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Fair Winds and Following Seas: Gender and Race Constructions by the European Union's Military Naval Missions Operation Sophia and Operation Irini

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Abstract

The European Union (EU) deploys European Union Naval Force missions in the Mediterranean Sea (EUNAVFOR MED), to implement the United Nations' (UN) arms embargo on Libya. Until 2020, Operation Sophia, and currently Operation Irini; these missions shape the EU's border security practices. Border security practices are vulnerable for gender and race inequalities, because of the sensitive contexts in which these border missions find themselves. Hence, it is important to assess how gender and race are portrayed in the EUNAVFOR MED missions.

By bringing together feminist and postcolonial critical scholarship on border protection, Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), and migration, a feminist postcolonial conceptual framework is formed through which gender and race constructions in the EUNAVFOR MED missions can be identified. The conceptual framework consists of four frames: (1) White masculine protector, (2) White masculine saviour, (3) Feminine and racialised victim, and (4) Masculine and racialised threat. Through a method of frame analysis, both linguistically and visually, of the Facebook and Twitter pages and policy documents of both missions, the following is argued about the portrayal of gender and race by the EUNAVFOR MED missions.

First, regarding gender, both naval missions uphold stereotypical representations of multiple masculinities, such as protector, military, combat, and hegemonic masculinity. Hereby, the mission itself and its employees are masculinised. On the other hand, femininities are marginalised, portrayed as vulnerable, dependent, or put in a 'care giver' role. This shows that the EUNAVFOR MED missions portray gender through stereotypical gender roles and binaries, that are embedded in both missions. Second, the construction of race by the two missions is characterised by a sense of white racial and western superiority versus the non-white and non-western 'Other'. These Orientalist biases can be found in the tendencies of 'civilising' the Other, and the framing of the Other as a threat to the EU. These racial representations originate from the colonial legacies of the EU member states.

The findings reveal that gender and race inform the EU's politics of its Mediterranean naval military missions. Subsequently, this reproduces internal and external power relations and hierarchies, which, hence, falsely legitimises gender and race discriminations and human rights abuses on the EU's border.

List of Abbreviations

CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
EEAS	European External Action Service
EU	European Union
EUNAVFOR MED	European Naval Force Mediterranean
GAPIII	Global Action Plan III
HR	High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IR	International Relations
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
PSC	Political and Security Committee
SAR activity	Search and Rescue activity
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
UN	United Nations
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UNSML	United Nations Support Mission in Libya
WPS Agenda	Women, Pace and Security Agenda

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Introduction

On Tuesday 11 April 2023, the Italian government announced a six-month state of emergency in response to a significant increase of migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea from North Africa to the European Union (EU) (Kirby & Davies, 2023). These migrants especially use the Central Mediterranean route from Libya and Tunisia, according to Frontex, the EU's Border and Coast Guard Agency. This recent increase of migrants is due to a persisting weak economy, security fears, and corruption in Libya, and racist and xenophobic remarks towards Sub-Saharan African migrants, by Tunisian President Kais Saied (Parker, 2023; d'Emilio, 2023). Thereby, migrants are pushed towards Europe, resulting a tripling of the number of migrants trying to reach the EU compared to 2022 (Kirby & Davies, 2023). The United Nation's (UN) Migration Agency has decried the first quarter of 2023 as the deadliest since 2017. Making the Central Mediterranean the world's deadliest known migration route (Missing Migrant Project, 2023).

The number of migrants arriving in Europe dropped in mid-2017, after a peak number arrived at the EU's borders in the so-called 'migration crisis' in 2015-2016. According to the UN Migration Agency, this drop in migrant arrivals can be attributed to an increase in the number of interceptions of migrants at sea. This means that migrants are returned to North African countries by maritime patrol vessels from the EU, and by coast guards of North African authorities (Missing Migrant Project, 2023). One of the EU's contributions to these interceptions was the EU's European Naval Force Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED), Operation Sophia. This mission was purposively involved in the rescue and interception of migrants at the Mediterranean Sea, from 2015 until 2020. In addition, the mission trained the Libyan Coast Guard and Navy in law enforcement at sea, interceptions, and protection of their borders (EUNAVFOR MED SOPHIA, 2017; Cusumano, 2019: 8). The successor mission of Operation Sophia is EUNAVFOR MED Operation Irini. This military naval mission currently aims to promote peace in the so-called European southern neighbourhood and the Mediterranean region (EUNAVFOR MED IRINI, 2021). Even though the migrant-caused pressure on the EU's borders clearly has not disappeared in the last years, mission Irini has no migrant rescue and interception mandate. However, the mission is indirectly linked to migration because the EU views the political stabilisation of Libya as a precondition to stop the migration flow to Europe.

The above illustrates that the context in which migrants try to cross the Mediterranean is difficult. As such, both EUNAVFOR MED missions also operate in a sensitive context, as migrants from various backgrounds and experiences, and with different sexes, races, religions, and origins try to

reach the EU. The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) defines how the EU's external action missions should act accordingly. External actions conducted by the EUNAVFOR MED missions, *'shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own [the EU's] creation'* (TFEU, 2016: Title V, Chapter 1, article 21.1). One of these foundational principles is human rights, which are protected by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. According to the Treaty these human rights cover *'the right to be free from discrimination on the basis of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation'* (European Commission, no date). This means that the mandates of the EUNAVFOR MED missions, must be executed according to the EU's principle of human rights.

In this thesis, the focus will lie on the portrayal of gender and race by the EUNAVFOR MED missions. These missions shape the EU's border security practices, and as gender and race can legitimise these border practices, the concepts are thus linked to the consequences of the EU's border security (Everson & Vos, 2021: 318). This makes it important to look at how gender and race are portrayed by the naval missions. A feminist postcolonial theory will be used to analyse how the missions portray gender and race, both internally and externally. This theory is suitable, because it combines gender, race, sexuality, religion, and class to look at cases concerning international politics (Sunder Rajan & Park, 2000: 54). In addition, it is important to investigate gender and race in the EUNAVFOR MED missions, as values concerning gender and race are foundational to the EU. An in-depth insight into the two concepts, can contribute to a more inclusive Union overall, and does not merely react to the symptoms, but also helps addressing the core systems and causes of embedded power hierarchies. Henceforth, gender and race constructions are directly linked to the value-based and normative legitimacy of the external and internal ambitions of the EU. Furthermore, it is important to gain an in-depth understanding of the workings of Operation Irini and Operation Sophia from a feminist postcolonial perspective. Since the EU still encounters internal and external pressure on its migration policy. The main research question posed in this thesis is therefore the following:

> *'How are gender and race portrayed in the EUNAVFOR MED missions Operation Sophia and Operation Irini?'*

Both EUNAVFOR MED missions fall under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) of the EU. Hence, the missions are involved in the border security of the Union. Security and border politics is structured on and influenced by gender and race inequalities. This can have severe consequences on migrants and on employees of the CSDP mission. Many postcolonial and feminist

scholars have researched the effects of gender and race inequalities on migrants (Bosworth, Fili & Pickering, 2017; Carrera & Hernanz, 2015; Every & Augoustinos, 2007; Andrijasevic, 2010). Other scholars used a postcolonial and/or feminist lens, to look at the consequences of gender and race inequalities on the employees of the CSDP missions internally (Hoijtink & Muehlenhoff, 2020; Kronsell, 2016a; Haastrup, Wright & Guerrina, 2019; Guerrina, Chappell & Wright, 2018; Chappell & Guerrina, 2020). These scholarships have so far not studied a combination of internal and external gender and race constructions. By assessing gender and race based on a combination of the EUNAVFOR MED mission's internal and external activities, this gap in the literature is filled. Furthermore, feminist and/or postcolonial theories have been applied to multiple other cases concerning the EU, the CSDP, border security, and migration. Such as, to the CSDP in the context of crisis (Hoijtink & Muehlenhoff, 2020; Sachseder, Stachowitsch & Binder, 2022; Allwood, 2020), in the context of migration (Moffette & Vadasaria, 2016; Bilgin, 2020; Pruitt, Berents & Munro, 2018), and in the context of the EU's borders and Frontex (Pallister-Wilkins, 2015; Paul, 2017; Horii, 2016; Sachseder, Stachowitsch & Binder, 2022). However, individual EU naval military missions under the banner of the CSDP are not yet researched from a feminist postcolonial perspective. Such is the case, even though both EUNAVFOR MED missions play an important role and manoeuvre in circumstances concerning migration, the EU's borders, and security and defence.

A critical lens has been applied to Operation Sophia, in the research of Riddervold (2018) and Cusumano (2019). They examine whether the mission can be deemed a humanitarian actor in the EU's border regime. Even though these studies tie in with a critical perspective, the concepts of gender and race, or a specific feminist or postcolonial lens, cannot be attributed to these works. Additionally, critical research in the case of Operation Irini is lacking. Furthermore, research on the differences between the two missions and the subsequent effects from feminist postcolonial theory, has not been conducted. Both missions have sporadically been compared. Alagna (2020) and Pricopi (2020) do compare the two missions, but only focus on the institutional differences. They do not make a comparison from a feminist and postcolonial lens, and certainly do not focus on the concepts of gender and race. Therefore, by using a feminist postcolonial perspective and focussing on gender and race in both EUNAVFOR MED missions, this thesis aims to address these deficiencies in the existing literature.

This thesis proceeds as follows. The first part reviews the introduction of feminism into the field of international relations and how this evolved into feminist postcolonial theory. This section is also complemented by an overview of the EU's equality strategy for gender equality and non-

discrimination. The next chapter outlines a feminist postcolonial framework on gender and race, based on a combination of feminist and postcolonial critiques on the EU's CSDP. This framework will be applied to the analysis that is conducted in the empirical analysis chapter. The third chapter gives an inside into the methodology of the thesis. Consecutively, this includes the frame analysis method that is used, the case study justification, the data selection, and the limitations and strengths of the used methodology. The fourth chapter presents a contextual background of both EUNAVFOR MED missions. Finally, the last chapter utilises a frame analysis method to analyse how gender and race are portrayed in the EUNAVFOR MED missions. Findings of the analysis are then immediately linked to the conceptual framework given in chapter two. The conclusion provides a summary of the findings of the empirical analysis. Additionally, final remarks relating to the main research question, the sub-questions, and the used theories, are drawn.

2. Literature Review

In this thesis, feminist postcolonial theory is used to approach the EU's EUNAVFOR MED missions. This theory will explain and help understand the interrelationship between gender, race, and both missions. To be able to do so clearly, this chapter outlines all relevant concepts, theories, and assumptions that are foundational to feminist postcolonial theory. First, the chapter gives a historical account of the development of feminism and how it was introduced into the field of international relations (IR). Second, critiques on feminist theory in IR lead to the development of feminist postcolonial theory, demonstrating its foundational concepts and epistemologies. Third and finally, the chapter focusses on how the EU considers the notions of gender and race in its domestic and foreign policies. Attention will be given to the concepts of non-discrimination, and the equality between women and men.

2.1: From Feminist Theory to Feminist Postcolonial Theory
2.1.1: Feminism in International Relations: Origin, Theory, and Concepts
Feminism as a socio-political ideology and movement, has the aim to establish equality of the sexes on economic, personal, political, and social grounds. Many consider Mary Wollstonecraft as the founder of feminism because of her book *'Vindication of the Rights of Women'*, published in 1792. In this book, released during the Enlightenment, she argued that women and men needed equal rights (Wollstonecraft, 1792). Additionally, feminists in the 19th and 20th century critiqued women's 'traditional' roles in social, economic, personal, and political life. Just as Wollstonecraft, they also committed their work to legal equality between men and women (Sjoberg, 2016: 144). Today, in the 21st century, women still fight for their rights and aim to achieve gender equality.

The socio-political movement of feminism existed far before feminism was introduced into the scholarly field of IR. Compared to the socio-political feminist movement, the introduction of feminism into IR happened relatively late, in the 1980's. With the 1980's being a time of great uncertainty and dissatisfaction on the international political stage, and a new world order looming around the corner, the emergence of feminist theory was not coincidental. The Cold War and the nuclear threat were part of the pinnacle of 'high' power politics, and feminist scholars aimed to expose the underlying aspects of these gender-based powers and securities. In addition, the end of the Cold War opened a space for more critical IR theories that questioned the existing 'classic' theories of IR (Basu, 2011: 112). In 1989, the Millennium – Journal of International Relations published a special issue fully focussed on '*Women in International Relations'*. Nowadays, that publication is marked as the beginning of feminist approaches in IR. In this issue, Sarah Brown

(1988) argued that until then women had been absent from IR, in both theorising about IR as in participating in IR in practice, and that the only way to overcome this silence was to 'bring women in' (ibid: 462).

Cynthia Enloe, one of the pioneers in the field of feminist IR, published her book '*Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International politics*', a year later. In this book, she shows that women have been subordinated to men in numerous ways within the world system. She argues that, even though women were present in IR, they always played an undervalued and subordinate role in the geopolitical system. In Enloe's portrait, men drive the great globalizing forces in international politics and are the leaders of international and multinational organisations. Women only play demeaning supporting roles in the background (Enloe, 1989). Another leading feminist scholar, Ann Tickner, supplemented Enloe's argument a few years later, with her book '*Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security*' (Tickner, 1992). The book focused on the role of gender in global security issues and aimed to introduce gender as a category of analysis in the field of IR. Hitherto, IR based its explanations and assumptions about world affairs almost entirely on the experiences and activities of men (Tickner, 1992: 6).

It is important to note that feminist IR theory does not only focuses on the position of women in the international political system. The theory also attributes a lot of attention to the creation of masculinities. Feminist scholars reason that the main theories of IR look at world affairs from a male perspective, and that these theories are also 'invented' by male IR scholars. Additionally, actions, experiences and ideas in IR are based on males, even though women experience the world in a completely different way. Males are seen as the starting point, the status quo, of IR thinking and theorising (Enloe, 2004: 1-3). Furthermore, the core IR concepts that are employed in the field, such as security, state, power, and war, are intrinsically gendered. Feminist theory does not disregard the importance of researching these core concepts in IR. However, they want to showcase that gender can be found everywhere, so also in these concepts (Ackerly & True, 2006: 243-46). Therefore, the fact that IR, states, and world affairs are based on gendered structures of domination and interaction, lies at the core of feminist IR. Feminist scholars emphasise that, social, economic, and political systems are all structurally unequal, and that the male-dominated world of IR is closed off from alternative views of world affairs. They strive to expose and open up these gender-based biases, that are permeated into the traditional IR theories of anarchical, interstate power politics (Grieco, Ikenberry & Mastanduno, 2019: 105-6). By breaking down the gendered character of IR, the field of IR and world affairs can become more open to wider social and international views

and debates. This includes views and standpoints from marginalised actors that would otherwise not be heard (Weldon, 2006: 76). Muehlenhoff (2021) describes the concern of feminist IR scholars as, 'making the invisible visible' (ibid: 128).

2.1.2: How to get to Feminist Postcolonial Theory
One of the main critiques of feminist theory in IR, comes from postcolonial theorists. They argue that feminist IR theory mainly relies on the views of white western femininity (Shepherd, 2013: 438). Not only white and western feminist activists were and are active in women's movements. 'Third World, black and queer feminists' play an equally important role in the fight for equal rights (Basu, 2013: 455). However, according to the critique, feminist theory generalises the western feminist women's experience as 'universal'. Western feminist theory assumes that 'sisterhood is global', and the experiences and concerns by western white feminists are the experiences and concerns of women all over the world (Lewis & Mills, 2003: 4; Jones, 2011: 33). However, this universal woman does not exist. For example, the sexual liberation and self-determination goals of liberal western feminists in the 1960s, were not widely accepted by feminists in other parts of the world, such as by Muslim feminists (Lewis & Mills, 2003: 4). Subsequently, in the 1970s and 1980s black, queer and Third World feminists challenged liberal, western, and white feminists to rethink their oversimplified and overgeneralised white concerns and assumptions. They argued that there existed a tendency to homogenise the 'Third World', without recognising the differences in cultures and ethnicities around the world (Wibben, 2011: 594; Ali, 2007: 194).

The same universalising tendencies are produced by feminist IR scholars. Some discourses produced by feminist IR scholars still portray 'Third World' women as powerless, victims of non-neoliberal socio-economic systems, who are backwards and oppressed (Al-Wazedi, 2021: 159; Mohanty, 1991: 51). Women are portrayed as 'the Other' and are often objectified and marginalized. By perceiving the 'Third World woman' as this singular subject, despite differences in class, race, and ethnicity, a notion of patriarchy is implied. Power is exercised through these white western feminist theories (Mohanty, 1991: 52; Sandoval, 2003: 84). This diametrically opposes to the core idea of feminist IR theory, to deconstruct power relations and give voices to the unheard.

