# Managing African conflicts:
## the use of CSDP mission to cope with terrorism and organised crime

<span style="color:red">DRAFT VERSION – FEEDBACK MOST WELCOME</span>

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The European Union (EU) is living very difficult times, marked by a series of political processes, economic trends, social phenomena, and global crises, which are challenging the fundamentals of the integration project and its capacity to resist. In the security field, in particular, the EU is trying to reinforce its peace and stability provider role, focusing on its most implemented areas. The African continent is certainly one of them and the recipient of many EU missions. In the last decade, and since the issue of European Security Strategy and until its most recent developments, the EU is concerned about terrorist groups financing and the use of violent tactics by criminals and the effects these phenomena produce within and outside its borders and, in a broader perspective and following the more recent events, on the global security. Focusing on the interventions in Africa, particularly the most recent ones in the Sahel region, this paper discusses the use of CSDP missions as a tool for tackling organised crime and terrorism and strengthening security and stability conditions. It aims at replying to the following research questions:

Q1     Are increasing relations between criminals and terrorist producing an impact on the CSDP agenda?

Q2     Can the use of CSDP missions represent an effective tool, particularly in Africa?

Q3     Is that EU approach to Africa destined to continue or to be changed?

The paper is divided into three parts. Firstly, an analysis of the relations between terrorism and organised crime and the danger they constitute for global and regional security is presented. Secondly, the integrated strategy settled by the EU is evaluated within the development of CSDP, particularly in Africa. Lastly, the empirical assessment of missions deployed in Africa is used to make a preliminary investigation of their

impact as a 'counterstrategy' tool and to raise perspectives of the future impact in the continent.

## 1. *Organised crime and terrorism in a changing security environment*

The scholarly debate about the relations between organised crime and terrorism has been quite advanced, in the last decades, and has produced some interesting results, particularly starting with the notion of crime-terror nexus. It refers to the connection between two different actors, provided with distinct identities, aims and methods but willing to go beyond them, in order to reach practical purposes. The United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime defines an organised crime group as an actor which usually (a) consist of a collaboration of at least three people (b) that are gathered for a prolonged or indefinite period of time; (c) they are suspected or convicted of committing serious criminal offences; and, (d) have as their objective the pursuit of profit and/or power [1].

The notion of terrorist group is more controversial and deals with the identity of the actor (governmental/non-governmental) as well as with the nature of the act of violence. According to the EU, it is a structured group of more than two persons, established over a period of time and acting in concert to commit terrorist offences (EU Council, 2002). This kind of violence differs from other forms of political violence, namely, from "paramilitary" which includes both those groups that maintain some forms of violent capacity and yet are not in any way part of the State as well as private enterprises employed by states for providing assorted services (Tupman, 2009). Additionally, it is also different from the notion of 'insurgency' which refers to the organized use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify, or challenge political control of a region (US State Dept, 2009).

Criminologists and International Relations scholars have analysed the ways through which the different nature (entrepreneurial for criminals, political for terrorists) of the two actors may converge and produce various forms of connection. Tamara Makarenko has started to describe the environment in which such threat emerged and started to use the definition of nexus (Makarenko, 2000). According to these first investigations, the immediate post-Cold War environment provided both actors with more access to technological advancements and to financial and global market structures.

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[1] United Nations (2000), *United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime*, art. 3.

Despite the very explicit differences, the intensification of the transnational dimension of organised crime activities in the 1990s, and the changing nature of terrorism, have contributed to blur the distinction between the two and to renew the existing operational and organisational similarities (Makarenko, 2004; 2009; Wang, 2010). Such process is composed of different phases which can be put along a *continuum*. Starting with the adoption of tactics of the other for achieving a practical mutual benefit, it can proceed with  the appropriation of methods or tactics from the other; the merging of a criminal and terror group, producing a functional alliance; finally an evolutionary phase marked by the transformation of the tactics and motivations of one entity into another. The continuum includes all potential steps and a wide variety of case studies, which depend on different conditions and causes (Makarenko, 2004). The alliances among criminals and terrorists have also received some critics. Williams, for instance, argued that they were based on opportunistic reasons rather than on a real change in attitudes and nature. He stressed the fact that terrorist groups were able to use illicit activities for funding while  criminals are ready to provide illicit goods and services to any buyer regardless of their motivation (Williams, 2002). Thus, later analysis concentrates on the contexts in which such alliances may proliferate more easily. Shelley and Picarelly (2005) investigated those features which facilitate interconnections and sustained that a state of chaos and on-going conflicts as well as regions with the largest shadow economies have provided a safe haven to them. According to some scholars, the nexus needs to live within unstable countries for proliferating, while to others, political and economic instability are not a structural cause but only an exacerbating condition (Pettinger 2001). The impact of criminal activities and the intersection of both groups are less risky in regions affected by economic transition or failing states (Ridlay, 2005).

