mali (EUTM Mali) und zur Multidimensionalen Integrierten Stabilisierungsmission der Vereinten Nationen in Mali (MINUSMA) hat jedoch in jüngster Zeit die wissenschaftliche Aufmerksamkeit vor allem auf diese multinationalen Beteiligungen gelenkt. Die bilaterale Militärhilfe der Bundeswehr für die malischen Streitkräfte, die Ende der 1960er Jahre begann, wurde dagegen bisher weitgehend vernachlässigt. Auf der Grundlage von Ministerialakten des Auswärtigen Amtes (AA) und des Verteidigungsministeriums (BMVg) gibt dieser Artikel einen detaillierten Überblick über diese

Beziehung. Auf Ersuchen der malischen Behörden entsandte die Bundesrepublik Deutschland Ausrüstung und Ausbilder nach Mali, um malische Pioniere auszubilden. In Zeiten des Ost-West-Konflikts versuchten die Bundesressorts hierdurch ihren Einfluss in einem Land zu stärken, in dem sie vor allem mit der DDR um politischen Einfluss konkurrierten.

1. Introduction

As far as Mali is concerned, only one reason could speak against the continuation of military aid, and that is the fear that this would unilaterally support the military and thus preventing a return to civilian government. But this fear is based on European ideas of a democratic state, which has never existed in Mali and for which all preconditions are lacking in reality. Whatever one may say against the military government [...], so far there has been no regime here that would have given the country greater internal freedom.¹

Mali, November 1968: When a group of young officers led by Lieutenant Moussa Traoré staged a coup in the capital Bamako,² a dilemma arose for West German diplomats. For years, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) had maintained good relations with the West African state; despite the pro-Soviet course of its first President Modibo Keita. After Keita was overthrown by his own military, the West German diplomats wondered whether the FRG, which stood internationally for principles such as democracy, rule of law, and freedom, could support a Malian military regime that might delay the return to a democratically legitimised government indefinitely; in the end it would be 23 years. During the East-West conflict, however, when the FRG and its Western European and North American allies competed for global influence with the members of the rival Warsaw Treaty Organisation, West German diplomats came to the conclusion that even supporting coup plotters could be in the FRG's interest. Against this backdrop, military assistance provided by the German Bundeswehr to the Malian Armed Forces upon request by the new Malian government became a visible foreign policy tool. To a limited extent, until the end of the East-West conflict, it allowed the West German ministries to exert their influence on the Malian political arena in general and its armed forces in particular, which were supported mostly by the Soviet Union and its allies until then.

2. The Federal Republic of Germany and Mali in the Light of the East-West Conflict

Formal relations between the FRG and Mali officially began in 1960. Like most West African states, the Republic of Mali became independent in this year, after its short-lived

- 1 Translated quote from Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts, PA AA, B 57 REF.405/IIIA4, Bd. 149, Kopie Schriftbericht der Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Bamako an das AA, Betr.: Fortsetzung der Ausrüstungshilfe, vom 15.12.1970, p. 3.
- 2 See M. D. Wolpin, Dependency and Conservative Militarism in Mali, in: The Journal of Modern African Studies 13 (1975) 4, pp. 585–620.

federation with Senegal.³ Since the beginning, the landlocked country was one of the poorest countries in the world. Yet, like almost all independent African states, Mali was quickly caught between the fronts of the East-West conflict. In exchange for aligning themselves with their political ideas, the two competing blocs, dominated by the United States of America and the Soviet Union respectively, offered the independent African states political, economic, cultural and military aid. The two German states were no exception. On the contrary; on African soil they waged their own Cold War in order to gain international recognition and to strengthen each one's stance vis-à-vis the other German state.⁴ Until the early 1970s, the FRG claimed to be the only legitimate German state (Hallstein Doctrine).⁵ Through development and military aid for countries of the global South it tried – sometimes with little success – to prevent the international diplomatic recognition of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) by those states.⁶ Although the West German government recognised the existence of the GDR in 1972, this did not end their competition for political influence in Africa. The African states possessed a powerful international weight, which is often neglected, and which they used themselves to request international support: In the General Assembly of the United Nations and in many other international organisations African states constituted the largest bloc. Without them, it was difficult to take global political decisions in the multilateral arena. Therefore, the FRG and the GDR competed for their favour.⁷

West Germany's engagement in Mali should be seen against this background. In 1960, there were few links to the former French colony. Since Germany had lost its colonies after the First World War, West German diplomats considered their relationship with the independent African states to be unburdened. This enabled them to present the FRG as a trustworthy partner and as an alternative to the former colonial powers, France and Great Britain, as well as to the superpowers, the United States of America and the USSR.⁸

In September 1960, the FRG was the first country to establish diplomatic relations with the Republic of Mali.⁹ Till today, German and Malian politicians likewise refer to this special event on a regular basis.¹⁰ However, it was not just a friendly gesture which lay

3 See B. Lemke, *Mali und die Entkolonialisierung*, in: *Wegweiser zur Geschichte. Mali*, Second Edition, ed. by M. Hofbauer and P. Münch, Paderborn 2016, pp. 47–59.

4 Vgl. W. G. Gray, *Germany's Cold War. The Global Campaign to Isolate East Germany, 1949–1969*, Chapel Hill 2003.

5 R. M. Booz, *Hallsteinzeit. Deutsche Außenpolitik 1955–1972*, Bonn 1995; W. Kilian, *Die Hallstein-Doktrin*, Berlin 2001.

6 T. Gültstorff, *Trade follows Hallstein? Deutsche Aktivitäten im zentralafrikanischen Raum des Second Scramble*, Dissertation, Berlin 2012, <https://edoc.hu-berlin.de/bitstream/handle/18452/18280/guelstorff.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> (accessed 1 June 2022); B. Fettich-Biernath, *Deutschland gibt. Zivile und militärische Entwicklungshilfe der Bundesrepublik an Afrika südlich der Sahara von 1956 bis 1974*, Erlangen 2018.

7 Aufzeichnung des Ministerialdirektors van Well, vom 25.1.1973, in: AAPD 1973, Doc. 23, pp. 122–132.

8 T. Gültstorff, *The white man's burden? Die bundesrepublikanische Afrikapolitik um 1960 zwischen „moralischer Verantwortung“ und „realen Interessen“*, in: *Zeitgeschichte Online*, vom 1.10.2010, <https://zeitgeschichte-online.de/themen/white-mans-burden> (accessed 1 June 2022). See also Aufzeichnung des Ministerialdirigenten Pauls, vom 25.1.1965, in: AAPD 1965, Doc. 34, pp. 178–181, here p. 178.