Aside from the homogenisation of women as the subject of research, the geographical origin of female researchers and feminist research in the field of feminist IR, is for the most part western. This can be illustrated by the geographical distribution of the 'Centres of Excellence' on the United Nations' Women, Peace and Security Agenda, an important research subject for feminist IR

scholars. Almost all these centres are based at universities located in the Global North, and not in other parts of the world. It shows that western feminists' expertise dominates the research field without looking at the expertise elsewhere. Hence, normative whiteness predominates the debate and research field of feminist IR (Haastrup & Hagen, 2021: 29).

To solve the domination of white western feminist thought, multiple scholars started adding postcolonial theory to liberal western feminist theory in IR. One of the first theorists to combine postcolonial and feminist theories, was Gayatri Spivak with her essay *'Can the Subaltern Speak'* (1992). In this essay she encourages liberal western feminist scholars to challenge their own knowledge, to oppose their own ignorance about other parts of the world, and to learn about the situations of women in other non-western countries. Furthermore, feminist theorist Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) argues that feminist IR scholars need to realise that gender is always racialised. There exists a colonial hierarchy of race and gender, where white western males are on the top, and native non-western females are on the bottom. These gendered and racialised hierarchies are for a large part cemented during colonialism. In line with the research by Spivak (1992) and Mohanty (2003), Wibben (2011) urges to transform feminist IR theory to become 'anti-imperialist' (ibid: 594).

Both postcolonial and feminist theory complement each other well, since they are concerned with the same epistemological foundational mission: dissect notions of Eurocentric modernity, break down imbalanced relationships of power, and to decentre the binary between the 'West' and the 'Rest' (Ali, 2007: 199; Sunder Rajan & Park, 2000: 65). A combination of both feminist theory and postcolonial theory, forms two 'different' theories: postcolonial feminism and feminist postcolonialism. Even though the difference between both theories is negligible, the starting point of research can provide an explanation. It is argued that feminist postcolonialism starts, as feminist scholars add race to their feminist research (Ali, 2007: 201). Postcolonial feminist research, on the other hand, starts as postcolonial research and then adds the notion of gender (Sunder Rajan & Park, 2000: 65). The indistinct difference between the two theories, however, makes that both theories are often used interchangeably. Because is there a difference between talking about feminist scholars who draw upon postcolonial theory, or postcolonial theorists who draw upon feminist theory? If it even makes a difference at all? Many scholars concerned with feminism and postcolonialism have even switched back and forth between the two theories. Hall (1992a) can be considered a postcolonial theorist, but she also incorporates feminism in her research, and therefore could be classified as a feminist postcolonial theorist as well. The same applies for Ware (1992), Spivak (1985; 1992), and Mohanty (1991; 2003), all three scholars who classify themselves as

postcolonial theorists, yet edited in the collection of articles in the book *'Feminist Postcolonial Theory'*, by Lewis and Mills (2003).

In order to make the argument clear, in this thesis the term feminist postcolonial theory is used. This adheres to the definition and theory used by Lewis and Mills (2003) in their book *'Feminist Postcolonial Theory'*. The theory brings together the feminist critique of universal male experiences, and the postcolonial critique of universal white experiences. This translates into two aspirations for feminist postcolonial scholars. First, they aim to include feminist concerns of gender into postcolonial theory. Second, they want to racialise mainstream feminist theory. As such, the theory persists on combining the specificities of gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, and nationality, all together in one theory (Lewis & Mills, 2003: 3).

2.2: Gender and Race in EU Policy Initiatives

For the purpose of studying how gender and race are portrayed in EUNAVFOR MED missions, it is important to assess how the EU itself looks at gender and race, both in its domestic and foreign policy initiatives.

According to the European institutions, equality is part of the European project and foundational to the norms of the EU. Equality, chapter 3 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, includes the equality between women and men (gender), and non-discrimination (race). The principle of equal rights between man and women, was added in the Treaty of Rome in 1957, and reinforced in the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997 (Wright & Guerrina, 2020: 329; Monaghan, 2015: 418). The principle of non-discrimination was also incorporated into the Treaty of Rome. However, this only meant discrimination connected to nationality. After a lot of lobbying in the European Parliament in the 1980s and the 1990s, non-discrimination as we know it today, *'any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, sexual orientation, and ethnic or social origin'* (CFREU, 2012: Title III, Chapter 3, article 21), was included in the Treaty of Amsterdam (Monaghan, 2015: 422; European Commission, 2023a).

The EU focuses on promoting non-discrimination and gender equality internally, and in its external policies. Foundational to the promotion of equal gender rights, is the principle of gender mainstreaming. The European External Action Service defines gender mainstreaming as, *'making sure that gender is integrated as a reflex in all our policy documents, position papers, decisions, and Council conclusions'* (EEAS, 2022). Hence, all EU policies, internally and externally, should contribute to the equality of men and women. Furthermore, regarding internal policy, the Gender

Equality Strategy of 2020-2025 introduces objectives *'towards a gender-equal Europe'* by 2025 (European Commission, 2023b). The Union also internally implements the Racial Equality Directive, which is aimed at equal treatment between people irrespective of their ethnic or racial origin (European Commission, 2021).

There are also several ways in which the EU focuses on gender equality and non-discrimination in its external policies. First and foremost, the EU's Gender Action Plan III (GAP III) promotes gender equality externally and address all *'intersecting dimensions of discrimination […] indigenous peoples and persons belonging to racial, ethnic, and religious minorities'* (EEAS, 2020). The GAP III obligates the Union to include gender and non-discrimination into all its external action. This includes the EU's CSDP, which the EUNAVFOR MED missions are part of (EEAS, 2022; Muehlenhoff, 2021: 129). Furthermore, the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPS Agenda) by the UN, is also *'at the heart of the European Union's foreign policy'* (European Commission, 2022). Foundational to this WPS Agenda, is the full involvement of women of all backgrounds in peace processes, and in prevention of conflict (Haastrup, Wright & Guerrina, 2019: 66). Lastly, regarding non-discrimination, the EU has released a document with the *"EU guidelines on non-discrimination in external action"* (Council of the European Union, 2019). In this document the EU proposes several guidelines addressing discrimination through, for example, *'Development Cooperation, Humanitarian Assistance, and Multilateral cooperation'* (Council of the European Union, 2019: 2). These tools will be used within the context of the CSDP, including its missions in third countries. The document stipulates that *'missions in third countries, should be equipped with information on non-discrimination'* (Council of the European Union, 2019: 25). Altogether, the EU's domestic policies and foreign policies must cohere to the principles of non-discrimination and gender equality, as stipulated in the abovementioned documents.

2.2.1: Feminist and Postcolonial Critiques on the EU's Equality Strategy
The EU's strategy towards gender equality and non-discrimination can be criticised from a feminist and postcolonial perspective. To start, the EU (re)produces a narrow understanding of gender equality, by basing its gender mainstreaming concept on the gender binary of men and women, excluding all other gender identities. Only equality between men and women is seen as the goal, other genders are excluded (Muehlenhoff, 2017: 159). Secondly, the WPS Agenda plays a central role in EU foreign policy. The WPS Agenda was adopted by the UN in 2000, but the EU was relatively late in implementing it (UN, 2023). It was not until earlier 2016, when the EU updated its foreign policy framework with the EU Global Strategy, when the EU made the full commitment to integrate gender into its foreign policy (Haastrup, Wright & Guerrina, 2019: 66-7). For a Union

that already included the principle of equality between genders in the Treaty of Rome in 1957, the implementation of gender equality in 2016 was long overdue. Furthermore, regardless of the WPS Agenda aiming at the full involvement of women of all backgrounds, in practice there is still an absence of black, non-western or LGBTQI+ people within the Agenda. This means that the interests of these people are also not included into the objectives of the WPS Agenda. This forms a divide between the implementers of the WPS Agenda, mainly countries from the Global North, and the countries in conflict mostly in the Global South, where the agenda is implemented (Henry, 2021: 24; Haastrup & Hagen, 2021: 27). Third, in the WPS Agenda, much attention is paid to the woman as a peacemaker. Consequently, the EU views women as better peacemakers than men. Hence, the notion of gender and women in the EU's equality strategy, is added to contribute to the effectiveness of the CSDP missions. Gender equality is hereby not seen as the end goal (Debusscher, 2011: 40; Carpenter, 2005: 306).

Fourth, the promotion of gender equality is viewed by the EU as essential to achieve democratisation and economic growth. This narrow conceptualisation of gender equality sees women as solely an economic actor and reflects on racialised assumptions of global capital (Muehlenhoff, 2021: 126; Martin de Almagro & Ryan, 2019: 8). The conceptualisation of women as economic actors is taken even further. According to the EU, gender equality can be achieved by the 'empowerment of women', through the GAP III (EEAS, 2020). However, the concept of empowerment displays unequal power relations between the one who is empowering and the one who is empowered. Since the EU assumes that women need to be empowered, they are seen as powerless, whereby subordination is ingrained. Additionally, the one who empowers transfers specific ideas and concepts of empowerment to the individual that needs to be empowered. These ideas include western and masculine ideas of empowerment. For example, the conceptualisation of women as neoliberal economic actors, as a prerequisite for gender equality. The EU's call for economic empowerment of women, therefore, does not consider the gendered and racialised power hierarchies that come with these neoliberal economic reforms (Martin de Almagro & Ryan, 2019: 5,9; Muehlenhoff, 2021: 129). Another example of western and masculine conceptualisation of women's empowerment in the EU's equality strategy, is the idea of women as military actors. This means that for women not to be a victim in conflict, they need to be empowered. In other words, they need to be masculinised (Muehlenhoff, 2017: 155).

In the end, the EU is promoting gender equality and non-discrimination through its domestic and foreign policy initiatives. However, according to feminist and postcolonial theorists, in the way it is promoting them, the Union maintains gendered and racialised hierarchies.

3. Theoretical Framework: Feminist and Postcolonial Criticism to the CSDP

Both EUNAVFOR MED missions fall under the CSDP and are therefore part of the EU's foreign policy. The missions are involved in (1) border protection, (2) security and defence, and (3) migration. Much research regarding these three subjects, has been done from both feminist and postcolonial theories independently. Separately from each other, feminist and postcolonial theorists have also formed criticisms of the EU's CSDP. Many of these criticisms relate to the concepts of gender and race. This chapter will explain the four frames, focussed on gender and race, that can be derived from the critiques of the CSDP, from separate postcolonial and feminist research. Together, these four frames form a feminist postcolonial framework that can be applied to the two EUNAVFOR MED CSDP missions. The four frames are: (1) The white masculine protector, (2) The white masculine saviour, (3) The feminine and racialised victim, and (4) The masculine and racialised threat (see table 1).

These four frames are constructed as follows: First, feminist scholars emphasise that the concept of 'protector' is inherently connected to masculinity (Hoijtink & Muehlenhoff, 2020; Muehlenhoff, 2017; 2021; Sjoberg, 2014; Thomson, 2022; Young, 2003). From a postcolonial perspective, protectors are western and white (Mani, 1990; Connell, 1987; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Kinnvall, 2016). Taking these feminist and postcolonial theories together, the *white masculine protector* frame emerges. Secondly, masculinity and masculinist norms are linked to the ability of 'saving' others, according to scholars with a feminist lens (Kronsell, 2016a; Pallister-Wilkins, 2015; Peterson, 1992). 'Others' are saved by white westerners from a sense of superiority, in line with postcolonial thought (Said, 1978; Fisher Onar & Nicolaïdis, 2013; Jones, 2011; Schlag, 2012). The *white masculine saviour* frame is formed by combining these two theories. Third, feminist scholars stress that women are almost always victimised (Enloe, 1993; Keskinen & Andreassen, 2017; Carpenter, 2005; Crawley, 2022). Postcolonial scholarship adds that this marginalisation is underpinned by racialised stereotypes (Al-Wazedi, 2021; Akram, 2020; Peroni, 2016; Abu-Lughod, 2002). Hence, the two theories combined, the *feminine and racialised victim* frame forms. Finally, the *masculine and racialised threat* frame, occurs by joining the following feminist and postcolonial thoughts. A feminist lens highlights that the construction of a threat is aways gendered with threatening masculinity (Gray & Frank, 2019; Kronsell, 2016a, Wibben, 2011; Bosworth, Fili & Pickering, 2017). According to postcolonial scholars, threat construction is also based on racialised narratives of inferiority of the unknown 'Other' (Said; 1978; Every & Augoustinos, 2007; Moffette & Vadasaria, 2016; Bilgin, 2020; Barkawi & Laffey, 2006; Pruitt et al., 2018).

In addition, core concepts concerning gender and race are part of these four frames (see table 1). These concepts also originate from feminist and postcolonial theories. Per frame, the gender and race concepts can refer to three different actors: The people, the CSDP mission, and the territory. By 'the People' is meant the employees of the CSDP missions, the people left behind at 'home' in the EU, the migrants, and other non-EU citizens. The actor 'CSDP mission', refers to both EUNAVFOR MED missions, Operation Sophia, and Operation Irini. Lastly, 'Territory' applies to the homeland of the missions, namely the EU, and other non-EU territories. Some concepts can be applied to all three actors, the four frames partly overlap, and recurring themes can be spotted between them. Down below, the four frames and the related gender and race concepts, will be elaborated one by one in more detail.

Table 1: Conceptual framework regarding gender and race in the EU's CSDP

	People	CSDP mission	Territory
White Masculine Protector	Masculinities - Protector - Military & Combat - Colonial - Hegemonic	Masculinised employer	Homeland security
		Based on male body	
	Masculinised women & employees		
	Gender war roles		
White Masculine Saviour	Saving women	Gentle civiliser	Saving 'our land'
	Sympathy	Modern white man's burden	
	Racial western superiority		Territorial superiority
	Eurocentric humanitarianism		
Feminine and Racialised Victim	'Womenandchildren'		Homeland femininity
	Paternalistic protection		Homogenous geographical grouping
	Marginalised - Vulnerable - Dependent - Exotified - Victim		Feminisation of geographical space
Masculine and Racialised Threat	Acts of terror		Periphery
	Risk to western society		Failed states
	Racialised maleness		
	Uncivilised		
	Racial inferiority		

Source: Own creation derived from a combination of postcolonial and feminist literatures

3.1: The White Masculine Protector

The first gendered and racialised frame is *the white masculine protector*. The institutional context of the EU, and hence the CSDP missions, is intergovernmental. This means that member states take a leading role in the agenda setting of the missions (Guerrina, Chappell & Wright, 2018: 1036). This has consequences regarding both gender and race. First, the foreign and security structures by member states are gendered and dominated by male bodies as result of historic consistencies. Because of its intergovernmental structure, these gendered notions are taken over by the CSDP missions. This results in 'gender war roles', where men's bodies are organised into military organisations, and the missions are exclusively associated with, and defined by masculinity and male bodies (Hoijtink & Muehlenhoff, 2020: 364; Sjoberg, 2014: 23; Kronsell, 2016a: 313). Second, the agenda setting of the CSDP in the so-called southern neighbourhood, is also shaped by the member states with a colonial history in that region. Especially France, Italy, and Spain, and their colonial 'legacy' in the Maghreb, influence the direction of CSDP policies and missions. This means that they view and consider economic interests, geopolitical concerns, and security most important. Risking the CSDP missions susceptible for gendered and racialised logics (Zajac, 2015: 69-70).

Hence, the CSDP mission as an employer is also masculinised. The connection between the mission, the associated military tasks, and male bodies, is reproduced through a gendered logic. Consequently, they influence the employees of the CSDP missions (Kronsell, 2016a: 318). The norms of CSDP missions are defined on the grounds of masculine practices and male bodies, which implies that men ought to be protectors, security actors, and defenders. This results in the contribution to combat and military masculinity, where military and 'warrior-like' traits among employees are emphasised (Kronsell, 2016a: 311, 317). Male vulnerability in this context becomes impossible (Young, 2003: 20). Because the CSDP missions are built on the masculine nature of military structures and the premise of masculinised 'hard' security, female employees of the CSDP missions are also masculinised. Women in security and military situations can then only be seen as combatants, protectors, and soldiers (Henry, 2017: 188; Muehlenhoff, 2017: 162; Kimmel & Aronson, 2004: 12).

Furthermore, a protector identity is expected of masculinity. The CSDP missions are dealing with 'protector masculinity' that is maintained by masculine norms (Thomson, 2022: 123; Young, 2003: 2). Four 'protectionisms', someone or something that needs to be protected by the CSDP mission, can be found in the literature. First, the values of the EU must be protected (Every & Augoustinos, 2007: 413). Second, the EU as geographical entity must be protected (Gray & Frank, 2019: 276).