These dimensions are defined as conditions of non-governability and conduciveness to terrorist or insurgent presence, that is to say, conditions in which the presence of criminal networks open the possibility of strategic alliances through which terrorists or insurgents and criminal groups can share logistical corridors, safe havens, and access to sources of funding (Rabasa et al., 2007). Therefore, the scientific debate on the nexus was enriched with investigations on the linkages between the nexus and institutional failure or instability and, increasingly, to wars and civil conflicts. Some analysis aimed, in fact, at investigating the extent to which  the nexus may have an impact on the escalation and/or duration of conflicts, or, alternatively, the existence of an armed conflict may facilitate it more easily (Cornell 2005).

At the end of the Cold War, the growth in number of intra-state conflicts

produced a large discussion on security threats. Reports by specialised agencies describes how such connections seriously affects the security conditions at all levels and how they florish and adapt to all regions, as depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: Organized Crime and Terrorism Impact by Region

| Region | Major Threats (by Type) | Criminal Groups Involved | Other Actors Involved |
|---|---|---|---|
| **South America** | Cocaine trafficking, corruption, violence. | South American clans | Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia [FARC], Autodefenses Unidas de Colombia [AUC], Ejército de Liberación Nacional [ELN], Shining Path |
| **Central Africa** | Illegal exploitation of mineral, gold, diamonds, weapons; armed conflicts. | Groups based in Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, and Tanzania | Use of illegal trafficking as a source of insurgency funding. |
| **West Africa** | Cocaine trafficking, armed violence, and corruption. | South American clans and Locals | Rival military and non-military factions. |
| **Central America** | Cocaine trafficking, corruption, and instability. | Colombian and Mexican cartels and Central American affiliates. | Armed local groups. |
| **Horn of Africa** | Piracy for ransom. | Groups based in Somalia. | Local insurgents. |
| **Central Asia** | Heroin trafficking, insurgency, and terrorism. | Local groups and criminals. | Al-Qaeda, Taliban (Afghanistan), Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), groups based in Pakistan. |
| **Southeast Europe** | Heroin trafficking, political fragmentation, and ethnic rivalry. | Groups based in the Balkans and Turkey; Mafia groups based in Italy. | Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK); Former militants can be mobilized. |

Source: UNODC (2010)

Somali pirates, Mexican and Colombian cartels, Italian criminal groups, the PKK, and Al-Qaida have very different purposes and aims, but their respective abilities in

establishing functional interactions are growing stronger and becoming increasingly professional. Additionally, the interactions they have with other political or economic actors—either ethnic factions or local insurgents—may vary immensely as well as the impact that the *nexus* can have on a region's stability and levels of violence (Irrera, 2016).

Armed conflict and insurgencies may exacerbate the nexus and they can be a relevant component of it, however, this phenomenon affects all regions, with a significant impact on European countries, either as traditional basis of criminals and as a larger transit area. The challenges posed to states by the *nexus* produce implications on both regional and global levels, since it constitutes a threat to state capacity and provides security to its citizens as well as to regional and international institutions' ability to manage the flow of people across borders.

Scholars and practitioners have explained how regional variations impact on connections, and to what extent, they are determined by the level of stability within the geographic region in which they operates. A troubled context, a transitional state or a democratic regime can have an impact on the nexus, its main features, its performances and actions (Makarenko, 2007).

More recent investigations have tried to reconceptualise the concept of nexus, in order to include more flexible and changing features and to understand the reason why it requires a collective response. It is clear that it represents a tangible threat albeit still difficult to measures, especially in its main components. Additionally, it has evolved into something more complex which, as already seen through the three categories, may affect stable and unstable regions and may involve or skip the insurgent part (Irrera, 2016).

