

# The EU's Missions and Operations from the Central Mediterranean to West Africa in the Context of the Migration Crisis

ANNA MOLNÁR

*University of Public Service, Hungary*  
*molnar.anna@uni-nke.hu*

MARIANN VECSEY

*University of Public Service, Hungary*  
*vecsey.mariann@uni-nke.hu*

This paper focuses on investigating how distance affects the political decisions on interventions, from geographically the closest to the farther CSDP (Common Security and Defence Policy) missions and operations. More specifically, we look at the utilization of the CSDP missions and operations in the context of the migration and refugee crisis. As part of the broad foreign policy toolbox, the EU started to use its CSDP missions and operations to address some of the root causes of migration (like internal security and border management issues) in the countries of origin. In this research, we investigate how the mandates and objectives of the missions and operations in the Mediterranean and West African region have changed between 2013 and first quarter of 2022 in order to support the EU's migration policy. Missions and operations gained political capital and more financial and political support from EU Member States as a consequence of the migration and refugee crisis. This support is visible in the expenditures of the three examined missions in the Sahel. Moreover, the European Agenda on Migration of 2015 stated that migration is to become a specific component of CSDP missions and operations. Consequently, the EU started to count on CSDP missions and operations to handle irregular migration in 2015.

*Key Words:* European Union, migration crisis, Common Security and Defence Policy, EU missions and operations, securitization

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INTRODUCTION

[56] During the migration and refugee crisis in 2015, the European Union proposed a comprehensive and integrated approach to answer the challenges of mass irregular migration (European Commission 2015a; 2015b; European Council 2015a; European External Action Service 2016a; Biscop 2016; Ceccorulli and Lucarelli 2017, 86–7; Buonanno 2017, 104–6). This paper focusses on the utilization of the CSDP (Common Security and Defence Policy) missions and operations in the context of the migration crisis since 2015. As part of the broad foreign policy toolbox at the European Union's disposal, the EU started to use its CSDP missions and operations to address some of the root causes of irregular migration in the countries of origin. Our main goal is to investigate how geographical distance from the territory of the EU affects the political decisions on interventions, from the closest to the farther missions.

We choose to discuss the missions and operations which are located on the Central Mediterranean migration route, and the African internal route from Libya to West Africa between 2013 and 2020. During the peak of the migration and refugee crisis, the Central Mediterranean migration route was the busiest on the way to Europe from Africa. According to the map published by EU Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations on 05 January 2021, 390,005 total arrivals were registered in 2016, which declined to 188,372 in 2017. In 2018 only 147,683 arrivals were registered; 2019 saw even less arrivals, totalling in 128,536 arrivals, and the lowest number of crossings were registered in 2020 with 95,176 arrivals (Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations 2021). But the significance of this route also lies in the EU's clear geopolitical interest. There are five EU missions and operations altogether on the route from Mali to Italy, EUNAVFOR Med Operation Sophia and its successor, Operation Iriini in the Mediterranean, EUBAM Libya in North Africa, EUCAP Sahel Niger, and two missions in Mali, EUCAP Sahel Mali and EUTM Mali, which all have a certain mandate to handle migration.

The missions and operations will be discussed in geographical or-



der from the North to the South. We followed this method for the sake of traceability, and because the EU NAVFOR MED military operation in the Mediterranean caused a main turning point in the EU's approach to handling migration when the Italian government decided to support the military answer to tackle this issue. Therefore, our analysis starts with EUNAVFO MED Operations Sophia, and its successor operation, Irini, which are followed by the civilian mission EUBAM Libya, and lastly, three missions in the Sahel, EUCAP Sahel Niger, EUTM Mali, and EUCAP Sahel Mali. Migration is generally perceived as a South–North movement, but it also has a South–South aspect, which is especially prominent in West Africa (Adepoju 2008, 15–8).

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Since 2011 the EU's Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel has been the main framework of action in Mali and Niger. The strategy contains a list of challenges in the Sahel region, which include environmental, economic, demographic and political factors, such as climate change, extreme poverty, frequent food crises, rapid population growth, fragile governance, corruption, risk of radical extremism, and other security related topics (European External Action Service n.d.). Because of the multidimensional crisis in the region, the EU Sahel Strategy became the point of reference, when the EU established its missions in the Sahel (Bøås 2019, 5–7).