This is also called 'homeland security'. The territorial concept originates from the United States after the 9/11 terrorist attacks and refers to an element of *'national security [...] to protect the sovereignty, territory, domestic population, and critical infrastructures against threats and aggression'* (Bellavita, 2008: 2). In the case of the EU, the CSDP mission needs to defend EU homeland and territory, against threats, such as migration, terrorism, and crime. Third, the people within the EU must be protected, in particular women (Kim, 2006: 521). Lastly, women from outside the EU must be protected (Muehlenhoff, 2021: 131). Protector masculinity focusses only on the positive aspects of masculinity, such as heroism, virtue, and chivalry (Gray, 2022: 15). Postcolonial scholars emphasise, that the treatment of a woman as someone who needs to be protected, is set by colonialism. For example, the English white colonial officers in India treated native women not as subject of their own action, but as someone who needed protection and saving from 'brown' men. This is 'colonial masculinity', according to postcolonial scholar Mani (1990: 90). The protector needs to defend the four 'protectionisms' from something. This 'something' is often racialised and related to colonial modernity, such as non-western cultures, religions, values, norms, and the 'Other' non-western person (Moffette & Vadasaria, 2016: 298; Al-Wazedi, 2021: 164; Said, 1978: 67).

Continuing colonial masculinity, Connell (1987) brings race to protector masculinity through the concept of hegemonic masculinities. According to her, most men in western societies are white, heterosexual, strong, heroic, and upper class. Therefore, protector masculinity is predominantly white. This shows that white protector masculinity is hegemonic in relation to subordinated other masculinities and women (ibid: 183). Institutions in the field of security and defence, such as CSDP missions, are often impregnated with hegemonic masculinity because masculinity is historically ingrained. Even though hegemonic masculinity faces criticisms, such as rigid gender typologies, today, hegemonic masculinity can be identified in CSDP missions, as Europeans with a white ethnicity prevail in the EU's CSDP missions, with an aim to protect the subordinate 'Other' (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005: 832; Hoijtink & Muehlenhoff, 2020: 367).

3.2: The White Masculine Saviour

Linked to the white masculine protector frame, is the frame of *white masculine saviour*. This frame is based on the notion of 'strong' white masculine saviours 'saving' women, or territory, from 'barbarian' men and chaos. Saving the 'Other' reinforces a sense of western superiority and reproduces normative stigmatisations of racial representations (Peterson, 1992: 82; Abu-Lughod, 2002: 783-89; Schlag, 2012: 335). According to postcolonial scholars, the basis for modern western superiority was laid out during colonial times. Back then, white colonial powers believed

'the European' was the pinnacle of civilisation and order. They were on the top of the racial hierarchy, the native 'Other' was seen as lesser, barbaric, and primitive, hereby justifying colonisation (Jones, 2011: 30). This is underscored by postcolonial scholar Edward Said's concept of Orientalism. He argues that this western dominance over the 'Orient', the Eastern world, is not something from the past. Dominance is still justified continuously today by representing the East as exotic and inferior to the West (Said, 1977: 186). The East is hereby constructed as the 'Other' and the 'Them', opposite from the West; 'They' are strange and different from 'Us'. This Us-versus-Them dichotomy highlights the construction of the foreign as lesser (Said, 1978: 12). The EU uses this concept of Othering in its foreign policy, according to Sachseder, Stachowitsch & Binder (2022). In their research, they show that Frontex uses fingerprinting, profiling, and biometric screening in its work. These technologies are aimed at controlling the 'Other' (non-EU migrants) to save and protect 'Us' (the EU). Subsequently, this suggests western racial superiority.

Besides racial superiority, this notion of western superiority can also be applied to the territory. The territory of Europe is tied to the notion of security, democratic reason, and 'European' values, such as rule of law and human rights. Said stresses that the Orient – non-EU countries – is represented as 'backwards', compared to the territorial superior West (Said, 1978: 12). This is evident in practice since Europe is positioned as the 'gold standard' when interpreting non-European countries. Non-European countries are evaluated on universalised EU-values and -norms, with which the non-European country must comply. Whereby, they are ruled through western governance (Kinnvall, 2016: 155).

The notion of 'gentle civiliser' is closely related to western superiority. It refers to the western believe that non-western people and territories need assistance with their perceived chaos. This concept also finds its origin during colonial times, when colonisers wanted to share the 'light of civilisation' through education to ensure people were loyal to the empire. Europeans were rational and civilised, the 'others' were not (Jones, 2011: 30). These hierarchies of domination between the West and the 'Other', comply with Said's theory of Orientalism (1978), and are still reproduced by the EU and its CSDP missions today. Fisher Onar & Nicolaïdis (2013) illustrate that CSDP missions convey a rescue narrative and assist the 'Other' out of sympathy for their plight (ibid: 296). Furthermore, these missions are a 'force for good' and more progressive than the 'Other'. For example, in the Middle East, the EU assumes it has the responsibility to strengthen women's rights and gender equality as the bearer of civilisation (Muehlenhoff, 2021: 125; Stern, 2011: 30). Additionally, Schlag (2012) demonstrates that the EU's missions in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, and Mali, were grounded in hierarchical power relations, where the EU perceived

its role as 'good reliever' (ibid: 336). Jayasundara-Smits (2021) identifies the same power hierarchies that underpin the European Union Advisory Mission in Ukraine and the European Union Capacity Building Mission in Sahel Mali. She even attaches the civilising tendencies of the missions to the term 'white man's burden' (ibid: 101). This term refers to Rudyard Kipling's poem from the late 19th century. In the context of the EU, it means that the EU feels the duty and responsibility to assist the 'less fortunate' people out of their backward ways, by imitating European ways of doing things. This is seen as Eurocentric, neo-imperialist, and racist (Wintle, 2020: 175).

Furthermore, many EU CSDP missions engage in the training of other actors, such as the EUNAVFOR MED missions train Libyan Coast Guards and Navy. However, Schlag (2012) emphasises that the aim of these training practices is, to civilise the 'Other'. The 'Other' barbarian native and subordinate masculinity need to become a 'proper' citizen through CSDP training by white western men. This 'proper citizen' looks like the white, liberal, EU, and human rights respecting male (ibid: 332). Transforming of the 'Other' into a 'civilised' self, reflects the feeling of 'moral responsibility' by the West, which is constituent of Orientalist thought (Said, 1978: 12). A feminist lens adds that these trainings convey masculinised and stereotypical gender roles, values, and concepts, that are already embedded into the CSDP missions (Kronsell, 2016a: 328).

The last important concept in the white masculine saviour frame, is the concept of humanitarianism. Especially during crisis situations, the EU views itself as a humanitarian actor, concerned about the vulnerability of migrants. However, this humanitarian self-representation of the EU is linked to gender and race. The narrative consolidates to Europe's white superiority, as it views itself as an able and trustworthy protector of 'native' and vulnerable migrants. Here, EU border actors are represented as masculinised white bearers of safety (Pallister-Wilkins, 2015: 115; Pallister-Wilkins, 2017: 22). Additionally, the 'humanitarian EU' does not only provide care because it has compassion with the situation; the EU helps because it can. Colonial origins are reflected in this superiority that is underpinned by socioeconomic, military, and political structures of power (Pallister-Wilkins, 2022: 66; Riddervold, 2018: 58).

3.3: The Feminine and Racialised Victim

The third frame is *the feminine and racialised victim.* This frame focusses on the marginalisation of all women in the framing process. The marginalisation of women can take on different forms. According to Enloe, 'womenandchilderen' are often represented as vulnerable, victims, dependent, and in need of paternalistic protection in times of crisis. In this case, women are seen as family

members, marked by motherhood, and not as independent actors (Enloe, 1993: 166; Carpenter, 2005: 308). Representing women on par with children, has a colonial origin. In 17th century Europe, a child was seen as an 'inferior version of the adult'. This representation of the child was transferred to the unsophisticated, uncivilised, and barbaric native of the colony. Hereby, the femininization and infantilism of the native population legitimated colonial rule (Jones, 2011: 28).

A postcolonial view, therefore, shows the racialised element to this marginalisation. In addition, postcolonial theory adds that racialised 'native' women are seen as innately vulnerable, which reflects Orientalist illusions by white westerners (Abu-Lughod, 2002: 789; Peroni, 2016: 52: Said, 1978). This racialised vulnerability is for example shown in the fetishisation, sexualisation, and exotification of the veil. Veiled women are often framed in the West as sensual girls, objects of desire, and victims of their backwards culture. The controversy surrounding the veil has heightened over the last years in western countries. The western response to the veil is to politicize it, making it very susceptible to classed, gendered, and racialised dynamics (Al-Wazedi, 2021: 163; Keskinen & Andreassen, 2017: 64). Moreover, migrant women are often pictured as a monolithic entity. They are exotified, seen as dependent, victims, and vulnerable, which is also inherently Orientalist (Akram, 2020: 18; Crawley, 2022: 376). Homogenising all women in one group, ignores the complex differences between the origins and experiences of these women (Crawley, 2022: 355).

This Orientalist view is not only applicable to people, but also to 'territory', specifically the non-EU countries. Postcolonial scholar Stuart Hall (1992b) builds on the theoretical insights of Orientalism by Edward Said. Here, the 'Other' is not only the Orient, as is the case with Said's, Hall's 'other' can be seen as any region besides the West. He argues that in western discourses, Africa, and the Middle East, are portrayed as one homogenous region without distinct differences, even though this is not true. He underlines that framing all these countries in one homogenous geographical group, shows the unequal power relation between the West and the 'Rest'. This relation is characterised by the 'rests' powerlessness and its dependency on the superior West (ibid: 283; Hill, 2005: 144). Feminist scholars bring in that this is linked to the feminisation of geographical space. Lands outside Europe are referred to as feminine, virgin, subordinate to European states, and in need of guidance (Jones, 2011: 38). The European 'homeland' is hereby also feminised. The land of the EU needs to be protected, 'she' is vulnerable and does not engage in military activity. The homeland is an object of masculine protectionism (Kronsell, 2016b: 112).

3.4: The Masculine and Racialised Threat

The last frame is the *masculine and racialised threat.* This frame refers to the people that form a risk to the dominant western culture, attitudes, and values. The representation of especially male migrants in this way, is not merely based on biological differences. There is a western conception that these migrants identify with clans and are uneducated about the values of a civilised state, such as the EU. Cultural practices, values, and norms of this 'Other', are inferior and are threatening to the dominant western culture. It is clearly connected to the thought of western and racial superiority and is underpinned by a range of beforementioned Orientalist tropes (Said, 1978; Every & Augoustinos, 2007: 413). Women are absent in this frame. Young, mostly Muslim, single, without family ties, and able-bodied men are identified as a threat and suspicious through their racialised maleness and inferior cultural practices. These men depict uncivilised behaviour towards women, and hence western countries link this to acts of terror. When vulnerability is linked to a male migrant, it is most likely an elderly or injured man. Otherwise, the possibility of men being weak is impossible (Gray & Frank, 2019: 279-81; Barkawi & Laffey, 2006: 330).

Through the lens of postcolonial scholars and Orientalism, violent, aggressive, barbarian, and other stereotypical racial character traits, are often associated with non-western masculinity. The 'Others' are constructed as troublemakers, as radical, and as threats to the EU's security. They are 'here to take away' from the EU, risking its national security, stability, economic well-being, and cultural identity. Furthermore, religion, especially the Islam, is in the western world used to create racial profiles. These racialised and gendered narratives, justify tough and invasive colonial practices by the EU's security policies against this threatening 'Other' (Bilgin, 2020: 781; Moffette & Vadasaria, 2016: 298; Al-Wazedi, 2021: 164; Said, 1978: 67). Additionally, surveilling and categorising practices are justified because migrants are constructed as unpredictable and deceiving. Consequently, the harsh treatment of migrants by institutions, reinforces the general public's view of them as hopeless, threatening, and dangerous (Jones, 2011: 27; Sachseder, Stachowitsch & Binder, 2022: 4676).

Lastly, the links to terrorism are not only made with the migrants or 'Others', but also with the 'territory', the non-EU country where they come from. These states are masculinised, seen as lawless, criminal, violent, and chaotic. By categorising them as 'failed states', they are placed in a colonial hierarchy, according to postcolonial scholars. Even though the official era of European colonial rule is over, the relation between the 'periphery' or the 'Third World' and the 'First World', is still defined by power inequalities that are rooted in colonial legacies (Hill, 2005: 144; Baker, 2021:126).

4. Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology that is going to be used in this thesis. First, the main research question and the sub-questions will be introduced. Second, the research methods, frame analysis and visual research, and the subsequent usage of these methods is explained. Third, the selection of the two case studies central to this research, EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia and Operation Irini, is justified. The fourth section shows and justifies the selection of primary data and sources that will be used for the empirical analysis. Lastly, an overview is given of the limitations of the research method and how these limitations are taken into account during the analysis.

4.1: Research Questions

The research of this thesis aims to analyse the concepts of gender and race in the EUNAVFOR MED missions Sophia and Irini. Therefore, the main research question that will be examined is:

> *'How are gender and race portrayed in the EUNAVFOR MED missions Operation Sophia and Operation Irini?'*

To fully answer the main question, two sub-questions have been formulated:
- *How are masculinities constructed by Operation Sophia and Operation Irini?*
- *How are femininities constructed by Operation Sophia and Operation Irini?*

4.2: Frame Analysis and Visual Research

Feminist and postcolonial scholarship draw on the epistemological approach that considers the marginalised, includes power relationships, and acknowledges gender, racial and cultural differences (Weldon, 2006: 64; Smith, 2012: 12). This epistemology shapes the methodology used by these scholarships. Therefore, methods used by feminist and postcolonial scholars lie within the line of constructivism and poststructuralism. These methods include interviews, ethnography, discourse, frame, and content analysis (Reinharz, 1992: 46). This research will use the method of frame analysis, wherewith the method fits into the epistemological foundation of feminist and postcolonial theories. Moreover, as will be explained below, frame analysis allows to identify in what ways gender and race are portrayed in the two EUNAVFOR MED missions.

First, to understand frame analysis as a method, it is important to define the concept of frame. Over the years, countless of definitions have been proposed to define 'frames'. The concept of framing

has been attributed to the work of Erving Goffman in his 1974 book *'Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience'*. In this book, he associates frames with *'schemata of interpretation'*. These schemata, or frames, allow people to give meaning to situations, reality, and occurrences by being able to label, and identify them in a certain way (ibid: 21). According to Reese (2001), frames are *'organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world'* (ibid: 11). The way in which these frames are constructed, is influenced by cultural, geographical, and biological backgrounds of people. Frames are changing, fluid, and a product of their time, influenced by the political, economic, and social actors involved. In this way, frames do not only describe a scenario. Frames are powerful, as they can convey information to people deliberately including or excluding certain parts of information or pressing for normative stances. They are used with the purpose of (de-)legitimising actions by certain actors. Consequently, frames can be picked up, made implicit, and naturalised, through which the frame only gains more power (Reese, 2001: 13; Verloo & Lombardo, 2007: 35).

Frame analysis is a well-suited method to identify gender and race constructions through a feminist postcolonial framework, because of the abovementioned 'power structures' connected to a frame. Organisations, such as the EU, construct frames to communicate large amounts of information to their audiences. These frames depict the way in which the actor is or wants to be seen. Subsequently frames affect the attitudes, opinions, and behaviours of the audience. Additionally, framing a subject in a certain way can also change the presentation of the subject, for better or for worse, in the desired way the organisation wants the subject to be seen (Chong & Druckman, 2007: 104-6).

Frame analysis is then used to examine the frames that portray gender and race in the EUNAVFOR MED missions. The most used way through which a frame is constructed is through words. However, other important instruments are the usage of videos and images. This explains why frame analysis in this thesis is also applied to the visual promotional material on the official social media accounts of the two missions. These posts contribute to the way gender and race are portrayed by the EUNAVFOR MED missions, since they convey the activities of the EU to the outside world. Furthermore, images and videos come to have political implications and shape the way concepts, like gender and race, are looked at. Moreover, videos and images contribute to the framing processes of actors, such as migrants and CSDP employees (Hansen, 2011: 53-5).

Frame analysis is mostly done through inductive research, which means that through a list of 'codes', texts or images are analysed and subsequently through this analysis frames can be derived from them (Kitzinger, 2007: 140). However, in this thesis, a deductive approach will be used, as four frames can already be derived from the literature before the start of the empirical analysis of texts, videos, and images. The frames are introduced in the conceptual framework, and are *the white masculine protector*, *the white masculine saviour*, *the feminine and racialised victim*, and *the masculine and racialised threat*. This deductive approach gives a clear idea of the frames that can be encountered during the empirical analysis of this thesis.

4.3: Case Study Selection and Justification

To answer the main research question, the research will focus on two case studies: European Union Naval Force Mediterranean Operation Sophia and Operation Irini (EUNAVFOR MED). By comparing the two missions, an answer can be found to the central research question and sub-questions of this thesis. Both case studies selected have some common elements. First, they are both military CSDP missions acting in the Mediterranean Sea (EEAS, 2021a). Additionally, both missions also contribute to the UN arms embargo on Libya and subsequently support the Libyan Navy and Coast Guard. Lastly, even though the main mandates of the missions regarding migration differs, they are both linked to migration to the EU. These corresponding elements between the missions make them suitable for comparison. Furthermore, analysing both missions next to each other for a longer period of time, within the same area and with the involvement of the same actors, makes is possible to find out if the EU's approach between both missions has changed over time.

