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The EU as a Global Actor: Peace, Security and Conflict**

The implementation of the WSP agenda in the EU's CSDP: The case of the EUCAP Sahel Mali

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Introduction

Gender mainstreaming was introduced for the first time in the EU's legal framework with the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997. The principle aimed to fuel a change in how gender policies were developed and implemented at the EU level. Indeed, the elementary goal was to introduce the gender dimension in all policy areas where the EU had competences (David & Guerrina 2013: 4). However, the implementation and its effectiveness have differed from some policy areas to others (Chappell & Guerrina 2020: 2).

The UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1235) on the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda (WPS Agenda) put forward the framework for the inclusion of the gender factor in the international peace and security field. Thus, the EU, not without delay, embraced the agenda as a guideline for its External Action Service (EEAS) commitments (Guerrina & Wright 2016: 1-3). However, what the EU *says* and what the EU *does* differs in the security and defense realm due to a claimed neutral gender approach in areas such as external affairs, or civilian missions (Guerrina et al. 2018: 1).

Thus, the aim of this paper will be to understand if the EU *does* what it *says* on implementing the WSP agenda in the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) by answering the research question: *To what extent has the EU implemented the WPS Agenda in the EUCAP Sahel Mali civilian crisis management Mission?*. Characterized by its Security Sector Reform nature, the EUCAP Sahel Mali civilian crisis management Mission fits as a typical case to understand if the EU is more functionally than normatively driven, and therefore to assess the role of the WPS Agenda in its implementation.

The first part of the paper will be oriented to develop the literature review that will give us the core elements to understand the content of the analysis. Secondly, the assessment framework will be presented. Finally, the case selected will be analyzed using official documents and secondary sources, which will allow us to draw some conclusions about the research question of the project.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Gendered normative power Europe

The EU's role as a normative actor in international affairs derives from its ability to develop and promote outward-facing policies based on the core foundational norms of the EU (e.g., equality) (Manners 2002). However, feminist scholars agree that the EU has largely failed in promoting gender equality in its external action. Indeed, they go as far as to suggest that the EU's rhetoric about gender only has a go if it does not hinder international negotiations (Guerrina & Wright 2016: 294-295).

Understanding how the EU *is* before understanding how the EU *relates* to others provides the starting point to assess the EU as a gender regime. Chappell & Guerrina (2020: 3) differentiated two kinds of normative actors when analyzing them through gender-sensitive lenses: normative gender actors and gendered normative actors. Whilst the former refers to those that are actively engaged in the promotion of equality principles and mainstreaming; the latter refers to those that use gender narratives with strategic aims.

Gender mainstreaming was understood as a long-term strategy that aimed to put gender perspective focus on the biases, political commitment, and the core norms that the EU deployed, as well as in its external dimension (David & Guerrina 2013: 55). However, when they studied the gender regime of the EEAS, Chappell & Guerrina (2020) concluded that the principle of gender equality and mainstreaming were both missing in the personnel of the institution.

Focusing on the scope of the project, Chappell & Guerrina (ibid: 14-17) concluded that gender mainstreaming was missing in the security and defense policy field. They highlighted three patterns of how the EU misbehaves regarding gender within its institutions. First, gender matters were lacking management support. Second, gender matters were subsumed to human rights aspects, leaving gender mainstreaming devoid of content and "added in as a tick of box exercise" (Chappell & Guerrina 2020: 16). Finally, the authors suggested that the EEAS approach to the WSP agenda was limited to gender equality rather than to its ambitious content based on security, stabilization, and peace.

All this analysis suggested that the EU, and more specifically the EEAS, is a *gendered normative actor* who is reluctant to offer a transformative gender approach to its power

structures that deal with high politics (wrongly understood as a gender-neutral field). Thus, the EU and its foreign affairs institutions lack from *being* a gender regime. This might impact on the ability of the EU to *relate* to others as a *normative gender power.*

2.2 Gender and SSR

Conflict and security are gendered; and, therefore, gender issues are key elements if Security Sector Reform (SSR) missions want to be successful (Gordon et. al 2015: 4). The SSR has potential to transfer and promote a gender equality framework in peacebuilding processes. It is assumed that patriarchal values are predominantly present in this field's institutions that act in fragile, violent, and conflict-ridden post-war context; thus, the promotion of gender norms through the SSR missions turns out to be essential to overcome the existing patterns (Jayasundara-Smits 2021: 87).

Gender mainstreaming in the security sector entails the "process of assessing the positive and negative implications from women and men of any planed action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels" (DCAF n.d.: 5). This paper wants to highlight the nature of gender mainstreaming: being the procedure to achieve the final goal: gender equality (DCAF n.d.: 7). For its correct assessment three different areas of this process have been differentiated: *oversight* (equal protection under the law), *provision* (equal levels of security by understanding the different gender-specific threats faced) and *management* (equal participation in the sector) (DCAF n.d.: 5).