The Valletta Action Plan and the European Agenda on Migration also became key documents in the management of CSDP missions and operations. Both the Valletta Action Plan and the European Agenda on Migration state that migration will be a specific component of the ongoing CSDP missions and operations in Niger and Mali. Besides this, the documents call for information exchange among the missions and operations along the West African migration route, in an effort to regionalise EU activities to fight irregular migration (European Council 2017d).

The use of CSDP missions and operations in tackling the migration crisis is part of the Europeanized externalization process of migration policy, which means transferring the management of migration policy to the countries of origin and transit by the European Union. This led to an increased emphasis on checking the legality of

entering the EU before the travel takes place (Bigo and Guild 2010, 273–7; Lavenex 2011, 374–5; Zaiotti 2018, 5–9).

[58] The externalization of migration has widely been discussed and debated by researchers (Martins and Strange 2019, 195–201; Reslow 2019, 31–42). According to Carrera, Radescu and Reslow (2015, 6), the aim of EU's external migration policies is to persuade non-EU countries to implement agreements, policy instruments, information exchanges, projects or cooperation mechanisms and regional processes related to the management of migration. This 'outsourcing of migration policies' was criticized for weakening the protection of human rights and for creating 'Fortress Europe' (Frelick, Kysel and Podkul 2016, 209–11; Jünemann, Fromm and Scherer 2017, 1–7; International Federation for Human Rights 2017; International Detention Coalition 2013).

An immense literature has been produced by researchers on the topic of the Europeanisation of migration and refugee policy as well (Faist and Ette 2007, 3–31; Abdou 2016, 105–17; Vatta, 2017, 13–27). While externalization means that entry procedures are exported to third countries, Europeanisation is a process where either EU norms spill over and are incorporated into national policies, or as a bottom-up process, when national policies of EU Member States influence EU policies. In the case of the CSDP the latter, bottom-up process can be observed (Radaelli 2004).

In parallel with the migration and refugee crisis in 2015, the creation of a defence union gained momentum in the EU and the need for deepening CSDP has raised the question of using CSDP military operations (Tardy 2018, 8–10; Nemeth 2018, 16–29; Rehrl and Glume 2017; Herranz-Surrallés 2019, 33–41). Until 2015, CSDP was regarded as an external military instrument. During the migration and refugee crisis, the question was raised to include CSDP missions and operations to manage migration besides Frontex (European Border and Coast Guard Agency) (Biscop and Rehrl 2016; Parkes 2016). In 2016 many mandates of CSDP missions and operations had to be extended, therefore modifications were made to fit the missions to the comprehensive migration policy (Biscop and Rehrl 2016).



#### METHODOLOGY

We use the qualitative method of practice oriented document analysis. This approach argues that documents are not just describing reality, but also influence it. Documents can modify our environment as well. This means that certain documents provide a modifying work, which turns paper into objects or materialities (Asdal 2015, 1–3). In this case, we examine how EU missions and operations were changed by different documents over time.

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In this case, the examined documents reinforced the Fortress Europe approach of fences and legal barriers in close connection with the securitisation of migration (Jünemann, Fromm and Scherer 2017, 83–95). During our research we use both primary sources such as EU Council decisions, agendas, action plans, as well as secondary sources including results of 11 semi-structured interviews we concluded in person and online during the research between 2015 and 2019 with EU officials from DG HOME, active and former officials from EU missions and operations, like EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia, EUCAP Sahel Niger and EUCAP Sahel Mali. Among the interviewees were two middle management level EU officials from the European Commission, a former head of mission, a deputy commander, a deputy head of mission, a chief of staff, a branch chief and two analysts of different CSDP missions and operations. Our interviewees were selected using the snow-ball method.

#### THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

To investigate if the geographical proximity of different CSDP missions and operations matters, regional security complex theory must be introduced. The essence of the theory lies in geography. Proximity is the central variable in most of the regional security complex theories, but definitions differ (Kelly 2007, 224). The theory most commonly claims, that political and security threats travel easily on shorter distances (Buzan 2003, 141). Consequently, most states worry more about neighbours than about crises farther away. This can be attributed to the more serious security dilemmas related to proximate actors, which have a shared history of interactions. Moreover, regional security complexes tend to form security com-

[60] munities (Kelly 2007, 224). In the case of the EU, migration can be regarded as an externality on the borders. If securitization and regional security complex theory is combined, security communities can emerge. The EU is considered as one. Actors within the security community tend to resolve problems in a peaceful manner and no longer expect or prepare for the use of force against each other (Buzan 2003, 142–3; Háda, Rózsa and Tálás 2016, 9–13; Tuscisny 2020, 426–30)

Three different versions of securitization theory emerged during the 1990s. The first one is the speech act approach, introduced by the Copenhagen School. The second is the sociological approach, based on Foucauldian views, and the third one is the inclusive security approach, inspired by the normative-theoretical approach (Hammerstad 2016, 265–75). The Copenhagen School describes securitization as an act to highlight an existential threat, which requires immediate response (Buzan, Waever and De Wilde 1998, 23–9). The Foucauldian school, however, considers securitization as a modified politicization, which is used as an everyday act to gain political power (Bigo 2002, 67–8). The inclusive security approach abandons the negative connotations of the previous two schools. It represents a proactive, inclusive and collaborative direction of the theory (Hammerstad 2016, 272–4). For the purpose of the research we used the approach of the Copenhagen School.

According to the Copenhagen School, securitization is a move which takes politics beyond the existing rules and regulations and makes possible the implementation of special politics. Therefore, securitization can be assessed as the continuation of politicization. Politicization occurs when a topic, which is not naturally political in its character becomes the subject of political debate and needs to be dealt with. Thus, securitization is a matter that presents an existential threat and requires an immediate response, which does not fall under the normal political procedures; it needs priority decisions made by top leaders. The act of presenting a topic as an existential threat is the securitization move (Buzan, Waever and De Wilde 1998, 23–9).

The securitization of migration started in the 1990s. Concerns



were raised in parallel with the emergence of migration as a security question, claiming that the process replaced migration from the more suitable political field (Waever 1995, 46–78; Waever, Buzan, Kelstrup and Lemaitre 1993, chap. 8.; Balzacq 2005, 190; 2008, 75–96; 2011, 1–28; Huysmans 2006, 125–44; Dannreuther 2016, 215–16). The start of the migration crisis in 2015, reinforced the securitization process of migration (Balzacq, Leonard and Ruzicka, 2016, 498–507; Biscop and Rehr 2016). With the securitisation of migration and the even more apparent externalisation, the two processes mutually-reinforced each other, resulting in an ideal environment to make radical steps like the utilisation of the CSDP military operations which would be acceptable to the audiences.

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#### CSDP OPERATIONS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

##### *EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia*

After the collapse of the Qadhafi regime, the EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia was the first CSDP military operation launched in the framework of the comprehensive approach to external conflict and crises (European Commission 2013). It was deployed after Italy realized its need for assistance and solidarity at the European level. One of the main priorities of the Italian presidency of the EU Council was to develop a genuine European solidarity on the migration issue (Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2014; Molnár and Szente-Varga 2020, 86–93). At the same time the EU started to put an emphasis on externalizing migration policy at this time (European Council 2017a). In April 2015, five days after the tragedy, when approximately 800 people lost their life close to the coast of Sicily, the European Council launched EUNAVFOR MED operation in order to help ‘the disruption of the business model of human smuggling and trafficking networks in the Southern Central Mediterranean’ (European Council 2015b). The deployment of the operation was to be concluded in three distinct phases. The first phase conducted information gathering on migration networks. The second introduced direct military actions, such as boarding, search and seizure of vessels suspected of being used for human smuggling or trafficking. The third phase was to introduce all necessary

[62] measures against such vessels, including demolition. The tasks of the operation were to disrupt the business model of human smuggling networks, and to contribute to the training of the Libyan Coast Guard and Navy. The Council Decision expresses the EU's commitment to prevent illegal migration (European Council 2015b).