9 Bundespresseamt (BPA), *Glückwunsch für Mali*, in: *Bulletin*, Nr. 181, vom 27.9.1960, p. 1752.

10 Die Bundeskanzlerin: *Pressestatements von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel und dem Präsidenten der Republik Mali, Keita*,

behind this decision. On the very same day, the FRG recognised the Republic of Senegal as well.¹¹ Faced with the rising tensions from the East-West conflict, the West German government in general and its Foreign Office in particular, wanted to secure a favourable position in the West African region. In 1958, Mali's neighbour Guinea was the only West African colony to break with its former colonial power France, demanding immediate independence. As a way of retaliation, the French cut all relations with Guinea, forcing her to look for assistance from the members of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation. In the course of this, the GDR saw an opportunity to obtain a diplomatic foothold in the region. In the spring of 1960, the diplomats in Bonn only prevented the GDR's recognition by Guinea by exerting huge political pressure.¹² With the earliest possible recognition of Mali and Senegal, Guinea's neighbours, the diplomats of the FRG hoped to pre-empt the countries of the Eastern Bloc and to send a clear signal to the two states as well as to the whole region, which alliance partnership would be of favour.¹³ Economically, Mali, which at that time was very sparsely populated with about five million inhabitants only, remained insignificant for the FRG. At the end of the 1970s, goods worth 26 million DM were imported from Mali and goods worth 29 million DM were exported to Mali.¹⁴ In 1990, the figures were 22 million DM (imports) and 41 million DM (exports), respectively.¹⁵ By far the largest share of Malian exports was cotton. Apart from gold, salt, and phosphate, the country had no raw materials worth mentioning that would have been of interest to the FRG.

Much more important was the Malian attitude towards the German question and a possible German unification. When the President of the FRG, Heinrich Lübke, travelled to Mali in 1966, he also assured himself of the Malian government's support in regards to this issue.¹⁶ In return, the FRG committed itself to provide financial assistance for water drilling in the north along the river Niger;¹⁷ a framework agreement on technical assistance had already been signed at the end of 1960.¹⁸ From then on, the water supply on the rivers Senegal and Niger became the focus of West German development aid,¹⁹

am 11. Dezember 2013, <https://www.bundeskanzlerin.de/Content/DE/Mitschrift/Pressekonferenzen/2013/12/2013-12-11-mali.html> (accessed 1 June 2022).

11 BPA, Republik Senegal, in: Bulletin, Nr. 181, vom 27.9.1960, p. 1752.

12 Fettich-Biernath: Deutschland gibt, pp. 900–917. See also C. Eberspächer and G. Wiechmann, Systemkonflikt in Afrika. Deutsch-deutsche Auseinandersetzungen im Kalten Krieg am Beispiel Guineas 1969–1972, in: Zeitschrift des Forschungsverbundes SED-Staat, 23 (2008), pp. 30–41.

13 PA AA, B 130, VS-REG, Bd. 4770A, Telegramm des Konsulats der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Dakar an die Abteilung 3 im AA, vom 21.3.1960.

14 Statistisches Bundesamt, Aussenhandel nach Ländern und Warengruppen (Spezialhandel), 4. Vierteljahr und Jahr 1977, Fachserie 7, Reihe 3, Wiesbaden 1978, pp. 173–174, https://www.statistischebibliothek.de/mir/servlets/MCRFileNodeServlet/DEHeft_derivate_00055181/FS-7-3-VJ-1977-04.pdf (accessed 1 June 2022).

15 Statistisches Bundesamt, Außenhandel nach Ländern und Warengruppen (Spezialhandel), 2. Halbjahr und Jahr 1990, Fachserie 7, Reihe 3, Wiesbaden 1991, pp. 182–184, https://www.statistischebibliothek.de/mir/servlets/MCRFileNodeServlet/DEHeft_derivate_00055193/FS-7-3-HJ-1990-02.pdf (accessed 1 June 2022).

16 BPA, Übereinstimmung in grundsätzlichen Fragen, in: Bulletin, Nr. 35, vom 15.3.1966, p. 273.

17 BPA, Deutsch-malische Regierungsabkommen, in: Bulletin, Nr. 62, vom 11.5.1966, p. 487.

18 BPA, Rahmenabkommen über technische Hilfe mit der Republik Mali, in: Bulletin, Nr. 227, vom 6.12.1960, p. 2206.

19 BPA, Hilfe der Bundesrepublik für Westafrika, in: Bulletin, Nr. 127, vom 9.10.1973, p. 1250.

with which the FRG's ministries intended to consolidate their influence in the country. Since the 1970s by far the largest project was the support for the construction of the Manantali Dam in south-western Mali. The dam's construction was intended to supply Mali, Senegal, and Mauritania with electricity, improve agricultural irrigation and make the Senegal river navigable.²⁰ The FRG's funding for this multilateral megaproject amounted to 226 million DM, even though it was discussed highly controversially from an ecological point of view²¹ and ultimately rendered to be economically unsatisfactory.²² Other notable projects were the support of the Selingué Dam or the supply of food aid. Between 1987 and 1990 alone, the FRG provided food aid amounting to 25 million DM.²³ However, under the rule of Modibo Keita the partnership developed rather slowly. This is evident especially in the field of military assistance.

3. Military Assistance as a Foreign Policy Tool

The Malian Armed Forces were only established in October 1960. They initially consisted of veterans of the French army and volunteers; in the mid-1960s they comprised about 3,500 soldiers.²⁴ Since the Malian security apparatus had to be established basically from scratch, the Malian government, like other African countries, immediately asked for West German assistance.²⁵ Unlike in neighbouring Guinea, however, where the German Bundeswehr trained and equipped an engineer unit between 1962 and 1970 investing some 40 million DM,²⁶ the ministries of the FRG initially rejected military support for Mali. This was not unusual. The neighbouring country to the east, Niger, was also initially denied military aid.²⁷ From its foreign office point of view, military aid was only to be used selectively and, if so, then only "where the danger of Eastern infiltration seemed particularly great". In the meantime, political and economical worries or expectations in neighbouring countries that could not be fulfilled, should be prevented

20 BPA, Hilfsprogramm für die Sahel-Zone, in: Bulletin, Nr. 124, vom 7.11.1978, p. 1155; BPA, Entwicklungspolitische Zusammenarbeit mit Senegal, Mali und Mauretanien, in: Bulletin, Nr. 63, vom 3.6.1980, p. 353; Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau, Organisation pour la Mise e Valeur du Fleuve Sénégal: Staudamm Manantali, Ex Post-Evaluierungsbericht (Schlussprüfung), 2008, p. 2.