To do so, a gender sensitive SSR needs, in the end, to understand how power relations function, reproduce and reinforce as a consequence of the existing dynamics in the security sector. What is more, SSR needs to acknowledge both that gender is a social construct, and that women are not a homogenous whole. Only this way, with a contextual understanding of the gendered power dynamics, will the process of assessing the positive and negative implications of the security sector and the responses developed after it, address the security concerns of all and manage it through the security sector reform institutions (Gordon et al. 2015: 6-7).

Bringing it down to the topic of the paper, the EU's strategy to guarantee a Gendered Security Sector Reform (GSSR) is based on the UNSCR 1325 and its WSP Agenda, both of which will be explained in the following epigraph.

2.3 WSP Agenda

The UNSCR 1325, and the following resolutions, have defined the content of the WPS Agenda. This international normative framework focuses on the gender-specific impacts of conflict on women and girls, the promotion of women participation in peace and security processes, and the support of women's role as peace builders in the prevention of conflict (True 2016: 307-308). Participation, promotion, and gender mainstreaming are the three pillars of the agenda, and so, they ought to be implemented in the entire peace process, from prevention to peacebuilding operations, together with an organizational change that allows the consecution of the agenda's content (Olsson et al. 2014: 23)

This international framework, at the same time, has had its continuity and development by the so-called National Action Plans (NAP) adopted by states and regional organizations. The EU embraced the WPS agenda as a regulatory framework for its CSDP[1]; and monitoring indicators were developed to assess the implementation of it (Deiana & McDonagh 2018: 6-7). However, once again, the real commitment of the EU's activity to its discourse regarding the WPS agenda has been inconsistent. Some actors go as far as to claim that the reason behind an erratic implementation of the WPS agenda is based on the existing misconception *within* the EU's institution regarding gender neutrality of security and defense issues (ibid: 3-4). The EU has traditionally approached the agenda *softly*, focusing more on elements like gender-balancing, rather than trying to transform how missions are approached, and how gender power structures are built around them *within* and in relation to *others* (ibid: 7).

This paper will try to understand to what extent the WPS Agenda has been implemented in the EUCAP Sahel Mali civilian crisis management mission. The aim is to assess whether the EU *does* what it *says,* and if a transformative gender approach is given and implemented in its external action, more specifically, in its Security Sector Reform missions.

3. Assessment Framework

The implementation of the WPS Agenda in the CSDP will be assessed following the framework that Olsson et al. (2014: 28-31) presented, and that focuses on four different areas: external

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[1] *The Comprehensive Approach on EU implementation of the UNSCR 1325 and 1820 on WPS,* and the *Lessons and Best Practices of Mainstreaming Human Rights and Gender into CSDP Military Operations and Civilian Missions*

integration, external participation, integral integration, internal participation. Through these, the scholars aimed to obtain a deeper knowledge about how EU Gender Policy is put into practice.

The *external work* emphasizes the way that the mission's context is addressed to fulfill the mandate. In the external area the mandate implementation and the cooperation with national actors are key elements for a proper and effective implementation of a gender perspective. On the one hand, the *external integration* (I1) focuses on the interpretation and execution of the mandate, specifically, on the elements concerning gender mainstreaming and gender specific measures. On the other hand, *external participation* (I2) pays attention to the cooperation with national actors, and to how local men and women can contribute to the implementation of the mandate. Those national actors can range from highest national actors (state representatives) to daily participants such as the population and civil society organizations. In this area, women's organizations should have a central role in gender mainstreaming and gender specific measures cooperation and monitoring.

The *internal work* put the spotlight on the mission organization – an organization that should ensure gender integration and participation of both male and female personnel. As already explained in this paper, gender mainstreaming must take place *within* the organization to successfully implement it when relating to *others. Internal integration (*I3) refers to the work structure of a mission, in terms of organizational and personal capacity. The *internal participation (*I4), instead, touches on participation of mission personnel. Accurately, this area responds to how the personnel are recruited (*gender balancing* and place of work) and how they perform their tasks (potential problems of discrimination). Thus, the implementation of Standards of Behavior within the institutional employers and towards the host population are assessed.

The following Figure aims to summarize the assessment framework that will be used in this paper.