According to critics, however, the search and rescue activity, which was not mandated by the operation but an obligation by international maritime law (Røsaeg 2020), acted 'as a magnet' for irregular immigrants and thus the mandate of the operation was amended (UK Parliament 2016). The search and rescue activity, however, was not reaching the level of pre-EUNAVFOR results. In the first four months of 2014, 50 people died during the attempt to cross the Mediterranean, while in the same period of 2015 the figure increased to 1,687 deaths. In both periods, around 26,000 successful crossings were recorded (Heller and Pezzani 2016). Later on, the search and rescue activity received even less attention (Carrera and Cortinovis 2020, 150–2).

In 2016, an increase in migration across the Central Mediterranean route (181,126 people) made it clear that, in the absence of comprehensive European policy tools and without the cooperation with origin and transit countries, like the Libyan partner, EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia could not counteract the activities of smugglers. The operation functioned only on the high seas, and both the EU and several member states therefore called for training and equipping the so-called Libyan Coast Guard as well (*The Guardian* 2016; European External Action Service 2017b). In June 2016, the mandate of the operation was reinforced with the supporting tasks of capacity building, training of and information sharing with the Libyan Coast Guard and the implementation of the UN arms embargo on the high seas. The operation in the Mediterranean was also obliged to coordinate with EUBAM Libya, and the Frontex operation in the area (European External Action Service 2016b; European Council 2016b).

The increasing effectiveness of the so-called Libyan Coast Guard, in fact, and the introduction of a code of conduct for NGOs that rescued migrants in the Mediterranean led to a decrease in the number



of arrivals during summer of 2017. This externalization of migration policy and later the creation of Libyan SAR zone was criticized by several stakeholders (The Maritime Executive 2017). In July 2017 the Council of the EU extended the mandate of EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia until 31 December 2018 (European External Action Service 2017a). [63]

In 2018, the immigration and refugee policy of the League and the 5 Stars Movement differed considerably from the former government's and made irregular migration a national security issue. Its position became more radical, as it was confirmed when Italian ports were shut down in front of rescue ships of NGOs (Marrone 2018; Fekete 2019, 165–7). In 2019, Italy tried to block the prolongation of the EUNAVFOR MED Sophia operation's mandate. Probably due to resistance by the Italian government, the deployment of the operation's naval assets had been suspended temporarily for the duration of the extension of the mandate. The operation continued with strengthening surveillance by air assets and reinforcing support to the Libyan Coastguard and Navy (European Council 2019a; 2019b). During the second Conte Government the mandate of this operation was elongated until 31 March 2020, but the deployment of the Operation's naval assets remained suspended (European Council 2019c).

#### *EUNAVFOR MED Operation Iridi*

In 2020, EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia ended as scheduled, and a new operation took its place. The establishment of EUNAVFOR MED Operation Iridi eliminated the deadlock of a naval operation during which vessels were withdrawn. In the new mandate the EU addressed the issue of disembarkation as well. In the new mandate the consent of the port State was needed to allow disembarkation. EUNAVFOR MED Operation Iridi inherited assets, HQ and personnel from its predecessor, with an initial one year long operational period (European Council 2020a), which was later extended to 31 March 2023 (European Council 2021a). Operation Iridi also inherited the tasks of the previous operation in the Mediterranean, but the priority among these changed significantly. Iridi's core task

[64] is to contribute to the implementation of the UN arms embargo on Libya, which was the latest addition to Sophia's tasks. The second is to assist the Libyan Coast Guard and Navy in its training and capability development. The disruption of human smuggling and trafficking routes to tackle irregular migration became the third, least important task of the new operation. Also, the text of the Council Decision avoids to mention the three international conventions – mentioned in the 2015 decision launching Operation Sophia (European Council 2015b) – on the obligation to assist people in distress at sea (European Council 2020a).

The maritime operations in the Mediterranean, as the closest to the EU's territory, experienced some changes since their deployment in 2015. The birth of Operation Sophia must be mentioned, as the operation was clearly the result of the securitization of migration, and the Europeanization of national policies. For the first time the EU used a CSDP military operation to address a list of tasks, which are traditionally not military tasks. For this, the securitization of migration was needed. The predecessor search and rescue missions were turned into a military operation, and the EU turned towards securing its southern borders instead of continuing the predominantly humanitarian operations.