In addition, linked to the aforementioned statements, it is relevant to compare Operation Sophia with Operation Irini from a feminist and postcolonial perspective. According to feminist theory, organisations and operations can become 'pattern-bound' over time. This means that certain norms, behaviours, and rules are locked into place. These norms are reinforced over time and can become embedded in political organisations. This contributes to path dependency, where opportunities for feminist innovations in successor organisations or related institutions, are constrained by previous, mostly unfeminine, situations and ideas (Kronsell, 2016a: 314-315). Hence, certain behaviours, norms, and rules – such as stereotypical gender roles and racialisations – that were embedded during Operation Sophia could still be part of Operation Irini. In that case, the normative history of Operation Sophia is remembered and transferred to Operation Irini. These patterns of path dependency ultimately legitimise discrimination, racism, and human rights abuses, and go against the human rights principles of the EU (Sachseder, Stachowitsch & Binder, 2022).

Lastly, the epistemological foundations of postcolonial and feminist theory also legitimise the usage of the two EUNAVFOR MED missions. Both theories aim to deconstruct power relations between the ones in power and the marginalised and aspire to break down the dichotomy between the West and the 'Rest'. The region of the Mediterranean Sea is very well-suited to examine these power structures, as 'border-controlling' EU is in a position of power, compared to the non-EU people risking their lives to reach the Union.

4.4: Selection of Data and Sources

4.4.1: Documents

This thesis will rely on both primary and secondary sources. Secondary sources will consist of academic research papers, journals, books, and publications. These sources are used for the literature review, the conceptual framework, and the context and background of both missions, in order to present an overview of the main theories, concepts, and debates on the topic. For primary sources, the thesis analyses the missions' mandates, as stipulated in their Council Decisions, factsheets, reports, and policy documents. These documents are published by the EU, by one of the missions, or by a member state. The documents published by the EU constitute of; correspondence between the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Political and Security Committee (PSC), and decisions about the missions made by the Council of the European Union and the European Council. These EU-institutions are all responsible for and enable the implementation of the EU's CSDP missions in general, including both EUNAVFOR MED missions (EEAS, 2021a). Therefore, official documents issued by the EU-institutions are regarded as suitable for analysis. Regarding Operation Irini, a presentation about EUNAVFOR MED Irini by the Rear Admiral of the mission, and a report on the workings of Operation Irini from the German Bundestag, are also analysed. Such is the case, due to a lack of official EU-documents that are available on the mission. However, the presentation is made and given by the Force Commander of Operation Irini, making the presentation suitable for analysis. Furthermore, EU member states must individually authorise the mission. Hence, an official document on the mission, published by the German authorities, can also be used for analysis.

Five documents are analysed per mission. This is regarded as sufficient based on a few arguments. First, there are not many official documents published on both missions by legitimate actors, making the choice also a functional one, based on the availability of documents. Second, the research does not rely on solely the analysis of documents, therefore, potential gaps in the documents can be filled with the other sources. Third, the quality of the documents is high,

considering they are published by official EU-institutions, member states, and the missions themselves. Last, the documents all cover a wide array of subjects within the EUNAVFOR MED missions, therefore providing a great range of evidence. According to Bowen (2009), these arguments legitimise a selected number of documents used in one research for a strong qualitative analysis (ibid: 33).

The policy documents that have been selected for the empirical analysis can be found in Annex 1. All primary policy documents can be found via official EU-websites, via the official websites of the EUNAVFOR MED missions, and via internet searches with keywords, such as 'Operation Sophia', 'Operation Irini', 'EUNAVFOR MED mission', 'report', 'factsheet', 'review'. Between the two missions, some of the content of the policy documents differs. However, since the number of available public documents concerning the missions is limited, it is nevertheless decided to analyse these documents although they are dissimilar. The documents are all about the missions, and therefore an analysis about the portrayal of gender and race in the missions can still be made.

4.4.2: Social Media

Besides the abovementioned documents, promotional material on the official EUNAVFOR MED missions' social media will be analysed. This includes videos, spoken text, and images from Facebook and Twitter. Social media is a way for political actors, such as the EUNAVFOR MED missions, to increase their visibility. Additionally, social media is used by political actors to represent them in a certain, often desirable, way (Kelm, 2020: 11). Therefore, by analysing the social media pages of the missions, a construction can be made on how the missions portray gender and race.

Both missions have an official Facebook and Twitter account, with around 11 thousand followers per mission. The posts posted on these official accounts will be analysed, both visually and linguistically. Linguistically, Facebook allows for an indefinite number of characters; therefore, these posts give the possibility of a deeper analysis. Twitter, on the other hand, only allows a limited number of characters, making that what is said most important (Kelm, 2020: 29). This legitimises the use of both social media platforms. The research had the initial intention to also analyse YouTube videos. However, many videos posted on the YouTube channels from both missions are also posted on their official Facebook and Twitter accounts. Therefore, to make the process of analysing more manageable, the videos posted on the official YouTube channels of both missions are excluded from the analysis.

The research aims to understand how gender and race are constructed in both the EUNAVFOR MED missions in general, this means that no specific filtering is applied to the posts on the social media accounts (i.e., based on gender or race). It is assumed that the missions only post about topics relevant to the mission or concerning the mission. Therefore, reposts by the official EUNAVFOR MED social media accounts, of posts related to the naval missions from other EU-institution accounts (such as the EEAS and the European Commission), are also included in the analysis. The only condition is, that the time of posting falls within the chosen time frame of this research. The primary sources are selected based on the following time frame: from the 18th of May 2015, the day the European Council approved Operation Sophia, until the 31st of March 2023, the end date of the second mandate period of Operation Irini. Additionally, only posts posted in English are used for analysis, thereby excluding posts in native languages of the EU member states. Annex 1 includes a list of the specific social media pages of both missions.

4.4.3: Method of Data Analysis

In this thesis, a deductive frame analysis approach is used to manually analyse two types of data: linguistic data and visual data. For a sound analysis of both these types of data, a step-by-step plan has been drawn based on Dan's (2018) research on frame analysis (ibid: 46-7). This plan ensures that all documents, texts on social media, images, and videos, are analysed in the same way.

Before starting the empirical analysis, the four frames, derived from the literature, have been broken down into several concepts. These concepts have been coded, which means indicators and operationalisations of these codes were added to the concepts (see annex 2). These operationalisations were coded for visual ('visibility') and linguistical ('mentioning') analysis. The operationalisation of these codes is substantiated by the academic literature used in the conceptual framework. Ultimately, these codes clarify what to look for during the analysis of the data. Based on this list, the step-by-step frame analysis of the data looks as follows:

1. Looking at and reading the sources next to the list of codes
2. Identifying if the material can be linked to a concept (as coded in the operationalisation)
3. Connecting the material to the relevant concept within the relevant frame
   (Dan, 2018: 46-7).

In addition to the abovementioned plan, one question is continuously asked whilst analysing the images and videos on the social media pages of the EUNAVFOR MED missions: 'What do I see/hear?'. According to Bleiker (2015), this question helps the researcher to really understand the image or video, which makes it easier to categorise into a coded concept, and subsequently use for the analysis. Then,

consideration is given to several points that require extra attention, such as the context of the image/video, the background, the facial expressions, and the clothes people are wearing (ibid: 15-7). This makes it also necessary to watch the videos multiple times.

4.5: Limitations and Strengths

Feminist and postcolonial theory draw on the notion of situated knowledge or standpoint theory. This theory stresses that the context in which we find ourselves, shapes the way we look at things. This can have strengths, as examining questions from the view of the 'subordinate' offers insights that would otherwise not be visible from the position of the powerful (Weldon, 2006: 64-5). On the other hand, Smith (2012) emphasises that the worldview of researchers is often, even unintentionally, shaped by dominant western research. This western research is implicitly linked to colonial legacies and the dominant discourse of the 'Other' (ibid: 18). Hence, it needs to be considered how the worldview and context of the researcher might influence the outcome of the research in this thesis. The researcher of this thesis is based in a western country and schooled at western universities. Even though she considers herself to be a feminist, according to postcolonial feminists there still exists a gendered and racialised hierarchy, where inadvertently a western woman predominates a non-western woman, and a white woman predominates a non-white woman (Mohanty 2003). Therefore, according to the notion of situated knowledge, these research specific contexts could influence the research. Nevertheless, by acknowledging the presence of situated knowledge beforehand, the risk of it influencing the research, is reduced.

Whilst pre-formulated frames can help the researcher guide the analysis, using frame analysis in a deductive way also has its limitations. The research is limited to established frames that suit the topic to be investigated, which makes finding new frames in this way difficult, and hence the method somewhat inflexible (Matthes & Kohring, 2008: 262-2). It is important to keep the option of adding new frames during the analysis phase open, as frames can evolve over time. Therefore, this research will not code with a closed code list. New concepts or additional operationalisations, based on the analysis, can be added throughout the analysis. Hereby, the inflexibility of predetermined frames is partially reduced (David et al., 2011: 346).

Furthermore, frame analysis has been criticised by proponents of quantitative research. They argue that the process of frame analysis is subject to personal interpretations and biases, which makes the research not objective enough. The same can be said about the use of case studies, which are criticised for their lack of generalisability and vulnerability to interpretative subjectivity

(Anderson, 2010: 2). This also applies to visual research, where visuals might lend themselves to interpretations of the researcher (Hansen, 2011: 58). A case specific example: an image depicts a man. The researcher interprets this as a man, because of biological characteristics linked to a man. However, the image will not indicate if the man identifies as a man. Hence, this image is subject to personal interpretations which can influence the research. To make the analysis less subject to personal interpretation and subjectivity, and to clarify certain concepts, such as gender; indicators, codes, and definitions of these concepts are attached in the operationalisation in annex 2.

All these limitations illustrate, that it must be conceded that this thesis cannot be representative to other cases other than the cases presented in the research: the EUNAVFOR MED missions Operation Sophia and Operation Irini. When using the same frames on and transferring the same operationalisation to other cases, other results might come to light. To minimize the limitations of frame analysis even more, the writing and analysing process of this thesis will be discussed with both supervisor and other peers. This positively contributes to the credibility of the research.

Despite these limitations, the subsequent analysis will give an insight in the complexity of the web of race and gender in the EUNAVFOR MED missions of the EU.

5. Context and Background of Operation Sophia and Operation Irini

To complement the understanding of the empirical analysis in the next chapter, an overview of both EUNAVFOR MED missions' mandates and origins will be given, along with an explanation of the context and background in which both missions were designed.

5.1: Operation Sophia

Prompted by the arrest of human rights activist Fethi Tarbel, uprisings against the Gaddafi regime started in Libya in February 2011. These uprisings were immediately violently repressed by the Gaddafi regime (Koenig, 2016: 161). As a reaction to the violent use of force against civilians, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1970, which included an arms embargo on Libya (UN, 2011a). Additionally, UN member states became authorised to *"take all necessary measures [...] to protect civilians"* (UN, 2011b). The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) answered to this call, by carrying out daily air strikes against military targets of pro-Gaddafi forces, the following months (NATO, 2015). On October 20, 2011, Gaddafi was killed by Libyan rebel forces in a firefight that broke out on the ground after a NATO aircraft struck pro-Gaddafi military vehicles, unaware of Gaddafi's presence in this convoy (Koenig, 2016: 161; Kuperman, 2013: 191).

After the killing of Gaddafi, the situation in Libya deteriorated further during the civil war that followed. In addition, the so-called Arab Spring of 2011, a wave of anti-regime protests, also brought instability to other North African countries. These insecure situations forced many people to flee their country, looking for safety elsewhere. Consequently, the number of migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea from Libya and other North African countries, surged in 2013 (Caponio & Cappiali, 2018: 121). This increase in migrants to Europe, especially to Italy's island Lampedusa, resulted in several deathly incidents with crowded and unseaworthy vessels sinking. One of the deathliest was on 3 October 2013, when a boat from Libya with hundreds of migrants on board, sank off the coast of Lampedusa, resulting in the deaths of over 360 migrants (Nováky, 2018: 200). After the incident, Italy highlighted the need for EU assistance to handle the sharp influx of migrants. According to the Italian Interior Minister at that time *'this is a European tragedy. Lampedusa has to be considered the frontier of Europe, not the frontier of Italy'* (BBC News, 2013).

Hence, Italy started pushing for an EU naval mission in the Mediterranean Sea. However, many member states still thought it was unnecessary to share the burden of dealing with the migration problem. Furthermore, they declared that Italy would benefit disproportionally in its favour from such a military naval mission (Nováky, 2018: 198). However, the Union did deploy Frontex Operation Triton in 2014, to assist the Italian Coast Gard with border control, search and rescue missions (SAR), and surveillance on sea (Frontex, 2016). Then, on 19 April 2015, more than 800 people drowned, when their boat from Libya to Italy capsized at sea (Bonomolo & Kirchgaessner, 2015). The EU realised that the migration problem had become much more acute. The boat disaster acted as a trigger for the EU to complement Operation Triton with military mission EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia. Simultaneously with the increase of people dying in the Mediterranean Sea, the demand by public opinion for the EU to finally act, also intensified (Koenig, 2020: 86; Alagna, 2020: 2). Because of this pressure from the 'outside' to move and act quickly, the mission was fast tracked. This meant the mission could be deployed at very short notice, by simplifying the standard planning process (Nováky, 2018: 205).

Thus, Operation Sophia was launched in June 2015, as a reaction to the worsening humanitarian situation at the Mediterranean Sea. Yet, its core mandate was primarily aimed *'to identify, capture and dispose of vessels and enabling assets used or suspected of being used by migrant smugglers or traffickers'* (EEAS, 2017). Counteracting and disrupting human trafficking and smuggling networks, was seen as a way to *'prevent the further loss of life at sea'* (EEAS, 2017; Cusumano, 2019: 12). The operation was divided into four phases. The first phase focussed on patrolling the high seas and information gathering on smugglers' business models. The second phase had a phase 2A; the seizure, diversion, and search of vessels on the high seas suspected of participating in human trafficking. Phase 2B extended these activities to the territorial waters of Libya. The third phase involved dismantling smugglers' boats on the Libyan territory. Withdrawal and completion of the mission formed the last phase of the mission. However, in practice operation Sophia never moved beyond phase 2A, since proceeding with the following phases required permission from the Libyan government and the UN Security Council. Both of whom never gave permission to operate within Libyan territories (Riddervold, 2018: 60; Tardy, 2015: 2).

In September 2016, two other mandates were added to the core mandate of Operation Sophia. The first, concerned the implementation of the UN arms embargo on Libya at sea according to the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2292 and 2357. These two UNSCR's were a continuation of UNSCR 1970, as mentioned before and implemented in 2011. Second, involved the training of the Libyan Navy and Coast Guard (EEAS, 2017; Cusumano, 2019: 12). These trainings were

requested by the Libyan authorities, and supported capacity building development to help them fight against and eradicate human smuggling and trafficking in their own country. By the end of Operation Sophia's mandate in 2020, 477 Libyan Coast Guards and Navy personnel had been trained by the mission (Larsson & Widen, 2022: 2). The two mandates added in 2016, were in line with the common security interests of EU member states at that time. Since the additional mandates contributed to the restoring of 'order' at the external borders of the EU (Koenig, 2020: 87).

In October 2016, the decision was made to deploy the NATO's new naval mission 'Operation Sea Guardian' in the Mediterranean Sea. This mission would support Operation Sophia in the enforcement of the Libyan arms embargo and increase logistical support (NATO, 2023). Subsequently, in July 2017, three other supporting tasks were added to Operation Sophia's mandate. First, there emerged a possibility for the EUNAVFOR MED mission to share information on human trafficking with NATO, Frontex, Europol, and law enforcement agencies of the EU member states. Additionally, from then on, the efficiency of the training of the Libyan Coast Guard and Navy was monitored. Lastly, illegal trafficking of oil exports from Libya needed to be surveilled by the mission in accordance with the UNSCR 2146 and 2362 (EEAS, 2017).

Furthermore, between 2015 and 2019, Operation Sophia performed search and rescue (SAR) activities. In this period, the mission saved around 45 thousand migrants in the Mediterranean Sea (European Council, 2023a). The EU's public discourse was very much focussed on these SAR activities. These were seen as the paramount task of the mission, even though they were not mentioned in the mandate specifically. The SAR operations were also highly contested within the EU, as these operations are frequently considered to be a pull-factor of migrations. This would go against the imperative of reducing irregular migrations to the EU. While according to academics there exists no significant correlation between SAR missions and an increase in migratory flows, the pull-factor argument played a large role in the discontinuation of this part of Operation Sophia (Cusumano, 2019: 8; Alagna, 2020: 4).