21 BT-Drs. 10/5638, vom 10.6.1986, pp. 14–15; Der Spiegel: Habe die Ehre, in: Der Spiegel, 53 (1992), pp. 31–32.

22 BPA, Regionale Kooperation in Afrika und deutsche Entwicklungspolitik – Rede von Bundesminister Spranger in Hamburg, in: Bulletin, Nr. 33, vom 24.4.1993, <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/service/bulletin/bulletin-1990-bis-1999/regionale-kooperation-in-afrika-und-deutsche-entwicklungspolitik-rede-von-bundesminister-spranger-in-hamburg-799692> (accessed 1 June 2022); BT-Drs. 12/4096, vom 13.1.1993, pp. 135–136.

23 BT-Drs. 12/840, vom 20.6.1991, p. 40.

24 PA AA, B 14, REF.301/IIA7, Bd. 1282, Schriftbericht der Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Bamako an Referat I B 3 im AA, Betr.: Informationen über die Streitkräfte der afrikanischen Länder; hier: Mali, vom 13.7.1966, hier p. 1. See also N. Brown and W. F. Gutteridge, *The African Military Balance*, Adelphi Papers, 12 (1964), London 1964, p. 8.

25 Fettich-Biernath: Deutschland gibt, p. 88 and 91.

26 H. Haftendorn, *Militärhilfe und Rüstungsexporte der BRD*, Düsseldorf 1971, pp. 24–25; Eberspächer, Wiechmann, *Systemkonflikt in Afrika*, p. 31. See also Fettich-Biernath: Deutschland gibt, pp. 900–1024.

27 PA AA, B 130VS-REG, Bd. 5119A, Vermerk Referat III A 4 an Referat I B 3, Betr.: Ausrüstungshilfe für Niger, vom 29.7.1963; BAArch, BW 1/452338, Schnellbrief Referat III A 4 im AA an Abteilung W im BMVg, Betr.: Antrag der Republik Niger aus Ausrüstungshilfe, vom 29.11.1963.

at all costs.²⁸ Therefore, during the East-West conflict, military assistance was only one instrument of many of the West German Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) to increase its influence in carefully selected countries and, given Germany's history, by no means the one most likely to be chosen by the FRG.

Therefore, at the beginning of the 1960s, the main beneficiary of Western German military aid in West Africa was Guinea, which – in retrospect with little success – was to be dissuaded from its pro-Soviet and GDR-friendly course. The other African countries that were recipients of German military assistance at that time were Nigeria, Madagascar, Tanzania (Tanganyika), Somalia, Sudan, and, since 1965, Ethiopia.²⁹

Mali's first president, Modibo Keita, however, also took a precarious political course from a FRG's point of view.³⁰ As early as 1962, Mali left the French-controlled West African Financial Community. In addition, Keita sought good relations with the states of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation, including the GDR as well as China. Although the United States provided limited equipment and military training to the company of the newly established Malian paratroopers in the 1960s,³¹ Keita's eastward gaze meant that the Malian air force, which was only established a few years after the Malian army, was mainly equipped and trained by the Soviet Union.³² Until the late 1980s, there were probably over 200 Soviet instructors in the country.³³ Overall, the Soviet Union and its socialist allies had "a quasi-monopoly in the field of armaments"³⁴ in Mali and therefore, huge influence on its political development. This, however, was not in the interest of the 'West'.

Even more problematic to the West German ministries was the influence of the GDR in Mali. For a long time it remained unclear whether the Malian government would recognise the GDR.³⁵ The German MoFA would therefore describe the Malian-West Ger-

28 Translated quote from PA AA, B 130 VS-REG, Bd. 5119A, Chi-Brief Referat III A 4 im AA an die Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Niamey, Betr.: Ausrüstungshilfe für Niger, vom 1.8.1963, p. 2.

29 Bundesarchiv Militärarchiv, BACh, BW 1/2379, Kopie als Anlage Entwurf Vorlage WI 3 an den Verteidigungsminister, Betr.: Grundsätze für Gewährung und Durchführung der Ausrüstungshilfe, April 1965, p. 5. For details see C. Eugster, Soldatische Mobilität im »Kalten Krieg«. Deutsche Ausbildungshilfe für afrikanische Soldaten in Afrika und in der Bundesrepublik in den 1960er Jahren, in: Militärische Migration vom Altertum bis zur Gegenwart, ed. by C. Rass, Paderborn 2016, pp. 165–188, here pp. 168–172.

30 In 1964, France therefore also expressed reservations about German military assistance to Mali. PA AA, B 130 VS-REG, Bd. 8819A, Vorlage Abteilung 1 an den Staatssekretär, Betr.: Besuch des malischen Handels- und Transportministers Hamacire N'Douré; hier Deutsche Militärhilfe für Mali vom 15.1.1964.

31 PA AA, B 130 VS-REG, Bd. 5119A, Vermerk Referat III A 4, Betr.: Ausrüstungshilfe für Mali; hier: Koordinierung mit amerikanischer Militärhilfe, vom 14.2.1964; BACh, BW 1/2220, WI, Notiz über Besprechung mit Mr. Blick am 12.11.1964, vom 19.11.1964, p. 2; PA AA, B 14, REF.301/IIA7, Bd. 1282, Schriftbericht der Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Bamako an Referat I B 3 im AA, Betr.: Informationen über die Streitkräfte der afrikanischen Länder; hier: Mali, vom 13.7.1966, p. 1.

32 BACh, BL 1/26913, Vorlage Oberstleutnant i.G. Puhl an Rü II 4 im BMVg, Betr.: Begutachtung der Transportluftwaffe der Republik Mali, vom 28.7.1980, p. 3.

33 BACh, BW 1/342338, Leiter Deutsche Beratergruppe (Bw) Mali, Kurzbericht/Vortrag über Deutsche Ausstattungshilfe und die Beratergruppe (Bw) Mali anlässlich des Besuches des Haushaltsausschusses, no date, p. 6.

34 Translated quote from PA AA, B 34, ZA, Bd. 154379, Kopie Schriftbericht der Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Bamako an Referat 321 im AA, Betr.: Offizieller Besuch des Parlamentarischen Staatssekretärs im Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, Peter-Kurt Würzbach, in Mali vom 06. bis 09. April 1986, vom 9.4.1986, p. 2.