As it is said above, international maritime law, however, applies to military vessels as well, and the disembarkation of Operation Sophia's naval assets with migrants on board became an increasingly pressing political issue in Italy. The internal policy again was raised to the EU level, and in 2020 Operation Irini replaced Operation Sophia. The list of tasks did not change with the new mandate, just a new priority order appeared. The externalization of migration management remained important, besides securing the EU's external borders.

#### *EUBAM Libya*

The European Union launched the European Union Border Assistance Mission in Libya on 22 May 2013. The objectives of this mission aimed to support the capacity development of Libyan authorities to improve border security in the short term, and to develop Inte-



grated Border Management (IBM) in the long term (Improving the Effectiveness of Capabilities in EU Conflict Prevention 2017; European Council 2013a). Despite the fact that the first mandate did not mention migration or the comprehensive approach for CSDP, introduced in 2013 by the EU (European Commission 2013), as a framework, the tasks of the EUBAM Libya were clearly designed to handle migration from Libya with the stabilization of the country. The political fragmentation of the country prevented the mission to identify and establish systemic relations with local actors, and it was not capable to carry out its tasks successfully (Christensen, Ruohomäki and Rodt 2018). Due to the deterioration of the situation in Libya, the mission had to relocate to Tunis in 2014 (Improving the Effectiveness of Capabilities in EU Conflict Prevention 2017). In 2016, at the request of the Government of National Accord, the mandate of the mission was prolonged. Despite the known shortcomings, the tasks remained the same, including one addition, the support of a comprehensive civilian security sector reform (European Council 2016c; European Council 2016d; Molnár and Takács 2021, 204).

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At the end of 2017, the situation allowed the EUBAM to re-establish its presence in Tripoli (European External Action Service 2019a), and due to the new mandate, the mission was no longer a mission with overarching strategic objectives. Instead, the mission focused on the sole task of supporting Libya's security sector reform in the fields of border management, law enforcement and the criminal justice system (European Council 2017c). This mandate mentioned a broad cooperation with UN and other EU missions and operations on the ground. Migratory figures peaked in May–July in 2017, counting 23,000 new arrivals in May and 23,500 in June (Frontex 2019). This happened in line with the 2016 EU Global Strategy (EUGS), which raised the establishment of closer connections among CSDP missions and operations along the West African migration route (European External Action Service 2016a). The EU's contribution to the training of the Libyan coast guard and border management in Southern Libya affected other missions in the Mediterranean and the Sahel since they were situated on the West African migration route. Therefore, the EU formed these missions

[66] and operations in a way to support each other's activities with coordination and information sharing, and to contribute to the regional security organizations as well (European Council 2017d). At the end of 2016, only the EUNAVFOR Med Operation Sophia was considered as a direct partner to engage with Libyan authorities (European Council 2017a), providing an active partner on the ground to the EUBAM. In 2017 the mandate of EUBAM Libya was changed, and the element of handling migration became more visible in this mandate, due to the mounting migration pressure on the EU (Loschi, Raineri and Strazzari, 2018). The document mentions the Malta Declaration as its fundamental document, which uses the comprehensive approach to address 'illegal flows into the EU' (European Council 2017a; Molnár and Takács 2021, 204–5).

The next mandate modification to EUBAM Libya came on 17 December 2018. The EU's strategic objective to handle immigration from the south became clearly visible in this mandate. The objective of the mission was to help the Libyan authorities, the GNA at the time of the Council Decision, in the building of state security structures in order to disrupt organized criminal networks involved in smuggling migrants, human trafficking and terrorism in Libya and the Central Mediterranean region (European Council 2018a). The EUBAM was also tasked to provide support in capacity-building in multiple fields, including border management and law enforcement. At the end of 2018, the headquarters of the mission was again in Tripoli (European External Action Service 2018a). General Khalifa Haftar's since failed offensive against Tripoli started in April 2019, just a couple of months after the Council elongated the mission (Molnár and Takács 2021; Molnár, Szászi and Takács 2021, 17–9). The military operation against Tripoli, thus the worsening security environment put the EUBAM Libya in a vulnerable situation at that time. Due to the two-base operational method, the mission staff could switch to work on the second base in Tunis where it still operates at the time of writing (European External Action Service 2021). With the interim government sworn in 15 March 2021, led by Prime Minister Abdelhamid Dbeibah, fresh hope emerges for ending the hostilities in the North African country, which at the time of writ-



ing remains torn between competing external powers and crowded with foreign fighters (Aljazeera 2021). Meanwhile the EUBAM Libya continues to operate and will continue at least until 30 June 2023 (European Council 2021b).