As Operation Sophia fell under CSDP military missions, it required unanimity in the European Council. Moreover, the operation relied on voluntary contributions of the member states' armed forces. Thus, when some member states continued to express belief in the migratory pull-factor argument, they refused to extend the SAR activities. 2019 also marks the year in which all EU naval assets were withdrawn from the Mediterranean Sea (Alagna, 2020: 1). Certain member states, especially Italy, vetoed the continuation of physical activities in the Mediterranean. There was no agreement on the relocation of migrants and the place of disembarkation among the

member states. Linked to this pull-factor argument and SAR activities, are two conflicting objectives of Operation Sophia. The mission was launched in response to the humanitarian situation at sea and the imperative to rescue and save migrants. Contrarily, the mission was tasked to reduce illegal crossings into the EU. Conducting SAR operations was seen as a way to facilitate and incentivise these illegal crossings to Europe. Accomplishing both objectives was therefore almost impossible, pushing the member states to rethink their interests and subsequently stop SAR activities. From 2019 onwards, the mission only conducted surveillance through aerial assets (Riddervold, 2018: 65; Cusumano, 2019: 8).

5.2: Operation Irini

On 19 January 2020, the UN Berlin International Conference on Libya took place. The objective of this conference was to achieve a consensus among member states on the crisis in Libya (UNSML, 2020). The EU was also part of this conference and its contribution to it afterwards was EUNAVFOR MED Operation Irini, which was launched on 31 March 2020 (Mustatea, 2022: 120). Just as Operation Sophia, Operation Irini was launched under political and popular pressure to act. This pressure stemmed from three factors. First, the UN arms embargo on Libya continued to be violated. Therefore, posing a threat to the stability of the EU's immediate neighbourhood. Second, the deteriorating situation in Libya spurred popular pressure because of the crisis-induced terrible humanitarian conditions in the country. Lastly, until then, an effective and united response from the EU on the conflict was lacking (Alagna, 2020: 2). Operation Irini was extended in March 2021 for 2023, and additionally in 2023 it got extended for two more years until 2025. In the wake of the Strategic Review of the operation by the PSC, the European Council declared that its decision to extend the mission was important because, *'the disposal of arms and related materiel seized by the operation should be further facilitated'* (European Council, 2023b).

The main purpose of Operation Irini is different from the one of Operation Sophia. The core task of the mission is *'The implementation of the arms embargo on Libya imposed by the United Nations Security Council'* (EEAS, 2020). Compared to Operation Sophia, Operation Irini does not actively patrol and conduct SAR activities in the high seas and the control of migration is no longer seen as a primary objective. This downscaled involvement of the EU in the migration crisis is due to a long negotiation process in the European Council near the end of Operation Sophia's mandate in 2020. Some member states still relied on the pull-factor argument of SAR activities and insisted this was excluded in a new military mission. To take away this concern by the member states, the progress of Operation Irini is monitored by the PSC every four months. When the mission appears

to have attracted migrants to the EU, a member state can decide to stop its contribution to the mission without any difficulties (Pricopi, 2020: 305; Mustatea, 2022: 129).

The only way Operation Irini can be considered involved in the migration crisis is linked to the secondary tasks of the mission. The mission still *'contributes to the disruption of the business model of human smuggling and trafficking networks'* (EEAS, 2020). However, this is only done through patrolling carried out by aerial assets, and satellites, and not by vessels in the Mediterranean Sea. The maritime vessels in the Mediterranean Sea are only there to contribute to the arms embargo. In addition, Operation Irini cannot operate within Libyan territorial waters, as was case for Operation Sophia. The two other secondary tasks of Operation Irini involve the prevention of illegal petroleum exports from Libya and the training of the Libyan Navy and Coast Guard (Pricopi, 2020: 303). However, as of today, these trainings have not started yet, because of the political instability and fragmentation in Libya (Vasques, 2023).

6. Empirical Analysis and Discussion

This analytical section is divided into four main sections, where every section consists of one of the four frames derived from feminist and postcolonial literature. Hence, the first section examines the white masculine protector frame, the second discusses the white masculine saviour frame, the third delves into the frame of the feminine and racialised victim, the last section looks at the masculine and racialised threat frame. Within these four sections, all the concepts that fall under these frames will be discussed (to recall these concepts see table 1). Additionally, per frame, the analysis starts with EUNAVFOR MED mission Operation Sophia, then examines Operation Irini and simultaneously compares this mission with Operation Sophia.

6.1: The White Masculine Protector

6.1.1: Operation Sophia

In CSDP missions, male bodies are often constructed as the protector. This protector is chivalrous, responsible, and heroic, willing to protect the vulnerable femininity and the homeland (Kim, 2006: 521; Gray & Frank, 2019: 276). This protector masculinity can be found in multiple ways in Operation Sophia, as the protector always needs something or someone to protect. First, the protection of the EU citizen is emphasised by the frequent use of *'#foryoursecurity'* in Operation Sophia's Twitter posts. To achieve security for the EU citizen, Operation Sophia is faced with dangerous situations, such as harsh weather conditions and illicit affairs on sea, highlighting the responsible and heroic nature of the mission. It is noteworthy, that together with the protection of the EU citizens, the EUNAVFOR MED mission itself needs to be protected from the threats at sea: *'we must have the right type and number of assets to protect the force and operate effectively'* (EEAS, 2016: 20). The ability to operate effectively is also important to protect the EU homeland. The EU's territory needs to be protected by the mission. This notion of homeland security is stressed in multiple videos on the mission's social media, showing the European flag and depicting the mission operating at the high seas with the European anthem as the soundtrack (i.e., Sophia FB, 29/31/15). In addition, multiple tweets mention the protection of the EU against terrorism and crimes *'under the European flag'* (Sophia TW, 20/3/17). The reference to the European flag, which men and women serve, shows a traditional masculine idea of militarism. It refers to military and protector characteristics, such as bravery and loyalty to the homeland (Hoijtink & Muehlenhoff, 2020: 369). Femininity is then associated with the homeland. 'She' is dependent on protection only the mission can provide. Maritime controlling by Operation Sophia is a way of *'securing the sea and our borders'* (Sophia FB, 19/11/17). The European continent is vulnerable through the

penetrability of its borders. Operation Sophia makes the European borders, European territorial waters, and the Mediterranean Sea more secure, and in that way protects this vulnerability of the homeland. The feminised European continent is an object of masculine protectionism provided by mission Sophia. At the same time, by protecting the borders of the EU, the mission also exerts masculinity by defining who is included and who is excluded to the EU geographically, but also racially and culturally (Ticktin, 2008: 865).

Besides the protection of the EU citizen, the EUNAVFOR MED mission itself, and the EU territory, Operation Sophia also conveys protector masculinity through the protection of migrants aiming to cross the Mediterranean Sea. This is underscored by *'#protectingmigrants'* under many Tweets of Operation Sophia. The strong masculine mission protects the vulnerable weak and feminised migrant from the human smuggler: '*the operation is arresting the smugglers who put so many people in danger'* (Sophia TW, 20/3/17), Operation Sophia *'successfully provides a higher degree of deterrence against the smugglers and traffickers'* (EEAS, 2016: 3). Colonial masculinity plays a role here, as white, male, 'heroic' EU border guards, protect the vulnerable feminised migrant from the masculinised and racialised human trafficker and smuggler. This clearly allows gendered and racialised self-representations of Operation Sophia. The analysis of videos and images on the social media accounts of Operation Sophia underline these notions of masculine protectionism. Primarily, white male border guards, wearing military garments, pull non-western migrants from a small rubber dinghy into a military vessel, therefore taking on a role that fits the heroic, responsible, and tough protector.

The protection of the EU territory and its citizens is linked to colonial masculinity, because 'homogenous' Europe needs to be protected from something or someone. These 'unknowns' are related to colonial modernity (Moffette & Vadasaria, 2016: 12; Said, 1978: 69). In Operation Sophia, two groups of people belong to the unknown 'Other': the migrants and the human smugglers. Operation Sophia applies control and enforcement measures, such as departure prevention, and border checks, to manage the 'Other' on board of the ships and after docking. Images on the Twitter page of the mission show large groups of black male migrants sitting on the ground after disembarking the mission's vessel, all wearing the same outfit, all homogenised. They are surrounded by white men in military uniforms, carrying arms. Colonial control needs to be exerted over these racialised migrants by masculine protectionist representations of the border officers. An image on the mission's Facebook page stresses the same masculine representations of border officers and colonial masculinity towards migrants, as white males in military garments, including arms, *'are the ones responsible for […] the initial approach to the migrant vessels'*

(Sophia FB, 5/11/15). In addition, suspected human smugglers are approached in the same protectionist and militarised way. A Twitter video shows *'the approach of a suspicious vessel'* (Sophia TW, 24/7/16), a small boat with two black male suspected human traffickers in it. The boat is surrounded by three boats from Operation Sophia and a helicopter. Two men in military uniform from Operation Sophia, aim a gun at the suspects. These three examples, illustrate the way in which Operation Sophia uses protector and military masculinity in a racialised context.

The abovementioned protector masculinity and colonial masculinity clearly illustrate that military masculinity is also present in Operation Sophia. Aside from the official name of the mission, *'Military Crisis Management Operation'* (Council of the European Union, 2015: 2), there is ample evidence for military concepts, such as the need for control, the responsibility to defend, and the usage of military equipment. The social media accounts and the documents of the mission all repeatedly mention and show the vast number of military vessels, frigates, helicopters, and aircrafts that are used to control and patrol the sea. These military vehicles, often called *'warships'* (Council of the European Union, 2017a: 27) are equipped with high-tech military equipment, such as radars, weapon systems, and sensors. These military means are foundational to the mission's *'Military Strategic Objectives'* (EEAS, 2016: 17). Furthermore, many videos on Twitter and Facebook are filmed as if they are looking for a target, through the sight of a gun, with an action-packed and pumped-up soundtrack. Therefore, these videos evoke a strong combination of masculinity, protection, and militarism.

Operation Sophia's personnel also carries out the notion of military masculinity, by dressing in military uniforms and carrying weapons. Such as an image on Twitter showing men in military uniform holding guns, *'we introduce to you the #SecurityOperationalTeam [...] in the EUNAVFORMED Operation'* (Sophia TW, 10/8/16). Moreover, many images reveal uniformed personnel wearing or receiving medals and insignias. These items illustrate norms, such as discipline, rank, and hierarchy, which are central to military masculinity (Kronsell, 2016a: 318). While an active positive attitude toward violence is missing in the mission, because of regular training exercises by military personnel of Operation Sophia, combat masculinity is constructed. Masculine fantasies and ideals, such as troop cohesion, are reinforced during these trainings and thus contribute to combat masculinity (Coker, 2008: 139)

The last way in which military and combat masculinity are visible in Operation Sophia, is through cooperation with other masculine institutions. Operation Sophia cooperates closely with Frontex, NATO, Eurojust, and Europol. They *'enable operational information exchange'* (EEAS, 2016: 14)

and share *'flexible use of assets'* (Council of the European Union, 2017a: 31), among the institutions. Many of these organisations operate within a masculine context, thereby affecting Operation Sophia when they work together intently (Yakhlef, 2021: 13).

Collaborating with masculine institutions, and the presence of other masculinities, reinforces the notion of Operation Sophia being a masculine employer. In addition, the mission carries out military tasks with military equipment, where male bodies dominate, and masculine norms are emphasised. The few women that are present wear border security uniforms, appearing *'professional'* and tough, *'fighting smugglers and traffickers'* (Sophia FB, 3/9/15). Thereby, masculinising the women of the mission. The mission does pay attention to gender equality with its post on International Women's Day (Sophia FB, 8/3/18). However, in many other videos and images on the social media accounts, the presence of men prevails. This leads to think that the mission is utilising the international holiday to portray itself and its practices progressive. This is underscored by the picture of the EU Open Day stand of Operation Sophia, where a female border guard is present, even though the majority of Operation Sophia's employees are male (Sophia TW, 6/5/17). Additionally, the high positions within the mission are held by men. The only frequently visible and high-ranking female is the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs (HR) at the time, Federica Mogherini. Furthermore, at the Operational Head Quarter there is a position of *'Social Affairs and Women Empowerment Advisor'* (Council of the European Union, 2017a: 38). However, even though this is a woman, the notion of empowerment implies that the female employees of the mission are initially powerless. Also, images on the social media accounts of Operation Sophia portray female employees in traditional sex- and gender-role expectations. These expectations place women in a humanitarian and caretaking role (Henry, 2017: 186; Pallister-Wilkins, 2015: 56). Multiple images of female staff members with new-born babies, or providing medical assistance to migrants, are available on the operations' social media (i.e., Sophia TW, 7/7/16; Sophia TW, 18/2/19; Sophia TW, 29/4/17). Male employees, normally dominant in the posts, are noticeably less prominent on these images.

Considering the aforesaid, the last masculinity, hegemonic masculinity, can be found in Operation Sophia in two ways. First, internally, as female employees of the mission are still under command of high-ranking male supervisors. Therefore, the male is dominant over de female in the mission. Second, externally, male border officers dominate over non-western females, other marginalised non-western migrants, and subordinated masculinities in the form of human smugglers, by exerting masculine and colonial power and control over them.

6.1.2: Operation Irini

Just like Operation Sophia, Operation Irini displays protector masculinity in multiple ways. However, Operation Sophia draws the most attention to *'identify, capture, and dispose of vessels and enabling assets used or suspected of being used by migrant smugglers or traffickers'* (EEAS, 2017: 1), where EU protectionism is legitimised through the threat of human smugglers and migrants. On the other hand, Operation Irini highlights its core mandate, as the *'implementation of the UN arms embargo on Libya'* (Council of the European Union, 2020: 2), and therefore frames people violating the arms embargo as the biggest threat through which to legitimise EU protectionism. Strictly implementing the UN arms embargo contributes to the *'political stabilisation in Libya'* (Bundesregierung, 2023: 5). Subsequently, the political stabilisation of Libya, a country in the immediate neighbourhood of the EU, is seen as a way to protect the Union. The stabilisation of the EU's so-called neighbourhood is inherently linked to the security of the Union, and hence requires *'urgent and immediate action'* (EEAS, 2020: 1). By highlighting the urgency of the matter, the process is securitised and therefore adds to the importance of protecting the EU. Operation Irini is *'protecting us from terrorist activities and other threats in Libya right on the doorstep of our continent'* (Irini FB, 23/3/21). This speech given by HR Joseph Borrell, emphasises the vulnerability and feminisation of the European continent, as it is the object of masculine protectionism by Operation Irini. Additionally, it shows that the homeland needs to be protected from 'others' posing a threat. This loyalty to the homeland shows traditional ideas of masculine protectionism and is underscored by several Tweets on the operations' Twitter page, stressing pride to *'serve under the flag of the European Union'* (Irini TW, 20/8/20), and dedication to contribute to *'a more stable world, a safer Europe'* (Irini TW, 31/12/20). Furthermore, the monthly reports published by the mission also depict how important it is to protect the EU, displaying a map of Europe including the number of suspect flights, hailings, inspections, and diversions, achieved by Irini. The reports illustrate how useful it is to protect the EU and how the mission adds to, the much-used hashtag of *'#maritimesecurity'*.

The ethnic and racial aspects are also noteworthy, as from the visual analysis of the images and videos of Operation Irini it seems that a white European ethnicity dominates among the mission's employees. This is also the case for Operation Sophia. Even though a fairly large proportion of EU citizens has a non-white ethnicity, this is not represented in Operation Irini, nor in Operation Sophia. Kronsell and Sverdberg (2001), dedicate this unequal distribution to the legacy of military conscription. Until not that long ago, military conscription was obligatory for young men. It was a way to be trained into a 'real' man, to learn how to protect the people and its nation. Therefore, military conscription is still inextricably linked to a feeling of national duty that relies on a form

of nationalism. National ethnic identity, such as the European white ethnicity, is tied to this form of nationalism (ibid: 160). Thereby, the 'white' aspect of the masculine protector is added into the frame.

Operation Irini's protector masculinity also contributes to the protection of the European citizen, as well as the protection of the mission itself. *'The use of military force for the protection of own and other EUNAVFOR MED Irini forces'* (Bundesregierung, 2023: 4), and *'ensures the security of all Europeans'* (Irini FB, 9/5/20) attest to this. Compared to Operation Sophia, Operation Irini does not exhibit protector masculinity towards migrants. This is due to the fact that Operation Irini does not conduct SAR activities as opposed to Operation Sophia. Therefore, the mission is not involved into the protection and security of migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea. Another difference between the two missions is that Irini mentions the importance of the protection of European values, something that was not noticeable in the case of Operation Sophia. A commander from the Hellenic Navy contribution to Operation Irini, defines the operation in an interview as, *'not only about security, but also about protecting common values and the European civilisation'* (Irini TW, 28/6/20). Additionally, at the departure of a Romanian warship operating for Irini, it was emphasised that it had contributed to the *'protection of Irini's European values'* (Irini FB, 3/1/22). This type of protectionism links to colonial masculinity, where Irini as the protector, is protecting the EU from other 'lesser' values. The protection of EUropean values, is based on racialised, Orientalist, and postcolonial ideas that EU norms are superior to other non-western values from 'culturally backwards' regions (Every & Augoustinos, 2007: 413; Said, 1978: 68; Sachseder, Stachowitsch & Binder, 2022: 4676). Another way in which Operation Irini contributes to colonial masculinity, is through the *'disruption of the business model of human smuggling and trafficking networks'* (EEAS, 2021: 38). Similar to Operation Sophia, Operation Irini constructs the smuggler in a hyper-masculinised and racialised way, over which masculine and colonial power needs to be exerted.

