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The Potentialities and Obstacles of the Comprehensive Approach within the EU as an Alternative Strategic Thinking for a Security Provider: the Case of EU NAVFOR

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Introduction

The aim of this paper is to examine the implications derived from the Comprehensive Approach (CA) doctrine of the EU as a security provider and to address the implications of the emerging multi-layered security approach of the EU in international crisis management. In order to meet this aim, the purpose is to contribute to the discussion about the EU role in world politics from a civilian (Bull, 1977a) and/or ethical power (Aggestam, 2008) perspective and its correspondent development of a Defence Policy to dispose its own military means (see e.g. Riddervold, 2011), which perhaps could be essential to project its own transformative power.

The hypothesis is that the success of the EU as a differentiated security provider, i.e., as a transformative actor in the international arena, depends more decisively on its levels of efficacy provided by the CA in both, a technical and a political sense, than on its normative power itself. The EU finds real difficulties in its struggle for the hegemony of the geopolitical visions by imposing discursively its normative terms in coexistence with mayor powers. However, the EU could find fewer difficulties in its struggle for hegemony by emphasizing the technical gap of its broader policy-tools in certain contexts, than by directly emphasizing its ethical dimension (Youngs, 2004). This formula could be more appropriate in order to readapt the EU international role to the structural changes experienced by the international system in recent years. These structural changes seem to evidence an increasing refusal of the European normative power (Barbé, 2012), the EU could emphasize its own broader policy-tool potentialities and the broader potential of its delivery in contrast to the narrower framework of great powers, which find more difficulties in managing complex environments and international crisis management. Such consideration of the EU as a transformative

power may imply recognition of the open future of the political domain and, consequently, the affirmation of the changing nature of world politics (see e.g. Guzzini 2013; Wendt, 1992, 1999, Cox, 1981), instead of the common discourse that stresses the ‘historic sense’ of the EU identity (Schimmelfenning, 2003; Gilbert, 2008; Middelaar, 2013)

The case of European Union Naval Force ATALANTA (EU NAVFOR), which is articulated within the legal framework of the European Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and the UN Security Council Resolutions, shows mixed results as part of a wider EU's CA to Somalia. In technical terms it has been effective but in political terms it still confronted by different obstacles (Ehrhart and Petretto, 2014). This paper draws on the EU's CA deployment within the EU ATALANTA (EU NAVFOR) to analyse the underlying ethical conceptions of the EU's new strategic thinking and its potentiality in transformative terms. As a result, the paper identifies the potentialities and obstacles that the strategically differentiated EU's CA poses to its ambitions to become an effective security provider in comparison with the predominant realist strategic thinking of the great powers, which is still dominating geopolitical thinking in world politics.

This paper is structured in the following way: the first section will discuss the status of the EU as a transformative power by applying the concept of hegemony from a gramscian perspective, focusing on its role in international crisis management based on a comprehensive approach. The purpose of this part is to analyze the strategically differentiated framework of the EU as a security provider in relation to great powers. In the second section we will discuss the conceptualization of the comprehensive approach doctrine of the EU from a strategic thinking perspective, with emphasis on the context of permanent competition and coexistence with the traditional well-established strategic thinking associated with great powers. The third section looks at the evolution and the current framework of the EU's foreign policy towards Africa which will allow us to define the normative means and limits of the EU's foreign policy to this region. The fourth section of this paper treats the CA implementation in the specific case of the EU ATALANTA (EU NAVFOR). In the final section, this paper identifies some potentialities of and obstacles to the normative power of the EU in its dispute for hegemony over of the regulatory framework of international conflicts.