35 Aufzeichnung des Staatssekretärs Lahr, in: AAPD 1962, Doc. 291, vom 18.6.1962, pp. 1295–1300, here p. 1298.

man relations in the early 1960s as “not unproblematic”.³⁶ In May 1961, the GDR was allowed to open a trade mission in Mali, which acted like a diplomatic representation.³⁷ The Malian embassy in the FRG, on the other hand, was closed in the mid-1960s due to financial constraints. From then on Malian interests in West Germany were represented by its diplomats accredited in Brussels.³⁸ Although Mali did not recognise the GDR until 1973 – i.e. after the improvement of German-German relations – probably out of fear of cuts of the important West European development aid, it had good relations with the GDR, especially in the cultural sphere. At Leipzig University, for instance, linguists did remarkable research into Mali’s lingua franca Bambara.³⁹ In the eyes of the FRG government, Mali, along with Tanzania and Guinea, ranked among the priority countries for GDR development aid on the African continent at the end of the 1960s.⁴⁰

Although Mali received more than 300 civilian trucks from the FRG at the beginning of the 1960s⁴¹ – which were significant from a humanitarian point of view⁴² – military cooperation did not take place for the time being. In 1964, the West German Federal Ministry of Defence (MoD) rejected a Malian request for training of its engineers.⁴³ Even though the request was supported by the German MoFA due to its Eastern European and German foreign policy,⁴⁴ the West German MoD did not have enough French-speaking and technically qualified personnel for another training project in addition to its assistance to Guinea.⁴⁵ Besides, the desired use of the French language was not a concession to the Malian soldiers; French is still the official language in Mali. Rather, the French government had only agreed to West German military aid to its former colony, if the German instructors used the French language.⁴⁶ This limited the possibilities of the FRG greatly and may taken as a proof of how limited the cooperation of the West European states was in their efforts to influence the African countries.

36 Translated quote from Ministerialdirektor Müller-Roschach an die Ständige Vertretung bei der NATO in Paris, in: AAPD 1962, Doc. 441, vom 9.11.1962, pp. 1880–1887, here p. 1885.

37 PA AA, B 34 REF.307/IB3, Bd. 555, Schriftbericht der Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Bamako an das AA, Betr.: Vertretungen der SBZ in Ländern außerhalb des kommunistischen Bereichs, vom 4.2.1964.

38 PA AA, B 130 VS-REG, Bd. 2547, Vorlage Abteilung I an den Staatssekretär, Betr.: Schließung der hiesigen Botschaft von Mali, vom 1.7.1967.

39 See S. Brauner, Lehrbuch des Bambara, Leipzig 1974.

40 BT-Drs. 6/1690, vom 15.1.1971, p. 17.

41 Deutsch-amerikanische Koordinierungsbesprechungen, in: AAPD 1963, vom 13./15.5.1963, pp. 528–539, here p. 535.

42 Due to the delivery of the trucks, the FRG had a reputation as a saviour in distress in Mali. PA AA, B 57-REF.405/IIA4, Bd. 102, Kopie Vermerk III B 5, Betr.: deutsch-malische entwicklungspolitische Beziehungen, vom 18.2.1970, p. 1.

43 PA AA, B 130 VS-REG, Bd. 8819A, Weisung Staatssekretär II an den Abteilungsleiter III, Betr.: Besuch des Malischen Handels- und Transportministers Hamacire N'Douré; hier: Deutsche Militärhilfe für Mali, vom 15.1.1964.

44 PA AA, B 130 VS-REG, Bd. 2191A, Schnellbrief III A 4 im AA an Abteilung W im BMVg, vom 6.2.1964; PA AA, B 130 VS-REG, Bd. 8819A, Vorlage Leiter Abteilung III an den Staatssekretär, Betr.: Deutsche Militärhilfe für Mali, vom 7.2.1964; PA AA, B 130 VS-REG, Bd. 5119A, Durchschlag Schreiben Referat III A 4 im AA an den Stellvertretenden Staatssekretär im BMVg, vom 24.11.1964.

45 Besprechung mit Vertretern des Bundesministeriums der Verteidigung, in: AAPD 1964, Doc. 18, vom 22.1.1964, pp. 101–106, here p. 106; PA AA, B 130 VS-REG, Bd. 5119A, Vermerk Leiter Abteilung III, Betr.: Ausrüstungshilfe für Mali; hier: derzeitiger Stand, vom 10.3.1965.

46 PA AA, B 130 VS-REG, Bd. 5119A, Vorlage Unterabteilungsleiter I B an den Abteilungsleiter III, Betr.: Ausrüstungshilfe an Mali, vom 28.2.1964.

In addition, the West German MoD simply lacked the money and the capacities to provide more military aid.⁴⁷ The mission of the German Armed Forces, as stated in the German Basic Law, was national defence. The Bundeswehr was constructed and equipped in order to fulfil this task and needed its available resources for this purpose. Therefore, on several occasions, it refused to provide military support to Mali due to these constraints.⁴⁸ Military assistance was merely a subordinate foreign policy tool alongside the main mission, which was the defence against the Eastern bloc. In 1965 the strategically more important assistance for Ethiopia only came true on the condition that deliveries or commitments to the Republic of Mali were provisionally postponed.⁴⁹ The West German MoD's point of view was that the various African states should not be supported simultaneously, but one after the other; if at all. At that time, the MoD did not have any special interests in Mali. Therefore, no West German-Malian military cooperation occurred.

4. Training for Engineers on the River Niger: The Bundeswehr in Mali

In November 1968, a group of young officers staged a coup in Bamako and established a dictatorship under Lieutenant Moussa Traoré.⁵⁰ However, this did not harm the relationship between Mali and the FRG. On the contrary, from the West German embassy's point of view, the Malian Armed Forces were the organisation that, despite the pro-Soviet course of former President Keita, had remained "at least at the top [...] relatively free of Eastern Bloc influence".⁵¹ Since the new Malian rulers subsequently pursued an official policy of non-alignment,⁵² the administration of the FRG slowly started to give Mali military assistance, in order to strengthen its influence in the country. While the West German MoFA had wanted to assist the Malian government for some time,⁵³ the new Malian rulers themselves had requested West German military assistance in March 1969.⁵⁴ This was a basic requirement for Federal German military assistance. In contrast to other states – and probably in contrast to its current considerations – the Malian

47 PA AA, B 130 VS-REG, Bd. 5119A, Schreiben W I 3 im BMVg an das AA, vom 21.12.1964; PA AA, B 130 VS-REG, Bd. 5119A, Schreiben Referat II A/6 im BMF an das AA, Betr.: Ausrüstungshilfe für die Republik Niger, vom 14.6.1965. See also W. Wagner, *Deutsche Ausrüstungshilfe in Afrika*, in: *Europa-Archiv* 6 (1966), pp. 221–232, here p. 223.