One thousand days of Operation Irini is celebrated with a video showing the missions' military equipment, vessels, aircrafts, and military uniform wearing males, while operating or training in the Mediterranean Sea (Irini FB, 26/12/22). The soundtrack is adrenaline pumped, and in combination with the bypassing images of military equipment, the video is a powerful example of military and combat masculinity. The large amount of social media posts featuring military instruments accompanied by masculine soundtracks, also match to Operation Sophia. A further similarity between the two missions is the perpetuation of military stereotypes. A Force Commander takeover ceremony is closed with drill commands, including weaponry (Irini TW,

22/10/20), and countless of medal and insignia ceremonies can be found on the social media pages of both missions. Here, the hierarchical relationship of military rank is shown, together with the enforcement of military norms, such as discipline and professionalism. The problem, the threat of embargo violators, human smugglers, and terrorism, is resolved by cooperation with other military and or masculine institutions, such as Frontex, Europol, Eurojust, and the EU Satellite Centre (Council of the European Union, 2020: 5). The only difference with Operation Sophia is that Operation Irini has not made any official agreements for cooperation with NATO (NATO, 2023).

The proven masculinities of Operation Irini above, illustrate that the mission is a masculine employer. Like Operation Sophia, the images, and videos on the social media pages of Operation Irini are dominated by male employees. In addition, Irini's stand on the EU Open Day is managed by a female employee, just like that was the case with Operation Sophia. Moreover, many of the women who appear on Irini's social media pages, are not employees, but visiting ministers from member states. Operation Irini does post special messages on days, such as International Women's Day, the anniversary of the WPS Agenda, Day of Gender Based Violence, and International Day for the elimination of sexual violence in conflict. It is important to notice that the mission does reflect on the contribution their female employees make to the mission. However, there are some ambiguities with these posts. First, posts on gender equality are only posted on days when attention is already internationally drawn to gender equality. This gives the impression that gender equality is still seen as something special and not as the norm. Secondly, in a video celebrating the anniversary of the GAPIII, a female employee is asked how she combines working for Operation Irini with family life (Irini TW, 30/10/20). Thus, she is immediately linked to the notion of 'motherhood' and not seen as an individual actor. Besides, it remains the question whether the same question would have been asked to a male colleague. Thirdly, Operation Irini released a statement after their Women and Peace Conference stating, *'Operation Irini realises that we are much more effective if there are women and men among the peacekeepers'* (Irini FB, 3/11/21). This resonates with the aim of the EU to add the notion of gender and women to CSDP missions to contribute to the effectiveness of the missions. Hereby completely sidestepping the goal of gender equality within the mission (Carpenter, 2005: 306). Fourthly, Operation Irini has a Gender Advisor who spoke at the Women and Peace Conference. It is a good thing the mission has a female gender advisor, however, in her speech she mentioned that Operation Irini is *'committed to gender equality and empowering women'* (Irini TW, 3/11/21). Unequal power relations and subordination are ingrained into the notion of empowerment, as the one who needs to be empowered is initially seen as powerless (Martin de Almagro & Ryan, 2019: 5). This makes Irini's aim of empowering employees still problematic. Lastly, while the videos on International Women's Day show many

women involved in the mission, only 7% of the personnel of Operation Irini is female. Top roles are still missing as no woman oversees a member state delegation within the mission or the mission itself. Patriarchal patterns are repeated, seeing men continue being in the positions of charge, whilst the female counterpart is subordinate and *'under [their] command'* (Irini FB, 9/3/21). In this way, internal hegemonic masculinity is evident. External hegemonic masculinity, as in Operation Sophia, is not applicable to Operation Irini, since the mission has nothing to do with other femininities, besides its own female employees.

6.2: The White Masculine Saviour

6.2.1: Operation Sophia
Western superiority and arrogance are reinforced through the aim of saving the 'Other' (Said, 1978: 68; Abu-Lughod, 2002: 789). This superiority is clearly distinguishable in Operation Sophia, as the analysis highlights the emphasis that is placed on the importance of *'saving lives'* (Council of the European Union, 2017a: 19) in the Mediterranean Sea. According to Operation Sophia, saving the lives of thousands of people is best achieved *'when we act together in the European Way'* (Sophia TW, 20/3/17). Western superiority is underscored through this tweet, seeing the European way as the best and superior way to save as many people as possible. The notion of western superiority can be linked to the concept of the EU as a gentle civiliser. With *'the EU flag at sea saving lives and arresting traffickers'* (Sophia TW, 17/10/17), the EU is portrayed as a force for good by HR Mogherini. Furthermore, the Force Commander stresses the importance of the mission, by saying that *'without the dedication of such crews, many lives would have been lost at sea'* (Sophia TW, 20/6/2016), through which a rescue narrative is implied. Operation Sophia clearly feels a responsibility to save lives, which ties to the concept of the modern white man's burden. Whereby you feel you have the responsibility and the duty to assist the 'less fortunate' (Wintle, 2020: 175). Multiple tweets and Facebook posts refer to the mission's feelings of *'responsibility', 'accountability', 'obligation',* and *'duty'.* Oftentimes, rescuing people at sea is even seen as the EU's *'moral obligation'* (i.e., Sophia FB, 19/1/18).

The western superiority narrative by Operation Sophia, is also intrinsically tied to the notion of racial hierarchies. Since, the non-white non-European is seen as subordinate to and dependent on the white European. An idea that finds origin in colonial times (Jones, 2011: 30). This is reflected in the right Operation Sophia has, to collect:

Personal data concerning persons taken on board ships participating in EUNAVFOR MED related to characteristics likely to assist in their identification, including fingerprints, as well as the following particulars, with the exclusion of other personal data: surname, maiden name, given names and any alias or assumed name; date and place of birth, nationality, sex; place of residence, profession and whereabouts; driving licenses, identification documents and passport data (Council of the European Union, 2015: 3).

This far-reaching identification process of migrants testifies to racial and western superiority. Where the solution to the threat of migrants is solved through extensive screening, categorisation, and registration. Operation Sophia views the migrant as a subject, from which data needs to be extracted. This subjectification of the migrant relates to colonial times when the coloniser screened the colonised in order to be able to control and manage them. Additionally, this identification process also evokes the securitisation of the European identity in relation to the non-European identity, which cannot be detached from racialisation (Maguire, 2010: 597). Furthermore, after rescuing migrants, Operation Sophia starts *'further intelligence gathering, and much was learnt following interviews with rescued migrants'* (EEAS, 2016: 9). In this case, the racialised body of the migrants is used as a source of data extraction, to increase knowledge *'about migration routes from across Africa and beyond, towards Europe'* (EEAS, 2016: 9). These knowledge practices create colonial and superior constructions of Europe, and dichotomies such as whiteness/blackness, European/non-European, and Us/Them (Sachseder, Stachowitsch & Binder, 2022: 4682; Said, 1978: 69).

The concepts of western superiority, modern white man's burden, and gentle civiliser can also be identified in the mission's task to *'train the Libyan Coast Guard and Navy'* (EEAS, 2017: 1). Rear Admiral and Force Commander of Operation Sophia said in an interview that *'we teach them how to do the job of a coast guard'* (Sophia FB, 23/2/17). This attests to notions of western and racial superiority, where white officers from Operation Sophia know how to do the job of a coast guard and the Libyan Coast Guards do not. Additionally, the trainings missions are seen as a way to *'give the Libyan authorities something in exchange for their cooperation in tackling the irregular migration issue'* (EEAS, 2016: 20). Therefore, the mission's training task is influenced by the self-interest of the EU, namely the aim to reduce the number of migrants coming to the Union. In exchange for keeping the migrants in Libya, Operation Sophia will build a *'capable and well-resourced Libyan Coastguard who can protect their own shores'* (EEAS, 2016: 3).

Besides military and operational lessons, Operation Sophia also feels the responsibility to teach the Libyan Coast Guard normative concepts, such as training in *'human rights and raising gender awareness'* (Sophia FB, 31/1/17), both *'rights that are foundational to Operation Sophia'* (Sophia TW, 8/2/17). While it is a good thing Operation Sophia pays attention to these aspects, the way in which they convey these norms shows signs of the mission 'civilising' the Libyan Coast Guard. As one of the training officers said, *'they learn about human rights, and other concepts they aren't aware of'* (Sophia FB, 23/2/17). Furthermore, the mission makes sure the Libyan Coast Guards become *'familiar with the highest standards of training in this regard'* (Council of the European Union, 2017a: 38), depicting EU human rights as superior. Operation Sophia in this regard assists the 'less fortunate' Libyan Coast Guards by making sure *'human rights and gender are an integral part of their planning and operational activities'* (Council of the European Union, 2017b: 5). Lastly, visual analysis of the pictures and videos on the social media pages, indicate that the training is only given by male employees of the mission. This contributes to the transfer of masculinised and stereotypical gender roles, such as the ones discussed in the previous frame, to the Libyan Coast Guard and Navy.

Humanitarianism is the last important concept that belongs to 'the white masculine saviour' frame. Operation Sophia has a clear humanitarian imperative. The context in which the mission was launched, after the capsized vessel resulting in more than 800 deaths on the shores of Italian island Lampedusa, was a response to the humanitarian situation at sea. Additionally, the name of the mission also suggests a humanitarian focus. Sophia was a baby born on the 24th of August 2015, on board of one of the mission's frigates, from a Somali mother who was just rescued. HR Mogherini announced the name change of the mission, not shying away from emphasising the mission's humanitarian contribution:

> *I will suggest to Member States that we change the name of our operation: instead of calling it EUNAVFOR MED, I suggest we use the name: Sophia. To honour the lives of the people we are saving, the lives of people we want to protect, and to pass the message to the world that fighting the smugglers and the criminal networks is a way of protecting human life* (EEAS, 2017: 2).

This portrayal of the EU and Operation Sophia as a humanitarian actor is also very evident in its social media posts. Numerous posts are dedicated to the number of migrants that are *'saved'*, *'helped'*, and *'rescued'* by the mission. Furthermore, posts emphasise Operation Sophia *'contributing to save lives'* (i.e., Sophia TW, 12/2/16; Sophia FB, 22/12/17), preventing *'further*

loss of life at sea' (Council of the European Union, 2015: 1), and hindering *'more people dying at sea'* (Council of the European Union, 2015: 1). They all illustrate that Operation Sophia sees itself as a humanitarian actor. The importance of the SAR missions is especially highlighted, because otherwise, *'without these endeavours of Operation Sophia, many lives would have been lost'* (Sophia TW, 16/6/16). The mission is clearly concerned about the vulnerability of the migrants and considers itself to be the protector of these vulnerable migrants. To further emphasise the difficult circumstances in which the migrants find themselves, alarmist and emotional language is often used in the posts and documents, *'loss of souls'* (Sophia TW, 6/7/16), *'perilous journey across the Mediterranean'* (Sophia FB, 17/1/18), *'boat in distress'* (Sophia TW, 28/1/16), and *'tragically losing their lives'* (Council of the European Union, 2017a: 82). However, the mission is making clever use of this type of language and the portrayal of 'saving lives'. Since, by using emotional language and simultaneously emphasising the immediate action in the form of SAR activities, the audience will focus on the quick ethical response of the mission. The violent borders which render the migrants vulnerable in the first place, are hereby forgotten (Pallister-Wilkins, 2017: 23). Furthermore, some images and videos on the social media pages of Operation Sophia also show white officers handing out life vests to black, faceless migrants. In this situation, the mission is presented as humanitarian and able to conduct 'safe' interventions. Nevertheless, it also illustrates western and racial superiority, as the masculine and white humanitarian actor is bringing the vulnerable racialised 'Other' to safety.

The mission also undertakes *'seizure, capture and dispose of vessels and enabling assets used [...] by migrant smugglers'* (EEAS, 2017: 1). According to the Council Decision, this should be taken very seriously, stating *'take all necessary measures against a vessel [...] rendering them inoperable'* (Council of the European Union, 2015: 3). However, this mandate does not take the humanitarian consequences into account, when boats used by human smugglers are destroyed. This means that smugglers have to rely on easily replaceable, unseaworthy dinghies, which are more vulnerable at sea and, therefore, make the crossing of the Mediterranean Sea for migrants even more dangerous. Furthermore, it can be argued that the involvement of NATO with Operation Sophia, makes the mission less of a humanitarian actor.

Lastly, Operation Sophia also repeatedly underlines the importance of the *'principle of non-refoulement'* (EEAS, 2017: 1) in both its documents and on social media. This principle asserts that migrants should not be returned to their country of origin if they fear persecution or face life threatening situations. Whilst it is essential that the mission pays attention to this, the increased publicization of the term presents the migration and border regime by Europe as a considerate one.

While in reality, the EU's migration regime is still aimed at limiting the freedoms of people. The same applies to the obvious promotion of SAR activities by the mission (Cuttitta, 2017: 9). Human Rights Watch (HRW) hauls another criticism regarding the EU's handling of the principle of non-refoulement. According to them, the EU is avoiding the non-refoulement principle by training the Libyan Coast Guards and Navy. Since, under international law, the EU cannot send migrants rescued in international waters back to Libya, Operation Sophia is training Libyan Coast Guards to 'catch' these migrants before they leave Libyan territory (HRW, 2016). This argument is supported by the aim of training the Libyan Coast Guard and Navy by Operation Sophia, *'to be able to better manage their borders and tackle irregular migration coming from Libyan shores'* (EEAS, 2016: 16). These policies infringe upon the individual right of movement, as it results in the prevention of migrants leaving Libya. Additionally, the inhumane situations in the migrant detention centres in Libya are well-known by the EU, leaving the mission not as much of a humanitarian actor as it portrays itself.

6.2.2: Operation Irini
Compared to Operation Sophia, Operation Irini does not mention 'saving lives' as an imperative of the mission. Therefore, western superiority is not propagated in this way. However, similarly to Operation Sophia, Irini may:

> *Collect and storage, in accordance [...] personal data concerning persons involved in the carriage of such prohibited items related to characteristics likely to assist in their identification, including fingerprints, as well as the following particulars, with the exclusion of other personal data: surname, maiden name, given names and any alias or assumed name; date and place of birth, nationality, sex, place of residence, profession and whereabouts; driving licenses, identification documents and passport data* (Bundesregierung, 2023: 2).

Where for Operation Sophia this screening process was aimed at migrants, for Operation Irini it is geared towards the people transporting possible prohibited items, cited in the UN arms embargo resolution. Nevertheless, the racial and gendered western superiorities reflected through these registration processes are the same for both missions. Operation Irini may even, *'collect and store necessary medical information and biometric data'* (Council of the European Union, 2020: 3), of the people involved in the carriage of prohibited items. Considering white masculine officers have the ability and the permission to screen mostly non-white, non-European people so extensively, a

racial construction of risk is reinforced. This implies, once again, the racial hierarchies of Us/Them, whiteness/blackness, and European/non-European.

While screening processes of the 'Other' are rooted in colonial practices, there is an important difference between Operation Sophia and Operation Irini regarding these processes. After screening rescued migrants, Operation Sophia detains them on board and after disembarking the vessels, keeps them locked up in detention centres. The migrants are fully deprived of their freedom of movement. The people screened by Operation Irini, when declared not violating the UN arms embargo, are released, and then photographed on deck smiling next to the heavily armed Irini officers (Irini FB, 1/3/22). Where the migrants of operation Sophia are immediately constructed as a threat, Operation Irini first conducts a *'friendly approach'* (Irini TW, 30/8/20) before conclusions are drawn.

Additionally, on the social media pages of Operation Irini, attention is often paid to international recognition days, such as Zero Discrimination Day and International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The mission also wishes *'a happy Ramadan to all who celebrate, in particular to our Libyan friends'* (Irini TW, 14/4/21). However, just as it was the case with the posts on international days for gender equality, these posts only address the importance of racism and discrimination on the days that were already intended for it. This makes attention to these topics something special, instead of the standard. It is noteworthy, that compared to Operation Irini, Operation Sophia does not post on these international days of recognition. This might have something to do with the fact that in the last years, since Operation Sophia ended, awareness about the importance of these topics has increased. Alternatively, it could also be because Operation Sophia had a different mandate than Operation Irini. An aim to decrease the number of migrants coming to Europe, and therefore constructing a threat based on the unknown and racialised 'Other', was more effective.