The EU's comprehensive approach: towards the transformative power of a strategic identity

In coherence with the notion of EU transformative power, the Normative Power Europe formulation (Manners, 2002, 2008, 2013; Whitman, 2013) affirms in some way that the EU pursues to have an influence in normative transformations instead of increasing its material power through self-interest calculus. Thereby the EU would represent an innovative sort of power in world politics, which uses *normative means* to pursue *normative aims*. Whether the EU really represents or not a normative power, whether EU's aims and means correspond or not to that notion, the discussion about how far the EU produces a real alternative power is still under debate (Diez et al., 2011; Diez, 2012). However, the reconceptualization posed by Ethical power Europe (Aggestam, 2008) would represent the fact that the EU has acquired a broader spectrum of capabilities, such as civilian and military power. This concept would try to move beyond civilian and normative power, shifting the question of what the EU is into what the EU does by remarking the increasing strategic role of the EU in world politics and by focusing on ethical but also on empirical evidence (ibid.). This would therefore enable us, according to the theoretical and the empirical formulation of the EPE, to redirect the debate about the EU international role beyond those concepts.

In order to address this issue, the use of the concept of hegemony from a gramscian perspective (see e.g. Bieler and Morton, 2004; Burnham, 1991; Cox, 1983) seems to formulate the EU particularity by adding more potential to the question of power itself (Diez, 2013, 2005; Haukkala, 2011). Different from the realist perspective of the hegemony proposed by Manners (see Hyde-Price, 2006), this particular concept would allow the unification of a broader range of actors actually involved in EU crisis management focusing on the analysis of the dominant ideas in the construction of its normative power. In this regard, the EU is an unstable space of relations of power where sovereignty is pooled and different forces and discursive frameworks converge producing and conditioning in some way the CFSP/CSDP of the Union. Opposite to this approach to the CFSP/CSDP, the notion of great power is likewise conceptualized, following Hedley Bull's study of the main institutions of international society (Bull, 1977b). One of these main institutions is constituted by great powers, which could be identified as such due to the recognition made by other actors but also due to its self-attribution of superior duties and rights.

Following the Thomas Diez proposal for the concept of hegemony (Diez, 2013), the objective is to relocate the controversial questions: a) the relations between norms and interests in foreign and security policy; b) the role of the state and non-state actors in this field; or c) the apparent academic particularities of the debate itself. As several academics affirm (Diez, 2013; Haukkala, 2011), the aim of the notion of hegemony here is to draw up a strategy of research which allows us to manage the complexity around the EU's foreign and security policy without being constrained by the tensions between these delimitations and debates. In short, the author attempts to contribute to the question of how far EU transformative power has an actual impact on the current European security architecture by focusing on the recent transformations that are shaping the dominant strategic thinking of international crisis management through an analysis based on the perspective of hegemony. Then, this notion of hegemony would enable us to conceptualize two phenomena: i) the formation of an understanding of the EU as a differentiated security provider as a whole, emphasizing its internal processes as well as focusing on its differentials with those external great powers (Manners 2006, Diez and Manners 2007; Diez, 2013); ii) the formation process of the dominant strategic framework of the European security architecture by analyzing the struggle between different strategic thinking. The analysis focuses, in sum, on the dispute for hegemony in defining the conflict resolution principles between different strategic thinking formulations (discursive struggles) and their effective operationalization (material elements).

Therefore, if the EU has at its disposal a wide range of instruments and develops a comprehensive doctrine as a result, its strategic thinking should indeed be different from the great powers.¹ In this sense, what would make the EU different from any traditional great power may be partly due to its circumscribed use of military tools, which relies on the existence of military means in complex relations with other elements (Riddervold, 2011) within a comprehensive approach. Then, from a gramscian concept of hegemony, it is crucial to understand that the transformations that may occur in the strategic domain could imply consequently, a transformation at the core of the regulatory framework of international conflicts.²

Conceptualizing the Comprehensive Approach from the EU's experience: an alternative to Great Powers

Understanding the emergence of the CA implies drawing attention to the emergence of the liberal consensus at the end of the Cold War. The liberal theoretical tradition in world politics has always played a crucial role in the conception of international regimes, mainly in what concerns economics. However, the successive international crises which have occurred since the end of the Cold War have implied somehow a mayor role of the liberal rationality (Doyle, 1995), establishing a particular historical period characterised by the consolidation of the liberal hegemony. In particular, the liberal rationality applied especially to international crisis management had already experienced a partial emergence in the eighties. For its part, the political agendas of governments and international organisations had experienced a similar trajectory (see e.g. Gross and Juncos, 2011; Colom, 2014).