48 BArch, BW 1/583658, Entwurf Schreiben W I 3 im BMVg an das AA, 21.12.1964; PA AA, B 57, REF:405/III A4, Bd. 102, Vermerk Referat III A 4, Betr.: Ausrüstungshilfe Mali, vom 6.6.1966; BArch, BW 1/583658, Entwurf Schreiben W I 4 im BMVg an die Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Bamako, Betr.: Ausrüstungshilfe für Mali, vom 7.4.1966.

49 PA AA, B 57, REF:405/III A4, Bd. 102, Drahterlass Referat III A 4 im AA an die Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Bamako, Nr. 64, vom 20.10.1964.

50 V. P. Bennett: *Military Government in Mali*, in: *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 13 (1975) 2, pp. 249–266.

51 Translated quote from PA AA, B 57, REF:405/III A4, Bd. 102, Drahtbericht der Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Bamako an Abteilung I im AA, Nr. 59, vom 7.8.1967, here p. 2.

52 BT-Drs. 8/3463, vom 4.12.1979, p. 9.

53 Fettich-Biernath: *Deutschland gibt*, pp. 963–964.

54 PA AA, B 130 VS-REG, Bd. 8758A, Drahtbericht der Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Bamako an die Abteilung III im AA, Nr. 22, vom 20.3.1969; PA AA, B 57, REF:405/III A4, Bd. 102, Schriftbericht der Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Bamako an Referat III A 4 im AA, Betr.: Ausrüstungshilfe für Mali, vom 16.4.1969, attachment.

military regime during that time apparently did not fear West German interference in its internal affairs when cooperating with the ministries of the FRG.⁵⁵

In order to strengthen Mali's new political stance of non-alignment and to create a Western European counterweight to the Soviet Union's influence,⁵⁶ the FRG's MoD and its Malian counterpart signed a first agreement on German military assistance in November 1969.⁵⁷ From today's perspective, with two million DM it was quite modestly endowed and comprised mainly so-called dual-use goods for road construction. In the first tranche, as requested, Mali received 50 Unimog trucks, 25 cameras, 20 tape recorders, and ten photocopiers.⁵⁸ By delivering such seemingly harmless goods, which had a developmental role at the same time, the West German MoFA did not believe it would threaten Mali's neighbouring countries or contribute to tensions in the region.⁵⁹ The agreements were renewed on a regular basis and gradually increased in volume to 8.5 million DM per three-year cycle. In total, Mali received military assistance amounting to 53 million DM between 1969 and 1994;⁶⁰ a peak value in Sub-Saharan Africa,⁶¹ however, not comparable to the record sum of 120 million DM which was invested in Sudan in the early 1960s.⁶² Nevertheless, the FRG ministries ignored that Moussa Traoré's regime became increasingly corrupt and in the early 1990s did not shy away from using violence to suppress the democratisation efforts of its own population.⁶³

The focus of German military aid in Mali, however, was not the assistance of combat troops, but of Malian engineers. Like in other (West) African states, the Malian government deployed its armed forces in the civilian sector to develop the country, especially through road construction. Thus, the double-lane road "Avenue de l'Indépendance" in the centre of Bamako or the expansion of the connection from Bamako to Koulikoro – well known to all forces deployed with the European Union Training Mission in Mali (EUTM Mali) – go back to the work of the Malian engineers.⁶⁴ They were also involved in the construction of the Manantali Dam.⁶⁵ The Bundeswehr mainly provided

55 PA AA, B 57 REF.405/III A 4, Bd. 149, Schriftbericht der Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland an das AA, Betr.: Ausrüstungshilfe für Mali; hier: Besuch des malischen Verteidigungs- und Innenministers Doukara, vom 31.3.1971, p. 1.

56 PA AA, B 57, REF.405/III A 4, Bd. 102, Schreiben Referat I B 3 an Referat III A 4, Betr.: Ausrüstungshilfe für Mali, vom 6.6.1969.

57 BArch, BW 1/257462, Verwaltungsabkommen, vom 12.11.1969.

58 BArch, BW 1/240565, Rü II 4, Zusammenstellung der Ausrüstungshilfe-Materiallieferungen an die Republik Mali, vom 30.1.1981.

59 PA AA, B 130 VS-REG, Bd. 2191A, Schnellbrief III A 4 im AA an Abteilung W im BMVg, vom 6.2.1964, p. 3.

60 BArch, BW 2/35092, Rü III 5, Hintergrundinformation für die Reise des Bundespräsidenten in die Republik Mali, November 2001, p. 1.

61 BT-Drs. 11/8527, vom 10.12.1990, p. 2.

62 R. Deckert, Die militärischen Beziehungen der beiden deutschen Staaten zum Sudan. Ein Extrembeispiel für das Verhältnis von Bundesrepublik und DDR zur „Dritten Welt“, in: *Wege zur Wiedervereinigung*, ed. by O. Bange and B. Lemke, München 2013, pp. 335–355, here p. 343.

63 See K. Schlichte, Mali unter dem Militärregime Traorés, in: *Wegweiser zur Geschichte. Mali*, Second Edition, ed. by M. Hofbauer and P. Münch, Paderborn 2016, pp. 60–69.

64 BArch, BW 1/342338, Durchgeführte Aufträge, Maßnahmen und Bauvorhaben Deutsche Beratergruppe Bw Mali mit 34. Bne du Génie Militaire, no date.