Figure 1:

	Integration: How is gender mainstream and specific measures used?	**Participation:** How do men and women take part in the work?
External: How is the context address to implement the mandate?	I1: *Mandate implementation.*	I2: *National Actors.*
Internal: How is the organization's work coordinated?	I3: *Work Structure of the Mission.*	I4: *Mission Personnel*

(Olsson et al. 2014: 28)

4. Implementation of the WPS Agenda in the CSDP: the EUCAP Sahel Mali

4.1 EU Capacity Building Mission in Mali (EUCAP Sahel Mali): an overview

The EUCAP Sahel Mali is a civilian crisis management mission. This non-executive mission was launched in 2015 with the objective of assisting the internal security forces of Mali that were struggling to maintain authority over its soil after the 'Northern Mali Crisis' in 2012 (EEAS 2022: 70). The European Council has renewed the mandate in 2017, 2019 and 2021, respectively, with the aim of continuing the security sector reform by giving "strategic advice, training and *accompagnement* to the Malian Police, Gendarmerie and National Guard and the relevant ministries" (idem). Moreover, the promotion of human rights, gender equality, and accountability are embedded in the SSR to guarantee the creation of sustainable conditions that enable the disposition of essential services and state authorities around the state (idem). However, the missions have worryingly proved the tendency to move towards a more functional approach of the missions, leaving the normative commitment aside (Jayasundara-Smits 2018: 238).

The New Mandate 2021-2023 has three operation lines: support to structural capacities, strengthening of operational capacities and strengthening of ethical standards of the internal security forces (EEAS 2022). Notwithstanding, and due to the worsening situation in the

region[2], the EU has temporarily suspended the formation provisions to the Malian armed forces and national guards, to prevent any reputational risk of the EU's defense and security missions (Council Decision 2022: 4). The EU's presence in Mali will be maintained with the spotlight of its activity on strategic advice and education.

Apart from that, several authors have suggested that the historically and contextually rooted societal attitudes towards gender norms and power relations have hindered the implementation of the WSP Agenda within Mali's mission (Jayasundara-Smits 2021: 98). Now, the assessment framework will be used for the analysis of the WSP Agenda's implementation in the EUCAP Sahel Mali mission.

4.2 External Integration: Mandate Implementation

Regarding the formulation and interpretation of mandate assignments, the Council Decision adopted in 2022 reveals an imbalance between the normative and technical elements. This decision operates now, as the guideline for the execution of the mission, and despite the declared commitment with the WSP Agenda, its evolution reveals disparities between that promise and the content. These disparities already have been highlighted by several authors in previous EUCAP mission mandates.

One of the WSP Agenda's pillars is gender mainstreaming, meaning, in this case, that the field operations need to include the gender component. However, when analyzing the documents, a disassociation between technical and normative elements is evident. Gender issues are relegated to the same box as human rights and are only addressed as educational matters. What is more, gender is conceptualized as an abstract, and not as a social construct where locals could have been considered as legitimate actors to, as Jayasundara-Smit (2018: 243) suggests, "renegotiate or co-invent new norms that are acceptable, meaningful and implementable in the local context".

Concerning the execution of assignment, the EUCAP mission fails to implement the WSP Agenda. Instead, the existing institutional and historical patriarchal gender norms and roles are reproduced and reinforced. Local men participate in the SSR activities concerned with training

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[2] Allegations of Human Rights violations and International Humanitarian Law have been reported committed by the terrorist groups acting in the region, as well as, by the Malian armed forces with the Russian-affiliated forces support.

or combat, whereas local women are completely absent in these activities. Their presence is more notorious in activities related to human rights-related training or civil society tasks. This differentiated engagement of local men and women in the tasks related to the SSR strengths the framings of "protector masculinity" and "women as passive subjects" that the WSP Agenda wants to overcome.

Any peacebuilding operation, and particularly, any SSR mission in the promotion of gender equality should address the existing power structures that have sustained the passive and victim role of the women in conflict. The EU in the EUCAP Sahel Mali mission has failed to do so (Jayasundara-Smits 2021: 98-99, 103).

4.3. External Participation: National Actors

The EU's discursive aims over the EUCAP mission were bound to the principle of inclusivity: the maximization of local engagement in the SSR process. However, the reality has turned out to be different. The role of civil society in the planning and normative field of the mission, a reality in the documents, has not taken place, and their activities have been limited to supportive ones. What is more, some local actors have been excluded from the process. Indeed, some authors go as far as to say that the principle of inclusivity and the local demands and needs have been subordinate to the EU's security agenda and its interest (Jayasundara-Smits 2018: 240).

Therefore, following the assessment framework, a top-down approach has been opted by the EU where local elites have been reinforced by leaving local communities as mere recipients of the process.

4.4 Internal Integration: Work Structure

Regarding how the EUCAP Sahel Mali has worked to ensure the implementation of gender mainstreaming and gender-based measures, several elements need to be borne in mind.