The role of EUBAM Libya seems less prominent in the management of migration since the host nation still faces internal instability. Notwithstanding, the mission can be an important element of externalization, since Libya lies on the southern end of the Central Mediterranean migration route, which has recently been the most used route from Africa to Europe. Given a favourable political environment in the future, the EUBAM can provide the EU with an important bridgehead in Africa. Since Libya traditionally had close relations with EU Member States due to its geographical proximity, it is plausible that, to some extent, the EU can project its security concerns to Libya. This is visible now, even in the name of the operating CSDP mission, which aims at border assistance. Migration was also mentioned in the mandate, which signifies that Libyan authorities are willing to address the question.

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#### *EUCAP Sahel Niger*

The EUCAP Sahel Niger mission was launched in 2012. The decision for this mission was the result of multiple events both in the EU and Africa. First, the European Union created a comprehensive Sahel strategy. Although the strategy was focused on promoting security and development in the region, it also addressed the root causes of migration, including the presence of organised crime and radical groups (European External Action Service n.d.). The death of Qadhafi left Libya in anarchy, which led to significant spill overs affecting even distant countries like Niger (European Council 2012).

The original mandate of the mission was to support Nigerien security actors in the fight against terrorism and organized crime with the development of an integrated, coherent, sustainable human rights-based approach. Among its tasks, the EUCAP Sahel Niger provided both strategic and technical advice and trainings. Initially, the mission had only one base, in Niger's capital, Niamey. While the mandate extension in 2014 did not include major changes to the

[68] mission (European Council 2014a), in 2016, an additional objective was added to control and fight irregular migration and associated criminal activity (European Council 2016a). This element is in accordance both with the EUGS and the proposal to use the CSDP missions and operations as tools to manage migration flows (Biscop and Rehr 2016).

The EUCAP Sahel Niger started to increase its presence, and activity in the Agadez region in 2015, and a field office was established in Agadez in 2016 (European External Action Service 2018b). The creation of a multi-purpose centre in that city was proposed in 2015 in the European Agenda on Migration. This project was clearly proposed to affect irregular migration, since the centre is tasked to give information on local protection and resettlement opportunities. The field office worked in close coordination with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the UNHCR. This multi-purpose centre in Agadez was a pilot project, which led to further assumptions that the EU was planning to set up more centres like this in the Sahel region to track and gain information on migrants' journeys (European Council 2015b).

The EUCAP Sahel Niger's mandate of 2016, in line with the EUGS, included the task of close coordination and information sharing with other EU missions, and regional security organizations in the Sahel (European Council 2016a). In 2017, the EU stated that a regionalization of CSDP missions is needed to be able to support regional security cooperation in the whole G5 Sahel region effectively. The initiative included three ongoing CSDP missions in the Sahel: EUCAP Sahel Niger, EUTM Mali and EUCAP Sahel Mali (European External Action Service 2019b). This regionalization also aimed to include the stabilization of Libya (European Council 2017b). The aim of regionalization was to enable CSDP missions to become an effective tool against irregular migration from West Africa in the framework of a comprehensive and integrated approach. This ambition was reinforced when the EUCAP Sahel Niger needed further mandate elongations in 2018, which were continued to focus on the fight against irregular migration and the reduction of the level of associated crime (European Council 2018b; Lopez 2017, 7–13). In 2019



the CSDP regionalization efforts had been reinforced with adding the task to improve interoperability and support cross-border cooperation between the internal security forces of G5 Sahel (European Council 2019d), and the mandate of the mission was prolonged again in 2020 for two additional years (European Council 2020b).