65 PA AA, B 34, ZA, Bd. 154379, Schriftbericht der Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Bamako an Referat 321 im AA, Betr.: Offizieller Besuch des Parlamentarischen Staatssekretärs im Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, Peter-

the Malian Armed Forces with engineer equipment like construction machineries and vehicles such as rubber wheeled rollers, wheel loaders or dump trucks.⁶⁶ The West German government did not want to make a military contribution per se, but a visible developmental contribution, which should strengthen its influence in the country. Unlike to the situation in Sudan in the early 1960s,⁶⁷ the FRG apparently did not supply Mali with weapons or ammunition. Nevertheless, in December 1985, vehicles of the Malian 34th Engineer Battalion, which was the main recipient of the German support, were also involved in the deployment of Malian forces to the border with Burkina Faso when the two neighbours went to war for several days as a result of a border dispute. Presumably several dozen Malian and Burkinabe soldiers were killed, giving the Bundeswehr personnel back in the barracks a “Wartime Christmas”.⁶⁸

The main project of German military assistance in the 1980s became the financial and material support for the construction of new engineer barracks;⁶⁹ on this scale an unusual project even for the Bundeswehr. Located in Bapho, north of Ségou next to the Niger river, the facility was supposed to ensure a more efficient use of the Malian engineers and better maintenance of the provided vehicles. Above all, however, the unclarified financial participation of the Malian government made the project more difficult. The total costs were in the small tens of millions DM and it ran for seven years. The fact that the FRG did not finance such a measure alone was not only due to the limited budget of its military assistance. Rather the FRG ministries hoped that if the recipient countries themselves participated financially, the beneficiaries would have a greater interest in the project’s implementation.⁷⁰ After some time the construction in Bapho was completed and it was no coincidence that the first decentralised training of the EUTM Mali, which took place in spring 2014, was a river crossing in Bapho conducted with the assistance of German engineer instructors.⁷¹ It was precisely this area in which the German ministries tried to pick up their military cooperation in the new millennium once more.

In addition to financial and material aid, between 1972 and 1995, i.e. after the end of the cooperation with Guinea, a Bundeswehr advisory group stayed in the country at

Kurt Würzbach, in Mali vom 06. bis 09. April 1986; hier: Gespräch mit Staatschef Moussa Traoré am 08.04.1986, vom 9.4.1986, p. 1.

66 BArch, BW 1/240565, Rü II 4, Zusammenstellung der Ausrüstungshilfe-Materiallieferungen an die Republik Mali, vom 30.1.1981.

67 Deckert: Die militärischen Beziehungen, pp. 335–355.

68 Translated quote from BArch, BW 1/257466, Schriftbericht des Leiters der Deutschen Beratergruppe der Bundeswehr in Mali an Referat Rü II 4 im BMVg, Betr.: Ausrüstungshilfe Mali 85-87; hier: Situations-/Lagebericht über Grenzkonflikt zwischen Mali und Burkina Faso im Dezember 85, vom 1.1.1986.

69 BArch, BW 1/240559, Studie über die Durchführbarkeit und die deutsche Beteiligung im Rahmen der Ausrüstungshilfe am geplanten Bau einer Pionierkaserne in Bapho, vom 15.4.1982.

70 BArch, BW 1/2021, Entwurf WJ, Betr.: Sprechzettel für die Besprechung mit den Herren Bundestagsabgeordneten Dr. Schäfer und Dr. Mommer am 10.7., 15.00 Uhr, im Bundeshaus, vom 7.7.1962, p. 2.

71 Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, BMVg, Unterrichtung der Öffentlichkeit, UdÖ, 10 (2014), p. 7; BMVg, UdÖ, 25 (2014), p. 9.

Mali's request.⁷² Led by an officer, it initially comprised of three,⁷³ later up to six soldiers. The advisory group supported the induction and training of Malian engineers in the delivered material as well as in its maintenance. They also helped with the planning and implementation of infrastructure projects.⁷⁴ At the same time, the instructors received first-hand information on the Malian relationship with the members of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation, which was of interest for the FRG's ministries.

During the construction of the engineer barracks in Bapho, the advisory group also supported the planning for the establishment of a river patrol component. Since the Niger is by far the largest river in the country and at certain times of the year one of the only transport links to the north, the latter intended to make the Niger usable for transport. However, the ideas of the advisory group often collided with the limited Malian resources and the local mentality. A lack of motivation to maintain the vehicles and equipment, a lack of planning and, most of all, the "cannibalisation", i.e. the exploitation of vehicles to repair others, were difficult for the German soldiers to understand.⁷⁵ As a consequence, since 1976, the FRG offered the Malian Armed Forces every year a number of apprenticeships and training slots at Bundeswehr institutions in West Germany; parallel to the delivery of equipment and the corresponding training in Mali. In the FRG, the Malian soldiers not only received further military education, but also linguistic and manual training, including as car mechanics or concrete builders.⁷⁶ In 1993, for instance, three Malian officers and six non-commissioned officers stayed in Germany for training and educational purpose.⁷⁷ In total, until the mid-1990s, over 100 Malian soldiers received training and education in the FRG;⁷⁸ putting Mali in a top position of respective rankings of African countries.⁷⁹ It is difficult to say what became of the Malian soldiers who were trained in the FRG. Apparently, no records were kept. The impact of this educational training on the Malian army in general and the Malian engineers in particular,

72 PA AA, B 57, REF.405/IIIA4, Bd. 102, Vermerk Referat W I 4, Betr.: Ausrüstungshilfe-Anschlußabkommen Mali; hier: Besprechung in Bamako am 16.2.1972, vom 25.2.1972, p. 2.

73 PA AA, B 57 REF.405/IIIA4, Bd. 149, Schriftbericht der Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Bamako an Referat 303 im AA, Betr.: Deutsche Pionierberatergruppe; hier: Vorbereitung des Baus der Straße Bamako-Koulikoro, vom 23.10.1972.

74 BArch, BW 1/372112, Kopie Vorlage Fü S II 4 an den PSts Wimmer, Betr.: Notifizierung eines Militärattachés Mali in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, vom 28.2.1992, p. 5; BArch, BW 2/35092, Rü III 5, Hintergrundinformationen für die Reise des Bundespräsidenten in die Republik Mali, November 2001.

75 BArch, BW 1/240566, Schreiben Leiter Beratergruppe Mali, vom 16.9.1981; BArch, BW 1/240566, Schreiben Beratergruppe an Rü II 4 im BMVg, Betr.: Arbeitsbesuch LtCol Ouologuem, Chef Etat Major und Cabinet Militaire sowie Cat Assimi Dembelé, Bataillonskommandeur des 1. mal Pionierbataillons, beim Bundesminister der Verteidigung, vom 14.9.1981; BArch, BW 1/342338, Leiter Deutsche Beratergruppe Bw Mali, Lagevortrag zur Situation der Dt Ber Grp Bw Mali anlässlich des Dienstaufsichtsbesuchs des Kommandeurs der Pionierschule/FSH Bau T Brig Gen u. Dipl. Ing. R. Zedler vom 19.02 bis 25.02.1987, vom 15.2.1987, pp. 9–10.