On the one hand, this work should be supported by the presence of the gender adviser. However, it seems that this task is being carried out by a Human Rights Advisor. This follows the traditional misconception of the EU that CSDP missions should have either a human rights or gender advisor, which voids the importance of gender expertise for the development and implementation of key objectives (Chappell & Guerrina 2020: p.14).

On the other hand, the inclusion of gender as a topic training for the personnel has been beneficial for a more gender-aware working environment (Olsson et al. 2014: 35). The EU Gender Action Plan (GAP III), in that sense, gathers the necessity of mandatory training on gender equality and implementation of the GAP III to the CSDP missions' staff. Together with that, annual monitoring of the GAP III implementation by the missions should be held according to the indicators developed by the Commission (European Commission 2020: 21-22). This pledge, if it takes place, is relevant for the internal integration of the WSP Agenda as it facilitates gender disaggregated information and brings gender awareness to the analysis of the mission (Olsson et al. 2014: 35).

4.5 Internal Participation: Mission Personnel

EU's commitment to a gendered-balance participation in the CSDP missions, and to promote women engagement, has been included in several regulatory frameworks[3] with the goal of reaching a proportion of at least 40% of women in the international personnel of civilian CSDP missions by 2024 (SIPRI 2022: 6).

When looking at the numbers of the EUCAP Sahel Mali, 31 women are on the mission, representing 20% of the personnel. Far from the objective determined by the EU, it is remarkable that there has been an increment compared to the previous data. This could prove a shift *within* the EU CSDP missions and operations, which have overall, suffer an increasing participation from women (idem).

However, the truth is that the reality of the EU's external action personnel, and even more, in the military structures, is far from the ideational power that some EU practitioners try to portray. It is important to remember that internal participation is a pillar for the WSP Agenda (Olsson et al. 2014: 22). Thus, the data presenting is concerning as, in the end, the lack of female participants can undermine the inclusion of gender mainstreaming in the CSDP missions (Chappell & Guerrina 2020: 14).

On the other hand, regarding the Standards of Behavior that try to avoid discrimination practices within and outside the EU institutions, the regulatory framework is established in the *Upgrading Generic Standards of Behavior for CSDP Missions and Operations*. The Political and Security

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[3] Civilian CSDP Compact; Strategy and Action Plan to Enhance Women's participation in Civilian CSDP Missions.

Committee pledged the standards of behavior to the European Union's commitment to the WPS Agenda, including the supervisory and disciplinary matters.

The documents highlight the importance of the application of the framework by the professionals of CSDP missions between them, and when relating with the host population. What is more, some paragraphs are orientated towards gender issues, such as, the zero tolerance to sexual exploitation and abuse or the zero tolerance to harassment, sexual harassment, and gender-based violence (Council of the EU 2018). This evidences the EU's commitment to protect women in situations of armed conflict, a pillar of the WSP Agenda.

Conclusion

To what extent has the EU implemented the WPS Agenda in the EUCAP Sahel Mali civilian crisis management Mission? Answering this research question was the aim of this paper. The literature review has given some hints of what the possible answers to it were: the EU in its external action has implemented the WPS Agenda in a rather limited way when it comes to its security and defense policies and actions.

The case study has proven that affirmation. The inclusion of the WPS Agenda in the EUCAP Sahel Mali mission has been limited. The discursive promises of the EU's commitment to the agenda and its content have not had its translation into reality. Participation, protection, and gender mainstreaming are the three pillars of the agenda, and the analysis has demonstrated that the application could be more ambitious both *within* and *outside* the institutions. Instead of a transformative approach to gender issues in its missions, it seems that the EU advocates for a low-key performance and advocacy that enables the consecution of the functional and, one could say, *real* objectives that the EU has. Coming back to the literature review, the analysis proves the conclusion made by Guerrina & Chappell (2020), the EU is a *gendered normative actor,* voiding the ideal power metanarrative that some authors have tried to suggest.

However, with this approach, what the EU is not considering is that not dealing with the gendered power structures that had led to the current situation of women as a victim, and their limited role as actors, does nothing but perpetuate the dynamics that exist in the conflict; and, indeed, hinders its activity in these missions. Thus, as the agenda has emphasized, approaching gender, in this case, in security sector reforms, entails its consideration as a transversal element, and not as a pick and choose one.

The EU should reconsider why the advocacy of gender mainstreaming has been so effective in some policy areas, and so limited in others such as the external action. The erratic and contradictory attitude of the EU regarding gender can be used as a political tool by its counterparts to delegitimize its normative discursiveness. In the end, why should the rest *follow* what the EU *says* if the EU fails to *do* so?

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