In recent years, the implementation of the CA in its different formulations has contributed to the broadening of security geography since the end of the Cold War (Major and Mölling, 2009) in comparison with the well-established formulations from a realist theoretical tradition in security terms.³ In contrast to the latter, the former not only comprises diplomatic and military means, but also border control, police activities, law enforcement, public administration, RSS, engineers and a diverse range of other professionals, humanitarian aid, development policies and international cooperation among others, as it is well-known (Gebhard and Norheim-Martinsen, 2011).⁴

As a consequence, the current EU *actorness* model and its CA doctrine could be explained partly due to the necessary adaptation to this historical context, to the point that the EU CFSP/CDSP towards Africa is based on well-known terms or core concepts like good governance, development and security (Gibert, 2011), where ‘institutional stability’ could be added. Therefore, in the EU CFSP/CDSP analysis, the struggle against social phenomena like civil wars, famine, natural disasters, corruption, terrorism, piracy, organized crime, trafficking, etc. seems to predominate over the confrontation dynamics against an enemy or antagonistic block of States.

In this context, from the author’s perspective, the EU’s CA is generally based on, among others, the following principles⁵: a) Risk management. In a context of high complexity and contingencies that characterise the international environment and the absence of an unlike large-scale war between States or great powers, the management of risks has become one of the main pillars in EU security strategy (Major and Mölling, 2009). The impossibility of reaching a degree of absolute predictability of a crisis has

led to a model where the measurement of risks and the containment of them has become one of the key elements (Gundel, 2005). b) The definition of standards of 'good government'. The design process of indicators and thresholds to measure and identify the priorities and options to assist an apparent weak state in order to create a model of what and how a State should be. c) The contingent character of an international crisis leads to an unclear constitution of the *other*. Assuming the fact of dealing with uncertainty or unexpected events leads to the necessity of the development of comprehensive security in order to respond with the widest range of instruments possible.

According to such assumptions, the traditional division of the security domain between the military-diplomatic apparatus in foreign security and the civilian-police apparatus in home security has been gradually diluted since the end of Cold War. As we will see, the emergency of the CA illustrates one of the crucial changes of the current strategic thinking from a State power perspective. One of the key consequences is represented by the existence of prevention and early warning alert mechanisms. The global aim of all of these mechanisms would be to reduce as much as possible any expected or imagined risk identified from those places of production of strategic thinking, either public institutions or private organizations, which have also become a core element of the security model. In this sense, some academics affirm that any design of crisis response and conflict prevention must be necessarily incomplete because of the treatment of information and data. Consequently, the following decision-making processes themselves are always held to subjective considerations (*ibid.*).

All of these aforementioned elements may evidence that there is a general tendency in Europe which implies certain dissolution, or at least a partial dissolution, of the traditional domains of security. That is, a type of dissolution between the traditional internal and external dimension of security as it was always understood from a State power perspective and, consequently, the military-diplomatic and civilian-police instruments respectively associated to each of them. All things considered, those two tendencies, i.e., the reorganization of the civilian and military tools at the disposal of the State as well as the emergence of the so-called hybrid wars and emerging crisis, have configured to some extent the new strategic thinking of the EU, currently materialized through the CA model. In order to articulate this conceptualization, a typology of the

EU's CA interfaces was proposed by Carmen Gebhard and Per Martin Norheim-Martinsen, which will be applied in this paper.

Functional interfaces in the EU's comprehensive approach.

Structural–Operational	Internal–external	Civilian–military
Security–development Security–trade	Terrorism–border control Organised crime–border control	Coordination–organizational cultura Coordination–planning
Security–foreign policy	Integration–migration	Coordination–operations

Source: see Gebhard and Norheim-Martinsen, 2011.