76 PA AA, B 14, ZA, Bd. 120139, Sachstand Referat 201, Betr.: Militärische Ausbildungshilfe Mali, vom 22.5.1980.

77 BT-Drs. 12/6525, vom 30.12.1993, p. 6.

78 BArch, BW 1/342340, Nebenabdruck Schriftbericht der Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Bamako an Referat 300 im AA, Betr.: Ausstattungshilfe für Mali; hier: Einstellung der AH und Beendigung des Aufenthalts der militärischen Berater, vom 30.3.1995, p. 1.

79 BT-Drs. 11/8527, vom 10.12.1990, p. 2.

however, remained low compared to German expectations.⁸⁰ This was probably also due to the fact that, especially in the early years of German military education, Mali by no means sent the best personnel to the FRG. Like nowadays, the Malian Armed Forces were already able to choose between different training partners, picking the best offer.⁸¹ Moreover, West German military assistance also had its limits. When the Malian government asked for 50 Bundeswehr trucks in the summer of 1973 to evacuate people as a result of a drought, the delivery was blocked by the Ministry of Finance (MoF) despite the MoD's approval. Since the Bundeswehr itself had a shortage of the requested vehicles, from an economic point of view, a levy was out of the question for the MoF.⁸² For humanitarian, but also political reasons – the FRG was about to join the United Nations – the MoFA had previously sought the MoD's approval.⁸³ The establishment of an air transport component, requested several times by the Malian government at the end of the 1970s, also failed. Since the delivery and operation of three Transall aircraft would have costed allegedly around 470 million DM⁸⁴ and the Bundeswehr would also have had to send operating and maintenance personnel, the MoD declined. The same was true at the end of the 1980s for the construction of a temporary bridge over the Niger river in Bamako, which was requested by the Malian government and also made sense from a development policy perspective. The bridge was to relieve the traffic chaos in the capital until a second bridge built by Saudi Arabia was completed,⁸⁵ but it did not get the support of the West German ministries due to financial constraints. The financing of a military hospital with 200 beds was already rejected by the FRG's embassy in Bamako due to the costs involved.⁸⁶ The construction of the engineer barracks in Bapho already consumed enough resources; it remained the Bundeswehr's leading project in Mali. Between 1991 and 1993, 47 percent of the 8.5 million DM designated for the West German-Malian military cooperation was allocated for the project in Bapho.⁸⁷ Finally, in 1990, the embassy rejected the delivery of four helicopters, 20 trucks, and 30

80 BArch, BW 1/342339, Schreiben Beratergruppe an RL Rü II 4 im BMVg, Betr.: AH-Mali 88-90, vom 29.9.1988, p. 1.

81 BArch, BW 1/240564, Bericht der Beratergruppe Mali an Fü S II 5 im BMVg, Betr.: Ausbildung malischer Offiziere; hier: Leutnante Kone, Maiga, Soumare, Somboro, 31.1.1978.

82 BArch, BW 1/80793, Kopie Schreiben Referat II D 1 im BMF an das BMVg, Betr.: Unentgeltliche Abgabe von 50 LKW's an Mali, vom 6.11.1973.

83 BArch, BW 1/80793, Schreiben Leiter Abteilung 3 i.V. im AA an das BMVg, Betr.: Mali; hier: Lieferung von Transportfahrzeugen, vom 23.8.1973.

84 BArch, BW 1/257460, No author, Studie über den Aufbau einer Lufttransportkapazität der Streitkräfte der Republik Mali, hier Anlage 5, Kostenprognose.

85 PA AA, B 34, ZA, Bd. 154379, Vermerk Referat 321, Betr.: Bau einer Behelfsbrücke über den Niger in Bamako, vom 13.4.1987; PA AA, B 46, ZA, Bd. 158057, Schreiben Rü II 4 im BMVg an Referat 300 im AA, Betr.: Ausstattungshilfe Mali; hier: Malische Bitte um deutsche Unterstützung bei der Errichtung einer zweiten Nigerbrücke in Bamako, vom 27.7.1977, attachment.

86 PA AA, B 46, ZA, Bd. 158057, Schriftbericht der Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Bamako an Referat 300 im AA, Betr.: Militärische Ausstattungshilfe für Mali; hier: Malische Bitte um Finanzierung eines Militärkrankenhauses, vom 5.8.1987.

87 PA AA, B 46, ZA, Bd. 158078, Schriftbericht der Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Bamako an Referat 300 im AA, Betr.: Ausstattungshilfe (AH) für Mali; hier: Vorbereitung des Dreijahresprogramms 1991–1993 durch Besuch RL Rü II 4 des BMVg in Mali, vom 6.1.1990, p. 2.

off-road vehicles, hinting at repeated reports of human rights violations by the Malian army in the north of the country.⁸⁸

The latter became a problem for the FRG's ministries from summer 1990 onwards. Similar to the 1960s, open conflict had broken out in the northern part of Mali between members of the Tuareg ethnic group and Malian security forces.⁸⁹ Reports of atrocities committed by Malian soldiers against the civilian population quickly accumulated,⁹⁰ putting a strain on the FRG's military cooperation with Mali. In March 1991, mass protests against the corrupt regime of Moussa Traoré finally led to another coup.⁹¹ Since the Malian military handed over power to the newly elected civilian government after the country's first multi-party elections in January 1992, the Bundeswehr's assistance continued for the time being. In view of the democratisation process that had been initiated in the West African country, it seemed diplomatically unjustifiable to limit its cooperation after years of support of a corrupt regime.⁹² However, while the conflict in the north intensified again, the human rights violations by the Malian Armed Forces increased, and the general situation in Mali became more and more fragile,⁹³ the MoFA's budget for its involvement in Africa was cut significantly in favour of democratisation assistance in Eastern Europe after the end of the East-West conflict.⁹⁴ Therefore, after 22 years of assistance, the German diplomats instructed the MoD, against its wishes, to stop the work of the advisory group at the end of 1994.⁹⁵ For the diplomats, the German soldiers had accomplished their foreign policy-motivated task.

After the withdrawal of the German military instructors in spring 1995, ten years passed before the German ministries became involved again in the military training of the Malian Armed Forces. As part of the global campaign to contain Islamist extremism, Mali received military aid from Germany again in 2005. In addition to the stationing of a

88 PA AA, B 46, ZA, Bd. 158078, Drahtbericht der Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Bamako an Referat 300 im AA, Nr. 225, vom 14.9.1990.