The concept of the gentle civiliser is tied to the aim to bring security and order to the chaos, to 'save' the people and the country, and to 'civilise' them (Stern, 2011: 30; Jones, 2011: 28). This notion is reflected in Operation Irini's name. 'Irini' means peace in Greek, and the mission is thereby *'named after the ancient Greek Goddess of Peace'* (EEAS, 2020: 1). It is Irini's mission to ensure peace in chaotic and *'troubled Libya'* (Irini TW, 31/3/20). This rescue narrative of helping Libya with its 'problem' of instability, is reflected in the frequent use of *'#Irini4peace'* (Irini FB, 8/3/22). According to HR Borrell, *'the Libyans have a new chance for peace. The EU contributes to the recent positive developments, through Operation Irini'* (Irini TW, 24/4/21). Operation Irini's

assistance to the perceived chaos, is out of the *'noble purpose of contributing to peace in Libya'* (Irini TW, 13/8/21), according to Irini's Rear Admiral. Out of nobility and sympathy for the 'plight of the other', the EU is helping to achieve peace in Libya (Gray & Frank, 2019: 276). This moral feeling to assist Libya, is directly linked to the modern white man's burden, and further emphasised by posts stressing the EU's, *'responsibility to play an important role in promoting peace'* (Irini FB, 31/3/20) and its *'commitment to achieve peace'* (Irini TW, 1/10/20). Hereby, the white Europeans will ensure peace for the less fortunate 'Other'. Additionally, the EU has established a model for peace based on values and norms that are 'fair and objective', according to the EU itself. However, this one-size-fits-all-approach to peace does not work everywhere and is also masculine- and racial-coded (Stern, 2011: 44).

Different from Operation Sophia, Operation Irini has not started its training program of Libyan Coast Guards yet, due to political instabilities in Libya (Vasques, 2023). The guidelines of these trainings are, however, the same as for Operation Sophia. Therefore, the same issues can be raised about the aim to 'civilise' the Libyan Coast Guard. The training provided by Operation Irini, *'promotes good governance, protection of human rights and the reinforcement of rule of law'* (EEAS, 2021: 39). Making the Libyan Coast Guards 'proper' human rights respecting, and the EU is the best to teach these concepts, as *'the EU is a world leader in the field of gender equality […] and eliminating discrimination and violence based on gender within the EU and beyond'* (Irini FB, 18/12/20).

Where the concept of humanitarianism is intrinsically linked to saving migrants for Operation Sophia, this is due to its different mandate not the case for Operation Irini. Hence, the concept of humanitarianism is not unequivocally linked to Irini. However, the mission is concerned about the political instability in Libya and sees its employment as a way to contribute to peace in Libya. Therefore, Irini's aspiration for peace can be seen as a humanitarian act for the people of Libya. Yet, there is more evidence which argues against the idea of Operation Irini being a humanitarian actor. First, like Operation Sophia, Irini does not meet the humanitarian principles of neutrality, independence, and impartiality. Humanitarianism is often deemed apolitical, and the three principles of humanitarianism indicate whether this is the case for actors that portray themselves as humanitarian (Pallister-Wilkins, 2017: 23). Because of the institutional design of the CSDP missions, Operation Irini is reliant on the sovereign permission of the EU member states to conduct its mandate. For example, the mission cannot carry out inspections of suspected vessels without the member states' legal approval. Furthermore, the frigates of the mission cannot operate independently as they are managed and coordinated by the Operational Head Quarter in Rome,

which in turn is controlled by Brussels (Riddervold, 2018: 60). Another reason why Operation Irini is not a humanitarian actor, is because the mission potentially ignores its international responsibility, *'to provide assistance to persons in distress at sea'* (Bundesregierung, 2023: 6). Even though the mission is obliged to rescue those in danger at sea, and acknowledges this obligation in its documents, the mission has been accused of rescuing very few migrants (Euronews, 2022). The analysis of Irini's social media page substantiates these allegations, as there are no posts, videos, or images, showing the rescue of migrants by Operation Irini. This is an immense difference compared to Operation Sophia.

6.3: The Feminine and Racialised Victim

6.3.1: Operation Sophia
The concept of 'womenandchildren' by Enloe (1993: 166) can be identified in the analysis of both documents and social media pages of Operation Sophia. The mission needs to protect *'especially women and children'* (Council of the European Union, 2015: 1). They are the ones that are the victims of uncivilised Libyan regime, *'lack of access to justice amongst the Libyan population, especially vulnerable groups including women and children'* (Council of the European Union, 2017a: 15). By portraying women at the same level as children, any form of actorness is taken away from the woman, and it adds to the need for paternalistic protection from the masculinised mission. Additionally, vulnerability is also associated with women and children, *'refugees are exhausted, particularly the many women and many children'* (Sophia FB, 24/10/15). The vulnerability of women is also underscored by images on board of a military vessel, where men are sitting outside in the scorching sun, while all the women and the children are sitting under tarpaulins in the shadow (i.e., Sophia FB, 20/9/15). The fact that female migrants are also separated from male migrants, capitalizes the idea of the 'native' woman that needs to be rescued from 'barbarian' men, by white European males.

Another example shows white militarised officers surrounding a group of black male migrants, their backs turned to the female migrants behind them (Sophia TW, 22/3/16). The image underscores a white rescue and protection narrative and simultaneously depicts the female migrants as passive, deemed unnecessary to keep an eye on. These cases all illustrate a racialised and masculinised hierarchy between the employees of Operation Sophia, and the migrants depicting female vulnerability. Furthermore, many of these 'vulnerable' black female migrants are veiled, enlarging the racialised dynamics between the 'protector' and the 'protected'. Also, for the SAR activities, the mission operates according to a *'migrant handling manual'* (Council of the

European Union, 2017a: 38) that stipulates how to treat people rescued at sea. Nevertheless, whilst this is an important document, it states that: *'a particular focus has been placed in this documentation on the handling of vulnerable persons, such as unaccompanied minors and women'* (Council of the European Union, 2017a:38). Hereby, picturing the woman conditioned in her role of motherhood, once again.

The feminisation of geographical space, other than the 'European space', is not really reflected in Operation Sophia. Regarding homeland femininity, as mentioned in the concept of protector masculinity, the European homeland is an object of masculine protectionism. Operation Sophia is *'bringing the European flag in troubled waters'* (Sophia TW, 21/3/17), which illustrates the EU as being in a vulnerable situation, from which she should be 'saved' and 'protected'.

6.3.2: Operation Irini

Migrants play an important role within the 'feminine and racialised victim' frame. Partly as a result of Operation Irini's mandate, migrants are largely excluded from the documents and the social media pages. When searching for the word 'migrant' on the mission's Facebook page, the only result that comes up is, *'the operation monitors and gathers information [...] on the migrant flows to support the disruption of the business model off human smuggling [...] networks'* (Irini FB, 14/8/22). Running the query on 'refugees' also does not yield any results. Subsequently, the 'feminine and racialised victim' frame for Operation Irini looks rather different from the frame for Operation Sophia. On the other hand, compared to the latter, the feminisation of the Libyan geographical space is much more apparent in Operation Irini.

Geographical spaces outside of Europe are seen as 'in need of guidance' and dependent on the EU. Consequently, attaching femininity to the geographical space (Hill, 2005: 144; Jones, 2011: 38). There are two ways in which the documents and social media accounts of Operation Irini display Libya's 'need of guidance'. First, Operation Irini links feminised dependency to Libya, by stressing that the EU, *'is helping to end the long-running conflict in Libya'* (EEAS, 2020: 1), by bringing peace. The Union implies that the employment of Operation Irini is crucial to the ability to obtain peace in Libya. Therefore, it appears as if peace in Libya is only achievable when Operation Irini exists. Secondly, the trainings missions of the Libyan Coast Guard have not started yet. However, an analysis of the documents on their guidelines implies that the mission depicts Libya as unable to control their own borders, and therefore dependent on the mission's training. Through this inability to control its own borders, Libya is portrayed as vulnerable, helpless, and

reliant. Operation Irini will assist Libya with border management and control, *'with a particular focus on creating the conditions for the return of peace and stability to Libya'* (EEAS, 2021: 15).

Like with Operation Sophia, Operation Irini also displays the EU homeland in a feminine manner. Operation Irini protects the EU from the threats from the 'outside'. Thereby, making the EU a feminine object in need of protection. The need of protection from the danger of outside threats, is highlighted by the usage of alarmist language, *'protecting us from threats on the EU's doorstep'* (Irini FB, 8/5/20). Threats to the EU are close, and the vulnerability of the EU's feminine homeland is exposed, thus, making protection of EU territory crucial.

6.4: The Masculine and Racialised Threat

6.4.1: Operation Sophia
In this frame people are depicted as a 'threat' to the EU. An analysis of the documents and social media accounts of Operation Sophia, shows that the mission primarily frames migrants as a threat to the EU. This 'migrant threat' takes various forms. First, the threat of migrants is highlighted, by stressing the large increase in the number of migrants coming to Europe, in the documents of the mission. They mention a *'1664% increase'* (EEAS, 2016: 5) and *'numbers […] are significantly higher than over the same period the previous year'* (Council of the European Union, 2017a: 10). The increase of influx of migrants to the EU poses a threat to the Union. Maps with large arrows pointing from North Africa towards the EU, symbolise the invasion of migrants, underscoring a looming threat (EEAS, 2016: 5). Race and gender play a role in these depictions, as these maps illustrate an EU that is going to be overridden and outnumbered by racialised masses. This threatening 'Other' will change the racial configuration of the EU (Van Houtum & Bueno Lacy, 2020: 207). The threat of migrants is also commonly related to the loss of control. Hence, the second threat for the EU is the fear of not being able to handle the large number of incoming migrants. This is frequently illustrated on the mission's social media pages, showing numerous of large, overloaded boats with migrants. The mission's Force Commander points this out by mentioning, *'the number of migrant boats regularly exceed the capacity of on-scene rescue services'* (Sophia TW, 20/6/16).

The third form in which migrants pose a threat to the EU, is through a perceived health risk. The perceived poor health status of the migrants is not mentioned as a risk in the mission's documents. However, many social media images and video's show Sophia's employees wearing protective gear, consisting of a white overall, hoodie, protection glasses, plastic gloves, and masks (i.e.,

Sophia TW, 27/1/16; Sophia TW, 30/12/15). This indicates a fear for infectious diseases, assuming the 'Other' is filthy and infected. The fear of the 'unknown' disease is embedded in the Global North and upholds the idea of the hierarchical relationship between the un-modern, 'backwards' Global South, and the modern Global North (Stern, 2011: 44). Additionally, these mainly white male and unrecognisable employees are screening the black vulnerable migrant bodies, which fits a colonial role. The fact that many of these migrants potentially have mental health issues and are emotionally and physically traumatised, is thereby not considered by Operation Sophia. Any kind of emotional support has been taken away by the unrecognisable and 'clean' officers. Furthermore, a Twitter image shows protection clad officers taking pictures of migrants holding up a number when disembarking the mission's vessel one at a time (Sophia TW, 31/5/16). This image aligns with the objectification of the migrant, making them a number, and subsequently easier to manage.

The last way in which migrants constitute a threat to the EU, is through their potential exploitation of the EU's welfare system. In both the documents and social media pages of Operation Sophia, migrants are sometimes referred to as *'economic migrants'* (Council of the European Union, 2017b: 3). By framing migrants this way, they are portrayed as utilising and abusing the European welfare system, as well as the European immigration laws. These migrants are unethical subjects, less deserving than the 'hard-working' European. Thus, protecting the EU from these migrants requires these migrants to be portrayed in a racialised and masculinised manner, to delegitimise their crossing (Kmak, 2012: 12).

The abovementioned forms in which migrants are deemed a 'threat', are reinforced through the images and videos on Operation Sophia's social media. Many posts display images of large groups of migrants. There are barely any images with a few migrants on it. Displaying many migrants in one image leads to the dehumanisation of migrants. It could be that Operation Sophia uses this identifiable victim effect: an image of one migrant will trigger empathy, an image of a lot of migrants will turn empathy into fear. Hence, they are not seen as a problem that requires a humanitarian solution, but as a political problem, a threat, that requires and legitimises invasive colonial border control practices and tougher policies (Bleiker, Campbell & Hutchison, 2021: 232; Bilgin, 2020: 781).

Apart from the migrants, human smugglers and traffickers are also perceived as a threat to the EU. Operation Sophia protects the EU from these traffickers and smugglers, *'the goal is to hunt smugglers and then to detain them* (Sophia FB, 24/10/15). A Facebook video reporting the mission, shows Sophia's armed men, helicopters, and military vessels, captioned with the phrase, *'to all the*

human smugglers, this is Europe's message to you', and *'the EU's war on migrant smugglers'* (Sophia FB, 24/10/15). The threat of human smugglers can only be dealt with by using the hyper masculinised mission. On the contrary, the human traffickers are also masculinised, and even racialised, by the mission. Racialised attributes, such as violence and aggression are associated with the human smugglers. They are to blame for *'mass drowning incidents'* (EEAS, 2016: 7), they provide *'migrant vessels with less fuel, food, and water, and launch them in more difficult weather conditions'* (EEAS, 2016: 7), they have *'atrocious modus operandi'* (Sophia FB, 21/2/19), and they *'make a lot of money by sending migrants on perilous journeys'* (Sophia TW, 20/6/16). The human smugglers are the reason there are so many deaths in the Mediterranean. They exploit Operation Sophia's good will of its SAR activities. Simultaneously, it renders the victimised migrants vulnerable, legitimising rough and intrusive reactions by Operation Sophia.

The 'failed state' is the last concept connected to the frame of the 'masculine and racialised threat'. Not only people can be considered a threat to the EU. Other territories can also pose a threat to the Union. This notion is based on the portrayal of states as violent, chaotic, volatile, and lawless compared to the safe and calm EU, with strong checks and balances in place (Hill, 2005: 144). The documents analysed for Operation Sophia show that the mission does depict Libya as a criminal and violent state, *'the situation in Libya remains unstable'* (Council of the European Union, 2017a: 6). Furthermore, the country is deemed chaotic and unable to control its own territories. A, *'lack of governance and security in Libya'* (ibid: 14), *'rule of law and border security […] lack a unified approach* (ibid: 15), and *'retreat of the central state'* (ibid: 12), underscore the absence of clear checks and balances in Libya. The instability of Libya is a threat to the EU, and hence needs to be dealt with. Both this, and the mission's portrayal of Libya as lawless and disorganised, are linked to territorial and colonial hierarchisation. Where the EU is clearly seen as the modern and civilised Global North, and Libya as the inferior Global South in need of help.

6.4.2: Operation Irini
In comparison with Operation Sophia, Operation Irini does not frame migrants as a threat very often. The reason is, because migrants do not appear on the social media pages of the mission at all. However, migrants to appear in the round table presentation given by the Rear Admiral and Deputy Operation Commander in Brussels. Under the headline *'Maritime security in the Mediterranean Sea'* (Martinet, 2021: 2), images depicting various threats to the Mediterranean Sea, are shown. Among them, drugs smuggling, militias, terrorist groups, and overloaded boats with migrants. Hence, by putting migrants in this list of threatening situations, migrants are framed as a threat. Furthermore, this presentation includes a map with large arrows pointing at the EU,

indicating the migration flows and the increase in the *'total number of migrants [...] by +138%'* (Martinet, 2021: 17). Because the arrows on the map are displayed the same size as the EU member states, a notion of 'invasion from the South' is emphasised. The member states disappear behind large 'migration arrows', representing them as in danger, and framing the migrants as the ones threatening them (Andrijasevic, 2010: 156).

Whereby Operation Irini does not frequently frame migrants as threats, human traffickers and smugglers meanwhile are often depicted as threats to the EU. Additionally, the people violating the arms embargo are also framed as a threat. Since they *'violate the UN arms embargo, hampering efforts to reach a ceasefire'* (Irini TW, 31/3/20). Not reaching a ceasefire means instability in Libya, and therefore constitutes a threat to the EU. Like Operation Sophia, Operation Irini characterises these people in a hypermasculine and racialised way. Accusing them of being the cause of a *'rapidly deteriorating security situation in Libya'* (Irini TW, 17/2/20), and *'fuelling the war in Libya'* (Irini TW, 3/2/21). They are the masculinised 'Other', the 'troublemakers' risking the security situation of the Union. Therefore, Operation Irini's response is also very masculinised. A Twitter video showing the *'fight against organised crime'* (Irini TW, 31/3/20), is packed with military frigates, equipment and a testosterone filled soundtrack.

Lastly, Libya is, just like with Operation Sophia, seen as a 'failed state'. The *'political and security situation in Libya remains fragile and instable'* (EEAS, 2021: 13). This instability also has a negative effect on the EU's security. In addition, as a consequence of this fragility, Operation Irini is not able to help the country. The mission has not yet launched its training program of the Libyan Coast Guard, because *'relaunching these projects continues to be slow and arduous [...] due to the persistent security risk'* (EEAS, 2021: 21). This thought of helping *'troubled Libya'* (Irini TW, 31/3/20) as modern and advanced Europe, is rooted in colonialist power relations.