This makes the implications they can produce on a regional and global level extremely multi-layered. They urge to be analysed in the long-term period and in a broader perspective, involving those states which are most manifestly affected, as well as those ones which can suffer indirect unfavourable effects. At the same time, it implies further reflections on the responses, produced by states and intergovernmental organisations and their capacity to adapt to the rising flexibility of security threats.

### *2. The EU response in a multilateral context*

The long and gradual process which has produced a set of policies and measures in tackling organised crime, terrorism and conflicts is paradigmatic of the relationships among leading states at the end of the Cold War. Largely initiated and shaped by the US,

such cooperation involved at first most relevant and experienced European states and secondly the EU, together with additional regional organisations.

The different policies, produced by the US and the European states reflected their dissimilar perceptions of organized crime and terror, as well as dissimilar approaches to security. However, the shifting perceptions of the security environment, together with the parallel transformation of the global system, pushed these prominent States to change their attitudes and to strengthen multilateral cooperation for developing adequate responses to new threats. Even before September 11, the transatlantic law enforcement infrastructure was actively working, through several joint initiatives against money laundering and cybercrime. The terroristic attacks contributed to change the characteristics of those initiatives, because it modified the perception of the threat itself. Attempts to facilitate greater cooperation in crime control and counterterrorism on an international level started to be strengthened for promoting more communication, establishing guidelines and best practices, and, ultimately for regularizing cooperation (Hignett, 2008).

The internationalization of EC/EU crime control started at the beginning of the Cold War, through the development of cross-border policing institutions, and the extension of its own practices to the neighbours. The deepening and widening of the European integration contributed to the increasing of this process.

The nuclear deterrence strategy and arms control negotiations of the Cold War and subsequent détente era, the three-decade-long Helsinki process, and the formulation of national and multilateral defence policies in the 1990s in response to new security threats, like new wars, the rising of civil conflicts, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), contributed to the increasing will of the European countries to strengthen their cooperation in the key-issue of drug trafficking (Shelley and Picarelli, 2005).

The adoption of the EU Drug Strategy, in December 2004, witnessed the existence of a larger political concern about drugs across the EU countries, beyond the different approaches among Member States. The successive EU Drugs Action Plans have been based on the same set of basic principles: a balanced approach to reducing the supply and demand for drugs, and the founding values of the Union: respect for human dignity, liberty, democracy, equality, solidarity, the rule of law and human rights. Among the measures prescribed for establishing joint policies, the enhancement of judicial cooperation in the area of combating drug trafficking and law enforcement and the strengthening of Europol, Eurojust and other EU structures are included (EU Council,

2008). Further enhancement arose with the development of Common Security and Defence Policy.

*2.1 The EU tackling insecurities in the African continent*

The impact the nexus is producing on the EU agenda needs to be analysed in combination with the tradition of close cooperation with underdeveloped countries, in the field of aid and relief policy. This last one offered the already exploited platform and expertise for improving cooperation with third countries and international organizations in the field of drugs through closer coordination of policies within the EU.

In the document *A Secure Europe in a Better World,* issued by the European Council in December 2003, the EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, pointed out the main elements which are required to build a strong and solid *European Security Strategy* (ESS). The abovementioned set of principles is used also for enlarging EU capabilities and contribution to global security. The ESS stresses European responsibility for global security, the need of effective multilateralism and the extension of the international rule of law (ESS, 2003). The ESS lists five key threats to Europe: terrorism, the proliferation of WMD, regional conflicts, failed/failing states, and organized crime.

Even in the case of the EU, the main character of its contribution is the shifting process from a Home and Justice Affairs approach to a more comprehensive plan, essentially founded on the blurring boundary between internal and external security (Irrera, 2018).

The common objective, which is the protection of citizens and States from risks, explains why the threat of terrorism and organised crime was identified in the ESS which had an explicit external perspective and then appears in the set of documents which constitutes what is commonly described as the Internal Security Strategy (ISS) of the Union. The ISS addresses a wide list of security challenges the European countries face in their domestic borders, including terrorism, organised and cross-border crime, cyber-crime, violence in all its forms, accidents and natural and man-made disasters and implicitly suggests a larger reflection on the *European Security Model,* consisting of common tools (EU Council, 2010, p. 5).

According to the document, the EU aims at coping with these phenomena and developing adequate responses, through a coordination of existing agencies (Europol,

Eurojust, Frontex, Community Civil Protection Mechanism, the Counter-Terrorism Coordinator) which will be strengthened.