89 See G. Klute, B. Lecocq, *Separatistische Bestrebungen der Tuareg in Mali*, in: *Wegweiser zur Geschichte. Mali*, Second Edition, ed. by M. Hofbauer and P. Münch, Paderborn 2016, pp. 82–99.

90 PA AA, B 46, ZA, Bd. 158078, Drahtbericht der Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Bamako an Referat 321 im AA, Nr. 159 u. 161, vom 10.8.1990; PA AA, B 46, ZA, Bd. 158078, Drahtbericht der Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Bamako an Referat 321 im AA, Nr. 174 u. 176, vom 20.8.1990; PA AA, B 46, ZA, Bd. 158078, Drahtbericht der Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Bamako an Referat 321 im AA, Nr. 199 u. 201, vom 29.8.1990; PA AA, B 46, ZA, Bd. 158078, Drahtbericht der Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Bamako an Referat 321 im AA, Nr. 247 u. 248, vom 1.10.1990.

91 See C. Heyl, J. Leininger, *Mali seit 1992: Erfolge und Schwächen einer jungen Demokratie*, in: *Wegweiser zur Geschichte. Mali*, Second Edition, ed. by M. Hofbauer, P. Münch, Paderborn 2016, pp. 70–81.

92 PA AA, B 34, ZA, Bd. 159327, Vermerk Referat 321, Betr.: Mali; hier: Vorsprache des Botschafters von Mali, Modibo Keita bei Dg 32 am 11.04.1991, vom 12.4.1991. See also Gespräch des Bundesministers Genscher mit dem malischen Ministerpräsidenten Sako in Königswinter, vom 21.10.1991, in: AAPD 1991, Doc. 353, pp. 1411–1417, here pp. 1412–1413.

93 Amnesty International: *Mali: Ethnic conflict and killings of civilians*, vom 20.9.1994, AFR 37/008/1994, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/afr370081994en.pdf> (accessed 1 June 2022).

94 For example, the German embassies in Liberia, Somalia, Chad and the Central African Republic were closed in the 1990s. C. Schuhkraft: *Die Afrikapolitik Deutschlands – von der „freundlichen Vernachlässigung“ hin zu einem stärkeren Engagement*, in: *Die Afrikapolitik der Europäischen Union*, ed. by G. Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet et al., Opladen 2007, pp. 195–220, hier p. 210.

95 BAArch, BW 1/342341, Vorlage Rü III 5 an Staatssekretär Schönbohm, Betr.: Ausstattungshilfe der Bundesregierung; hier: Beendigung des Programms mit der Republik Mali, vom 3.7.1995.

new advisory group with a peak of two officers and five non-commissioned officers, more than 37 million Euros were invested into the West African country's military until the renewed outbreak of the conflict in the north and the subsequent brief termination of the measure in 2012.⁹⁶ From 2013 onwards, the German Government played a key role in providing personnel for the newly established EUTM Mali and continued its bilateral assistance for the Malian engineers.⁹⁷ It was not until May 2022 that the German participation in the EUTM Mali was largely suspended as a result of further military coups, the Malian cooperation with Russian forces as well as their involvement in human rights violations.⁹⁸

5. German-Malian Military Cooperation in Historical Perspective

German-Malian military cooperation has a long-standing tradition. It has its roots in the Malian request for help in developing the country and its armed forces. For the FRG, this cooperation, which began in the 1960s during the East-West conflict, was initially intended to gain influence and sympathy in an African country strongly favoured by the Soviet Union and the GDR, which military government wanted to follow a path of non-alignment after it had overthrown the first Malian President Modibo Keita. Of course the cooperation was therefore never altruistically motivated. While using as few resources as possible, the FRG intended to increase its reputation in Mali and to position itself as a counterweight to the Warsaw Treaty organisation states and especially to the GDR. The fact that a military regime – albeit moderate in comparison to other African examples – received support in this process was accepted in the West German Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). “What seems more important to me”, wrote Michael Jovy in 1971, then Western Germany's ambassador in Bamako, “is whether there is a general consent of the population and that they somehow have the feeling that those in power are taking care of them and not just governing for their own pockets and clan.”⁹⁹

The fact that the Malian security forces were not put in a position to provide security and stability in the country themselves in the long term was neither a concern in the federal ministries, nor would this have been possible with the resources given to them. They were limited in the amount and first of all connected to developmental projects of the Malian engineers. Much more important for the FRG's ministries than the military development of the Malian Armed Forces was the foreign policy signal that was given for decades to the recipient country. By maintaining their visible military support, they

96 BT-PIPr. 17/203, vom 7.11.2012, p. 24659.

97 BT-Drs. 20/1798, vom 11.5.2022, p. 3.

98 BT-Drs. 20/1762, vom 11.5.2022.

99 Translated quote from PA AA, B 57 REF405/IIIA4, Bd. 149, Kopie Schriftbericht der Botschaft der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Bamako an das AA, Betr.: Beförderung des Staatschefs und der Mitglieder des Militärkomitees der nationalen Befreiung in ihren militärischen Rängen, vom 14.10.1971, p. 2.

uphold their influence on the Malian political arena and strengthened their stance vis-à-vis the influence of the GDR and the Soviet Union.

With the end of the East-West conflict and the German unification, military assistance became obsolete from a German perspective. For the German MoFA, it had fulfilled its purpose and could be ended, especially against the backdrop of national austerity and recurring reports of human rights violations by the Malian Armed Forces.

Such national self-interests should also be taken into account in the interim evaluation of the German military engagement in EUTM Mali, which was greatly reduced in May 2022. The partnership with France and the cooperation with the other European states, especially after the disagreements in the response to the Libyan conflict in 2011, were two reasons for the participation in the multilateral training mission EUTM Mali that should certainly not be underestimated.¹⁰⁰ Even though the training has not (yet) led to the creation of efficient Malian Armed Forces, the German participation, with the inclusion of such national interests, can certainly be seen as a success.

As with the military cooperation from the 1960s to the 1990s, however, Germany's most recent military engagement in Mali can only be fully assessed once the ministerial files have been opened. A conclusive historiography of German-Malian military cooperation is therefore still decades away.

100 See T. Konopka: Das deutsche militärische Engagement in Mali im Licht der strategischen Kultur Deutschlands, in: *Strategische Kultur als unterschätzter Faktor von Strategie und Sicherheit* (Schriftenreihe der Landesverteidigungsakademie, 17), ed. by T. Pankratz and B. Hensellek, Wien 2019, pp. 105–116.