Conclusion

This thesis has presented an analysis of the EUNAVFOR MED missions, Operation Sophia and Operation Irini, to analyse their portrayal of both gender and race. These EUNAVFOR MED missions, as part of the EU's CSDP, shape migration, border protection, and security and defence. Hence, this broad context makes it relevant to look at gendering and racialisation. The thesis has analysed gender and race through a feminist postcolonial framework based on four frames: (1) White masculine protector, (2) White masculine saviour, (3) Feminine and racialised victim, and (4) Masculine and racialised threat. Thereby, Twitter and Facebook posts, and official policy documents from both missions, were analysed according to these four frames, using a frame analysis method. The answer to the research question, '*How are gender and race portrayed in the EUNAVFOR MED missions Operation Sophia and Operation Irini?',* can be subdivided into three sections. The first section, the people. Second, the territory. Third, the missions.

First, the people who are involved in or impacted by the EUNAVFOR MED missions. Male employees of both the missions are masculinised through protector, military, combat, and hegemonic masculinities. Additionally, these employees are predominantly white, exerting also colonial masculinity. On the other hand, the female employees of the missions are masculinised through masculine norms that are central to the gender war roles uphold by mission. The only time female employees are depicted as feminine, is in the stereotypical gendered conception of the 'woman as a caregiver' and humanitarian actor, in Operation Sophia. In case of the migrants, both male and female migrants are very often racialised by both missions. Their culture, skin colour, values, and norms, differ from the EUs, and therefore they are often treated as racially inferior. Male migrants are racially masculinised, hyper masculinised and thus formed as a threat to the EU, by the two missions, irrespective of their different mandates. Female migrants, in contrast, are racially feminised and victimised, made vulnerable, dependent, and exotified, by the missions' white male protectors. Regarding other non-EU citizens, such as human traffickers, are also framed threatening, based on their racialised maleness. As for the EU's own citizens, they are constructed as a racially homogenous white group, hereby, completely disregarding the non-white EU citizens. Also, the EU citizens are feminised in their need for protection by both missions.

Second, gender and race are also portrayed through the different territories the EUNAVFOR MED missions are connected to. Libya is the first relevant territory on which the analysis is applied. The country is masculinised by the two missions, through a continued construction of the state as 'failed' and posing a threat to the EU due to its instability. Moreover, the country is subordinated

to the EU, and hence feminised, as it is framed as dependent and in need of training, in order to be able to protect its own borders. This attests to a racial inferiority construction that is rooted in the colonial legacies of the EU member states. Secondly, even though other non-EU states are not mentioned that often by the two EUNAVFOR MED missions, they are still the countries of origin, and the transit countries of many of the migrants that try to reach the EU. Therefore, these countries also pose a racialised and masculinised threat to the EU. The last important territory is the EU homeland. As an object of protection, the EU's own territory is feminised. Furthermore, as home to the homogenised white-EU-citizen-community, the EU territory is also racialised.

Finally, the mission is the last section through which gender and race are portrayed. Both EUNAVFOR MED missions portray themselves as a masculine employer, by complying to protector, military, combat, and hegemonic masculinities. In addition, the two missions also display aspects of 'civilising' the 'Other', carry the responsibility of the white man's burden, and pose as the protector of the 'native' woman conform colonial masculinity. This illustrates that both missions are not only masculine employers, but they also maintain colonial practices and racial representations based on western and white-racial superiority.

All in all, the analysis of the two missions shows that both Operation Sophia and Operation Irini, portray gender in a stereotypical 'tough' masculinised or marginalised feminised way. The portrayal of race is characterised by racial representations that are founded on the colonial legacies of the EU member states. The hierarchy of white Europe versus its non-white racialised and threatening 'Other', is continuously reproduced by the two missions. The establishment of these gender and racial norms and representations, leads to the legitimisation of gendered and racialised discriminations, violence, and violations of human rights, by both EUNAVFOR MED missions. Additionally, regardless of the different mandates of both missions, the portrayal of gender and race are strikingly similar, indicating path dependency between both missions. It shows that the missions are not in line with the fundamental right of equality between sexes and non-discrimination. This suspension of EU norms and values delegitimises the EU domestically and on the international stage.

The abovementioned shows, that all four feminist postcolonial frames can be identified in the two naval missions. Furthermore, each concept within the four frames, contributed to the findings of gender and race portrayals by the EUNAVFOR MED missions. It illustrates that the feminist postcolonial conceptual framework fits a postcolonial and feminist epistemology, focussed on dissecting imbalanced relationships of power, and breaking down the notion of Eurocentricity.

Further research, then, could focus on gender and race constructions in other CSDP missions by the EU. There lies room in the possibility to apply this feminist postcolonial framework on other military (naval) missions. On the other hand, it would be interesting to apply this framework in the case of a civilian mission, since those missions do not employ military staff, nor deploy military equipment. Secondly, this thesis and its feminist postcolonial conceptual framework, use gender constructions based on female and male gender characteristics. Future studies should add a broader range of gender identities by, for example, using queer theory in the conceptual framework. Then, a more thorough and extensive evaluation of the construction of gender in the EU's CSDP missions, can then be made. Thirdly, the focus of this thesis does not lie on the effectiveness of the EUNAVFOR MED missions. Therefore, further research could show whether gender and race play a role in the effectiveness of the missions. Lastly, the methodology of this thesis remains mainly descriptive. Although the empirical analysis is linked to academic literatures, its descriptive base limits an explanation for the causes of the specific gender and race constructions by the two missions. Hence, additional research could focus on this explanation.

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Annex 1. List of Primary Sources

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2. Council of the European Union (2017a, 15 May). Strategic Review on EUBAM Libya, EUNAVFOR MED Op Sophia & EU Liaison and Planning Cell. Brussels: Council of the European Union.
3. Council of the European Union (2017b, 19 June). Joint CivCom Advice and PMG Recommendations on Strategic Review on EUBAM Libya, EUNAVFOR MED OP Sophia & EU Liaison and Planning Cell. Brussels: Council of the European Union.
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2. Council of the European Union (2020, 1 April). Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/472 of 31 March 2020 on a European Union military operation in the Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED Irini). Brussels: Official Journal of the European Union.
3. European External Action Service (EEAS) (2020, May). EU Common Security and Defence Policy: Operation EUNAVFOR MED IRINI. Brussels: European External Action Service.
4. European External Action Service (EEAS) (2021, 19 February). EUBAM Libya Strategic Review 2021. Brussels: European External Action Service, Integrated Approach for Security and Peace Directorate.
5. Martinet, J. (2021, 4 November). Maritime Security at work: Operation EUNAVFOR MED IRINI. Rome: Maritime Security Regimes Round Table, Deputy Operation Commander.

Facebook
Operation Sophia
- European Naval Force Mediterranean – Eunavfor Med Operation Sophia
- Page activated: 3 July 2015.
- Last post: 21 February 2020
- https://www.facebook.com/EunavforMed/?ref=page_internal
- Referenced in the text as: Sophia FB, day/month/year

Operation Irini
- Operation EUNAVFOR MED IRINI
- https://www.facebook.com/EUNAVFORMED.IRINI
- Referenced in the text as: Irini FB, day/month/year

Twitter

Operation Sophia
- EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia
- Member since: July 2015
- Last post: 11 April 2020
- 995 Tweets in total
- https://twitter.com/ENVFM_Sophia
- Referenced in the text as: Sophia TW, day/month/year

Operation Irini
- Operation EUNAVFOR MED Irini
- Member since: March 2020
- 758 Tweets in total
- https://twitter.com/EUNAVFOR_MED
- Referenced in the text as: Irini TW, day/month/year

Annex 2. Code List and Operationalisation 4 Frames

Frames	Codes	Indicators
White masculine protector	Protector masculinity	Not exclusively related to the biological male sex. Divided in four 'protectionisms', mentioning and/or visibility: 1. Of the protection of EU values 2. Of the protection of the EU as geographical entity 3. Of the protection of people within the EU that must be protected. Specifically, the protection of women. 4. Of the protection of women outside of the EU *(Gray & Frank, 2019; Kim, 2006; Muehlenhoff, 2021)* The protector is always directly linked to the one that needs to be protected. There is a visibility and/or mentioning of some sort of hierarchical relationship: - Strong protects the weak - Agents versus the victims *(Gray, 2022; Kronsell, 2016a)* The protector is associated with positive aspects of masculinity: - Virtue - Chivalry - Heroism - Shows compassion *(Gray, 2022; Kimmel & Aronson, 2004; Thomson, 2022)*
	Colonial masculinity	Mentioning and/or visibility of the protector, defending someone from something. The 'something' is related to colonial modernity: - Protecting from: another culture than the EU's western centric culture - Protecting from: another religion than the EU's dominant religion of Christianity - Protecting from: other values and norms than the EU's values and norms: democracy, equality, rule of law, human rights, freedom, and human dignity. - Protecting from: 'Other' people *(Mani, 1990; Abu-Lughod, 2002; Moffette & Vadasaria, 2016; Said, 1978; Al-Wazedi, 2021)*
	Military & combat masculinity	Not exclusively related to the biological male sex. Mention and/or visibility of: - Positive attitudes toward violence - Need for control - Military garments - Weapons - Additional military equipment - Military foundational to the mandate - Military way to achieve the main goal

		(Kimmel & Aronson, 2004; Kronsell, 2016a; 2016b; Sachseder, Stachowitsch & Binder, 2022; Coker, 2008)
	Hegemonic masculinity	Contrary to other forms of masculinity, hegemonic masculinity is linked to the biological male sex. Additionally, hegemonic masculinity in CSDP missions is visibly or verbally opposed in relation to and against an 'Other' (compared to other masculinities mentioned above). The male is dominant over the subordinate other. Multiple others: - Females: western and non-western females - Marginalized: non-western people, such as migrants (with other skin colour, culture, and religion) - Subordinated masculinities: mostly men from outside the EU (with other skin colour, culture, and religion) Visibility and/or mentioning of the hegemonic masculine male: - White - Strong - Heroic - Upper class - Heterosexual (Connell, 1987; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Hall, 1992a)
	CSDP masculine employer	Mention and/or visibility of gender war roles in CSDP missions: - Masculinised woman: women equipped like a man - Military tasks with military equipment - Male bodies dominate the missions - Traditional sex-role expectations: male employees as military combatants, female employees as humanitarian actors - Safeguarding masculine traits at mentioned above (military, combat, and protector masculinity) - Advertising empowerment of women (Muehlenhoff, 2017; 2021; Henry, 2017; Kronsell, 2016; Pallister-Wilkins, 2022) Mention and/or visibility of masculine norms foundational to the operation of the CSDP mission. Masculine norms emphasise: - Physical toughness - Emotional stoicism - Heterosexual dominance over women - Self-sufficiency - Risk taking - Protector - Violence - Professionalism

		(Kimmel & Aronson, 2004; Thomson, 2022; Kronsell, 2016a; Hoijtink & Muehlenhoff, 2019) Missions of CSDP convey: - Masculinised and stereotypical gender roles (as mentioned above) - Masculinised values - Masculinised concepts *(Kronsell, 2016a; Guerrina, Chappell & Wright, 2018)*
	Male bodies	Mention and/or visibility of male staff in EU mission, related to the characteristics of the biological male sex. Examples but not exhaustive: - Adams apple - Facial hair - Broader shoulders - Fuller chest *(Kimmel & Aronson, 2004)*
	Homeland security	Mentioning and/or visibility and depiction of the EU territory as 'homeland' that needs to be protected from the three 'somethings', as is mentioned in the part of colonial masculinity (other culture, religion, values, and norms) and from other people (migrants, 'Others'). *(Bellavita, 2008; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005)*
White masculine saviour	Western superiority	Mentioning and/or visibility of 'the West over the rest'. - EU > barbarian territory - EU security and order > chaos - EU democracy > non-democracy - EU rule of law > no rule of law - EU human rights > no human rights The rest, the outside, applies to non-EU countries, such as the countries where migrants come from. Visibility and/or mentioning of western superiority: - Fingerprinting - Profiling - Biometric screening - Information databases - Controlling who comes in *(Sachseder, Stachowitsch & Binder, 2022; Abu-Lughod, 2002; Pruitt et al., 2018; Every & Augoustinos, 2007)*
	Territorial hierarchies	Mentioning and/or visibility of EU positioned as the 'gold standard': - Non-EU countries compared with EU - Non-EU countries evaluated on universalised EU standards *(Kinnvall, 2016; Jones, 2011)*
	Racial hierarchies	Mentioning and/or visibility of racial hierarchies: - White European > non-white non-European - White protectionism over the 'Other' - Framing the 'Other' as threat

		(Jones, 2011; Said, 1978; Bilgin, 2020; Barkawi & Laffey, 2006)
	Gentle civiliser	Mentioning and/or visibility of EU believing that they are: - Doing something good for the other: EU as a force for good - Helping the other with a problem - Rescue narrative - Showing sympathy to the other *(Gray & Frank, 2019; Fisher Onar & Nicolaïdis, 2013; Muehlenhoff, 2021; Stern, 2011)* Civilising the other visible in: - Aim of training missions - Mandate of missions What does a 'proper' citizen look like: - White - Liberal - Conveys to EU norms and values - Human rights respecting *(Schlag, 2012; Kronsell, 2016a; Fisher Onar & Nicolaïdis, 2013)*
	Modern white man's burden	Mentioning and/or visibility of the EU: - Have a responsibility to people other than Europeans - Assist the 'less fortunate' by implementing EU norms, policies, legislation - White > non-white *(Jayasundara-Smits, 2021; Wintle, 2020; Said, 1978; Akram, 2020)*
	Humanitarianism	Mentioning and/or visibility of the EU as a humanitarian actor: - Saving lives through interventions - Humanitarianism as most important purpose of the EU, not as a platform to raise concerns regarding migration to the EU Border actors, mission, and/or employees, are visible and/or mentioned: - Superiority - Masculinised - White > non-white - Trustworthy protector - Non-vulnerable > vulnerable - Safety > danger Humanitarian principles which a true humanitarian actor must meet: - Independence - Neutrality - Impartiality

		(Pallister-Wilkins, 2015; 2017; 2022; Cusumano, 2019; Riddervold, 2018) Words referencing to humanitarianism: - Aid, assist, distress, help, hope, humanitarian, life, recover, refoulement, relief, rescue, SAR, save, survive. (Cusumano, 2019)
Feminine and racialised victim	Femininity	Not distinct to the definition of the biological female sex, feminine traits can be exhibited by anyone. Feminine traits are: - Compassion - Tenderness - Sensitivity - Loyalty - Sympathy - Accommodating human role (Kimmel & Aronson, 2004)
	Womenandchildren	Mentioning and/or visibility of women represented as: - Vulnerable - Victims - Dependent - Paternalistic protection: in need of protection from people or institutions who are above you - Women always mentioned in relation to motherhood, not independent actors (Enloe, 1993; Peroni, 2016, Abu-Lughod, 2002; Crawley, 2022)
	Marginalisation	Mentioning and/or visibility of women, especially migrant women, as: - (Non-)western women as vulnerable - Dependent - Victims of 'barbaric' others (e.g., people, institutions and regimes) - Veil is fetishized, sexualised, exoticized, politicized by the people who are protecting/saving them - Monolithic entity: no differences are made in country of origin, race, culture etc. (Al-Wazedi, 2021; Akram, 2020; Crawley, 2022; Keskinen & Andreassen, 2017)
	Feminisation of geographical space	Mentioning and/or visibility of non-EU countries as: - Al in one region with the same characteristics - Non-EU countries dependent on the EU - Non-EU countries in need of guidance - Non-EU countries feminine and virgin (Hill, 2005; Jones, 2011; Hall, 1992b)
	Homeland femininity	Mentioning and/or visibility of the EU and EU-countries as: - Vulnerable and in need of protection - Does not engage in military activity

		- Object of masculine protectionism *(Sachseder, Stachowitsch & Binder, 2022; Kronsell, 2016b)*
Masculine and racialised threat	Migrant as risk/threat	Mentioning and/or visibility of migrant as: - Risk to dominant western culture - Risk to dominant western attitudes - Risk to dominant western values - Risk to western economic well-being: stealing jobs - Here to 'take away' - Uneducated and uncivilised - Only males What do these male risk migrants look like? - Young - Muslim - Single: no family ties - Strong and powerful - No vulnerability/weakness - Violent *(Every & Augoustinos, 2007; Gray & Frank, 2019; Al-Wazedi, 2021; Bilgin, 2020; Said, 1978)* Mentioning and/or visibility of the EU's reaction to these migrants: - Harsh and invasive practices by EU security policies - Surveilling - Categorising with threat *(Bilgin, 2020; Moffette & Vadasaria, 2016; Sachseder, Stachowitsch & Binder, 2022; Barkawi & Laffey, 2006)*
	Terrorism	Mentioning and/or visibility of people (migrants, human traffickers, 'Others') as: - Risk to western national security - Risk to western society and people in the light of real or perceived danger - Real danger: violence, threat to women *(Gray & Frank, 2019; Every & Augoustinos, 2007: 413; Said, 1978; Pruitt et al., 2018)*
	Failed state	Mentioning and/or visibility of non-EU countries and territories represented as: - Lawless - Criminal - Violent - Chaotic - Centre > periphery - Geographical hierarchisation: western territory > non-western territory *(Hill, 2005; Hall, 1992b; Baker, 2021)*