The constant use of the common actions, in the last decades, has contributed to the rising of a specific international image of EU as a civilian power. The will to build long-term stabilisation, to act through multilateralism, and to be inspired by norms and ideas are the main elements of the global actorness EU has developed in the field of promotion of democracy and security (Duchene, 1972). The more complex set of competences the Treaty of Lisbon has contributed to link this policy to the common security and defence policy and to the civilian and military assets in support of peace-keeping missions, conflict prevention and international security outside the Union (TEU art. 42).

As stated in the EUGS (EU Council, 2016), since its beginning, the European integration project has been aimed at bringing peace and prosperity to the region and keeping war and conflicts far away from it. Since 2002, the European Union has deployed more than 30 civilian and military missions in three continents (Europe, Africa and Asia). The EUGS has reaffirmed the need to adapt to the changes in global and regional security and particularly, to understand the rising of more hybrid threats. In a recent study commissioned by the European Parliament, hybridity threats are defined, by using Hofmann, as a *full range of different modes of warfare including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts including indiscriminate violence and coercion, and criminal disorder. Hybrid wars can be conducted by both states and a variety of non-state-actors' (Hoffman, 2007).*

If the hybridity dimension is perceived as the new normal, it then impacts tools and response policies to cope with them also (Facon, Mazzucchi, Patry, 2008). Crises – whatever natural and geographical dimensions they may have – are transboundary, as they affect multiple dimensions and require the development of capabilities and tools which involve various actors and competences (Boin, 2018). The EU foreign policy, that is to say, the co-existence of European, multilateral and bilateral relations, has produced many overlaps and needs to be tailored to the different contexts and preferences as expressed by member states. This means having convergent positions – or at least not too much divergent - in respect to the more relevant conflicts and crises (from Syria to Donbass) and towards the crucial political actors.  At the same time, it seems necessary to re-focus on defence and re-discuss the role of missions. The establishment of Permanent Structured Cooperation on security and Defence (PESCO), a Treaty-based framework to deepen force cooperation among member states, has been presented as the

last frontier of joint commitment to this on a regular basis, yet it is also analysed as a complicated system dependent on states' preferences and national goals, despite the renovated cooperation with NATO and the commitment to the principles of inclusiveness, reciprocity and decision-making autonomy of the EU (Biscop, 2018; EU Council 2018).

The EUGS and the efforts made by PESCO are trying to revitalize emphasize the image of the EU as security provider, able to intervene in very multilayered conditions and using multiple programs and measures. CSDP missions, in particular, have been recalled as a very flexible tools, functional to tackle a wide variety of security challenges, including those linked to irregular migration, terrorism and radicalisation, organised crime, border management and maritime security (Conclusions of the Council, 2018).

The African continent has always been at the core of the EU action and the one in which very sophisticated missions have been experimented.

The most recent involvement of the EU in the management of conflicts in Africa has been the establishment of the 'G5 Sahel', in December 2014. The Sahel region – which comprises Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad - is affected by a series of threats and insecurities. The existence of organized crime activities, insurgents and terrorism groups aggravates a situation already marked by civil and ethnic conflicts. The huge masses of refugees and IDP nurtures the exploitation of irregular and human beings smuggling. The humanitarian dimension of crises in all these countries is deteriorating and requires the involvement of several tools, programs and measures (Dowd and Raleigh 2013; Lacher, 2012).

The EU Strategy for Security and Development (so-called the Sahel Strategy), has been launched in March 2011, as a comprehensive framework for addressing security and development challenges by using several tools. The Regional Action Plan, adopted by Ministers of Foreign Affairs on 20 April 2015, clarifies the strategic priorities, that is to say: 1) Preventing and countering radicalisation, 2) Creating appropriate conditions for Youth, 3) Migration and mobility, 4) Border management, fight against illicit trafficking and transnational organised crime.

Through the intervention of a Special Representative, the plan aims at involving all relevant stakeholders of the region, in particular local governments, international organisations, civil society and diaspora communities. A relevant role within this comprehensive strategy is played by CSDP missions, deployed in the regions, as essential tools for supporting crisis management and conflict prevention.