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The externalization of migration management and projecting securitization to third countries can be assessed as successful in the case of Niger. The EUCAP Sahel Niger experienced a meaningful change when the EU started to push for the utilization of CSDP missions and operation as a tool to manage migration. The task to control and fight irregular migration and associated criminal activity was added in 2016. This is indeed a significant step since the tasks have to be approved by the host nation as well. Thus, in the case of Niger, its geographical proximity did not influence how the country was willing to cooperate with the EU.

*EUTM Mali and EUCAP Sahel Mali*

The European Union deployed two missions to Mali to help Bamako reinforce its security sector and re-establish state authority in the country. The EUTM Mali started in 2013, with the aim to provide training to the Malian Armed Forces (MAF), and to advice on command and control logistical chain and human resources together with educating MAF on human rights and the protection of civilians. The mission had to conduct its tasks in close coordination with other actors in the country, the UN peacekeeping mission, MINUSMA, and ECOWAS (European Council 2013b).

The mission was launched in the framework of Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel, under the comprehensive approach (European Council 2013b). As it was stated before, the EU's Sahel Strategy did not mention migration as a security challenge in the region, but it addressed some of the root causes of migration (radical groups and organised crime). In Mali, the EU set out goals to address fragile governance, violent extremism and radicalization in the Northern regions of the country, and terrorist-linked security threats with the deployment of the EUTM. The mandate of the mission did not include tasks directly linked to the fight against ir-

[70] regular migration, but rather addressed the root causes contributing to it. As it includes training and advising the MAF, this mission is an important measure in the EU's CSDP toolbox to tackle irregular migration. The first mandate also embeds the need for cooperation with the already existing EUCAP Sahel Niger, and also the coordination of the mission's activities with Member States' bilateral actions in Mali and with international and regional actors also present in the region, like the UN, the African Union (AU) and the ECOWAS (European Council 2013b).

The original mandate changed in 2016, when it extended the area of operation of the mission, including the municipalities of Gao and Timbuktu in Northern Mali. A new coordinating partner, the G5 Sahel, also had to be added to the already existing partners (European Council 2016e). Supporting the G5 Sahel Joint Task Force means that the EU is promoting an African homegrown solution to the regional crisis in the Sahel. The African initiative of the G5 Sahel Joint Task Force includes Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania, Mali and Niger. In 2018, the Council of the European Union prolonged the mandate of the EUTM Mali until 2020, stressing more the importance of G5 Sahel, which was promoted to be the beneficiary of the EUTM's training and advising activities together with the MAF (European Council 2018c). This was amended in 2020, when the mission's mandate was extended until 2024, with giving the EUTM the task to provide military assistance to the G5 Sahel Forces, as well as to the national armed forces of the regional formation (European Council 2020c).

The EU decided to launch the EUCAP Sahel Mali in 2014, but the mission formally started in 2015. The youngest EU mission in West Africa is also based on the framework of the EU Sahel Strategy. The objectives and tasks of the civilian mission were to help Malian authorities to restore and maintain law and order through the territory of Mali and improve the efficacy of their hierarchy in close coordination with other UN and EU missions in the area (European Council 2014b).

Besides this, the mandate of the mission includes the obligation to establish contacts among the EU missions in Mali, Niger



and Libya (European Council 2014b). The following mandate extensions reinforced these tasks and obligations, adding just a few changes to the mandate. The inclusion of cooperation with the G5 Sahel group's internal security forces was one of the added elements in 2017, together with delivering support for the implementation of the 2015 Accord for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali (European Council 2017d). [71]

The EUCAP Sahel Mali also contributes to the regionalization of CSDP in the Sahel (European Council 2017d). This was reinforced in 2021, when the new mandate included the need for better coordination with G5 Sahel countries, the reinforcement of G5 Sahel national forces and support information sharing with the group (European Council 2021c). Over time, the EU's commitment to maintain the EUCAP Sahel Mali became obvious from the pledged financial reference amount, which is intended to cover the expenditures of the mission. The sum grew steadily from the beginning of the mission, reaching EUR 26,300,000 between 2016–2017, and skyrocketing to EUR 89,100,000 for the two-year period until 2023 (European Council 2021c). The financing of the three CSDP missions in West Africa shows that, the EU is committed to engaging the Sahel in all possible ways. The EU's actions, however, must be accepted by the host nations, thus limited to mutually agreed interventions. This means that the EU cannot project its security concerns to third states successfully in every case.