*3. CSDP missions and hybrid security threats*

As seen in the previous paragraph, peace operations have been considered as tool for preventing or combating terrorism and organized crime. As observed by Van der Ljin, specific activities included in the mandate can target both the consequences and drivers of such security threat. On the one hand, activities targeting consequences are mainly reactive, in the sense that they respond to an already identified threat, by  reducing and deactivating it. On the other, targeting drivers requires more  proactivity, since activities need to prevent criminals and terrorists initiatives, by addressing the push and pull factors that might produce or enable it. Additionally, missions may target consequences and drivers in a direct or indirect way, depending of whether the mandate allows them to directly fight or to build or strengthen the capacity of local actors, including the host government, civil society and various communities (Van der Ljin, 2018).

The use of civilian missions constitutes a unique feature of the EU contribution to the multilateral cooperation. The development of CSDP missions has followed this last objective and, particularly in the use of civilian or integrated missions, have been assigned a variety of tasks and activities which address issues such as corruption, development, human rights, rule of law,  deliberately or incidentally overlapping with preventing and combating terrorism and organized crime.

The number of military and civilian missions the EU has deployed outside Europe and particularly in Africa, has increased and developed over the years.  Even though they are envisaged as the last resort, civilian missions have been extensively used for tackling non-traditional threats, including crime and terrorist issue. There is, thus, a general absence of explicit mention to the fight against terrorism among the objectives of the Union' s missions despite the fact that all of them were carried out after 11 September 2001 and despite their respective implementation have originated occasional demands (Oliveira Martins and Ferreira-Pereira, 2012).

Fig. 1 – EU civilian and military missions (2019)
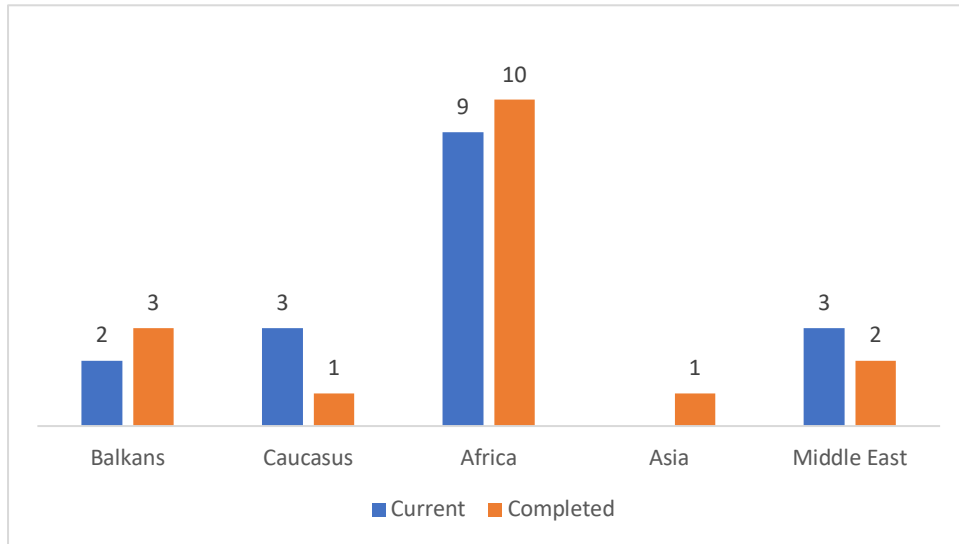


Source: EU External Action, 2019

Fig. 1 displays all missions deployed by the EU, both civilians and military, either already ended and still active until present. The EU is obviously more active outside Europe, using its crisis management abilities in countries affected by insurgency and instability. Most of civilian missions are associated to executive tasks, that is to say Security Sector Reform, Rule of Law, Border Control which are inevitably dealing organised crime, terrorism and insurgency.

Africa has always been the privileged recipient of EU policies and programs, from development and aid to humanitarian assistance and crisis management. The majority of missions deployed outside Europe has addressed this part of the world, in parallel, cooperation or sometimes frictions with other relevant political actors, like the US, UN, OSCE (Dijkstra, 2010).