In fact, the EU could not include migration in the mandates of the two missions in Mali, since the country did not allow it to be addressed. However, migration is an important aspect in Mali. As most of the West African countries, Mali also has a 3% population mobility rate, and an estimated quarter of its nationals take part in international migration. Mali is both a country of origin, transit and destination and, therefore, important from the EU perspective when considering the migration toolbox (Ministère des Maliens de l'Exterieur 2014). This also means that the country does not want to curb migration in any way, since it is part of Mali's culture and contributes to its economy through remittances. Thus, as the furthest examined region, here the EU no longer insisted on explicitly

mentioning migration in the mandates of the CSDP missions. This is partially because of geographical distance, partly because of the host nation's reluctance to include such aims in the deployed missions' mandates.

[72] Notwithstanding, the EU seeks to use all tools that can contribute to the management of irregular migration in the country such as by providing support for the security sector reform, and stability in Mali.

#### CONCLUSION

The securitization of migration and the tendency to externalize crisis handling and border management as mutually reinforcing processes made military solutions possible for handling migration. This appeared also in the EUGS in 2016, when the EU committed itself to address these challenges, which have both internal and external dimensions, like terrorism or organized crime (European External Action Service 2016a). This commitment shows in the mandates of the CSDP missions, since they are engaged first in counterterrorism and organized crime, with migration a seemingly secondary mandate.

To address migration in the Sahel, the EU uses the framework of both the Valletta Action plan and the European Agenda on Migration (European Council 2017d). The European Agenda on Migration states that migration will be a specific component of the ongoing CSDP missions and operations in Niger and Mali (European Council 2015b). This meant that the EU has officially begun to count on CSDP missions to handle the migration crisis.

CSDP missions gained capital, which shows in the figures of the expenditures of the EUCAP Sahel Mali as well. The financial framework of the mission grew steadily in the period of 2016–2018, and then the growth was either maintained or saw insignificant drops. The securitization of migration initiated a debate about using CSDP missions and operations to respond to irregular migration. At the immediate border of the EU, in the Mediterranean, it became accepted that a military operation the EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia, and from 2020 on, the Operation Irini handles tasks, which could be addressed by the Frontex, or by a civilian CSDP mission.



While the EU has influence across the examined chain of CSDP missions and operations, it is clear from the mandates that geographical distance or proximity has a two-fold impact. In the Mediterranean, Italy had the power to block the EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia from the use of its naval assets, which led to the replacement of the operation with EUNAVFOR MED Operation Irini. This occurrence is an example of how national policy could be Europeanized when it is in close proximity to EU borders. The Italian reluctance manifested in the changed priorities of the tasks of the new operation. In the meantime, Italy is engaged in both Niger and Mali to counter migration, which is a common EU effort in the Sahel region (Ciocca 2019).

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The second impact of geographical distance from the EU's external borders is that the furthest host nations are not necessarily following the EU's lead in addressing irregular migration. For example, in Mali, national authorities did not approve the inclusion of migration related tasks into the mandate of the EU CSDP missions in the country.

Thus, it can be argued that in the closest geographical proximity national policies had an influence on EU policies, including CSDP, with that influence decreasing in farther regions. This research has shown that EU policies had a higher influence on EUBAM Libya and EUCAP Sahel Niger. This is shown in Libya's case in the aim of the mission; while in the case of Niger, a task was agreed to address irregular migration. In the farthest examined country, Mali, the EU had two missions deployed during the time of research, EUTM Mali and EUCAP Sahel Mali. In this case, the EU's influence was not enough to persuade national authorities to agree upon adding a migration related task to the CSDP missions.

Distance influences how the EU can intervene in countries to address irregular migration. In the closest proximity, the influence is greater; however, national policies interfere when using CSDP missions and operations. As a CSDP mission or operation is further away from the EU borders, the host nation gains increasing influence relative to the EU, and its willingness to cooperate with EU policies decreases proportionately with distance.

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