The EU's comprehensive strategy in the Sahel region includes three CSDP missions: EUCAP Sahel Niger, EUCAP Sahel Mali and the EU training mission in Mali (EUTM). All three mandates explicitly refer to the fight against terrorism and organized crime and indirectly tackle them, by strengthening the interoperability and the sustainability of local security forces. The deteriorated situation in Mali, in particular, required an additional intervention. Following a request of the local government and according to the provisions of the UN Security Council resolution 2085 (2012), the EU launched a military Training Mission in Mali (EUTM Mali) in 2013, aiming at supporting the rebuilding of the Malian armed forces, matching the humanitarian needs of population and helping training combat units.

Tab. 2 – EU civilian and military missions deployed in Africa addressing crime-terror issues (2019)

| Mission | Region | C/M | Reference in the Mandate |
|---|---|---|---|
| EUAVSEC | South Sudan | Civilian | OC and Terrorism |
| EUNAVFOR | Somalia | Military | Piracy |
| EUTM | Mali | Military | OC and Terrorism |
| EUCAP Sahel Niger | Niger | Civilian | OC and Terrorism |
| EUBAM | Lybia | Civilian | OC and Terrorism |

References to organized crime are frequent in documents mandating multilateral missions, however only few ones have been explicitly tasked with addressing it. Other than the missions deployed in the Sahel region, the ones still active in Africa include missions specifically shaped to target piracy, illegal migration and radicalization attempts which are considered as consequences and side effects of criminals' and terrorists' activities and interactions.

The suitability of missions, particularly CSDP ones, to be used for tackling non-traditional security threats is a controversial yet fascinating topic, which will require further research. This is confirmed and enriched by the variety of empirical data and phenomena, offered by the  missions deployed in Africa, particularly in the Sahel region. The EU  aspiration to bring peace and prosperity outside its borders, along its neighborhood and all over the world, in addition to the dream of appeasing populations exposed to poverty, deprivation, and violence, has pushed the EU towards the creation of a complicated political and bureaucratic system which, over the years, has revealed some inefficiencies. Yet, the EU potential – in terms of nature, structure and competencies, remains quite relevant.

*4.  Concluding remarks*

The main aim of this paper is to understand whether the nexus between terrorism and organised crime may represent a renovated kind of security threat, able to produce an impact on CSDP agenda and to explore whether the missions deployed in the Sahel region can constitute a renewed effort to build a sustainable strategy.

Going through theoretical assessment and empirical analysis, it is possible to elaborate some preliminary assumptions, which will definitively require further research.

Firstly, the strategic alliances between criminals and terrorist constitute a typical case of non-traditional security threat which will continue to impact the global political system. The effects of such alliances may be deteriorated in troubled contexts, affected by war and insurgency, which can constitute safe heaven because ungoverned entities. Nevertheless, failed and weak state do not attract criminals and terrorist *per se* and they can be considered as an additional features, not a constitutive one. Although they still remain two separate phenomena, the changing nature of global security and the increasing effects of globalisation have contributed to blur the distinction between political and criminal motivated violence and to reveal operational and organisational similarities.

Secondly, the evanescence of non-traditional security threats impose to scholars and policy-makers a reconceptualization of the whole phenomenon, which include on one hand the flexible set of interactions between separate entities and, on the other, the multi-layered implications they can produce at the regional and global level.

The challenges the nexus poses to states are definitely marked by the global and regional widespread and can be placed on a double level. It constitutes a threat to the state capacity to provide security to its citizens and to the regional and international institutions ability to manage cross-border flows. This is the reason why it is listed among those issues of global concern that require a collective response.

Thirdly, the consideration of such impact and the failure to manage non-traditional security threat can explain why some conflicts are becoming more intractable and lasting. The hybridity of security and of threats requires a likewise hybrid set of responses. Therefore, the establishment of peace, development and stability, in most cases, passes through the use (or combination) of multi-layered policies, programs, competencies. In this sense, the EU approach could constitute a unique case, provided with a potential and expertise which could find in the framework of CDSP an ideally concrete set of tools.

Fourthly, once again Africa constitutes a laboratory for both threats and security providers. On the one hand, many countries have offered to criminals and terrorists the best context - marked by civil conflicts, poverty, corruption - for developing their alliances, exploiting local black markets, enhancing profitable sources of insecurities, like piracy of illegal migration. On the other, the EU has extensively used CSDP civilian missions for experimenting cooperation with other actors, focused on specific executive

tasks. Tackling non-traditional security threats in Africa inevitably requires a comprehensive or integrated approach, based on both drivers and consequences, including both direct and indirect activities, as the age of hybridity entails.

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