Their typology consists in three main intersections around the EU's CA: i) structural/operational; ii) internal/external; iii) civilian/military. The first column, the structural–operational interface, relates different domains that traditionally had been considered ruled by different elements of security. In the second column, the interface between the internal and external security refers to security matters while the third column, civilian–military coordination, implies a focus on the way these comprehensive apparatuses of security are coordinated (for more information see Gebhard and Norheim-Martinsen, 2011). As it has been suggested, the military–diplomatic and civilian–police instruments are increasingly intertwined and no longer circumscribed to a specific dimension of State's security. Furthermore, the CA itself is a consequence of the existing dissolution of the traditional military–diplomatic and civilian–police instruments division of the State power derived from the increasingly undistinguished internal–external security matters. This, therefore, requires a new approach towards the way these traditional state apparatus should be articulated (e.g. military–civilian) in order to answer to the increasing flexibility or resilience that a complex environment demands nowadays.

Several States in Europe and several international organizations have led their capacities and strategic thinking in a more comprehensive way to the point that it has become a general trend in Europe. Nevertheless, in spite of the aforementioned diverse range of implementation plans for a CA, the case of the EU may present a major potential. Basically, two of the most common reasons are its historic trajectory and *sui generis* actorness or the wider range of tools at the disposal of EU in comparison with actor of other nature (see e.g. Diez, 2012; Hyde-Price, 2008; Sjursen, 2006; Bull, 1977a). The special sensitivity of the EU towards a CA has contributed to the image of the EU as an

innovative space in multiple fields in international relations. In this context, the EU must rely on the normative, bureaucratic and organizational framework at its disposal (Gebhard and Norheim-Martinsen, 2011), to deepen the coordination and operationalization process in the long and short-term towards the great strategic transformation. In addition, the aforementioned compendium of elements reveals once again the profound transformation that the European security architecture is experiencing because of the specific case of the EU, which tends to increasingly formulate a comprehensive framework of strategic thinking.

Defining the EU's foreign policy towards Africa

The EU has become increasingly involved in international crisis management in Africa since the end of Cold War. In this period, the progressive formation of a CFSP/CDSPP has been based mostly on strengthening its regional policy framework for Africa focusing on development programmes and encouraging State reform measures on a remarkable technical basis. Framed in a strategic thinking of strengthening institutions, promoting 'good governance', 'peace' and 'stability' among others (ESS 2003, 2008), the analysis of the EU historical evolution towards Africa underlines the priority given to transforming the nature of weak States into a more standardized State, according to a so-called dominant definition of what and how a State should be (Gibert, 2011).

Due to the fact that the horn of Africa represents one of the most unsettled regions in the world and after a success of UN SC Resolutions (especially 1814, 1816, 1838, 1846) when the Security Council has been called to address the escalation acts of piracy off the coast, Africa became in one way or another a sort of laboratory for the development of EU international crisis management (Gibert, 2011; Brosig 2014). Institutionally, although in the beginning the African–EU relations started with the Cotonou Agreement and the first Africa–EU Summit in 2000, the creation of the Africa Peace Facility (APF) in 2004 –financed by the European Development Fund–, represented a commitment to foster multilateral peace and security in the region after the African Union (AU) Summit in 2003. The main intention of the APF was based on the premise that a peace and security-development link is an unavoidable condition for prosperity. In accordance with the interdependence between these two concepts marked by the APF, the EU presented in 2005 the *EU Strategy for Africa* in order to articulate its foreign policy in the region with the deliberate intention of enhancing multilateral relations for security

matters, which have become one of the key instruments for the EU to support the operationalization of APSA –formulated in terms of capacity-building under the notion of “African solutions for African problems”. In this way, based on the idea of sustainable peace and development by AU and other African organizations through their own particular instruments, the recent Africa–EU Joint Strategy (JAES) was adopted in 2007, which has derived to its subsequent Action Plans. One of the main strategic fields of JAES from a CFSP’s perspective was the possibility to establish what has become the current framework of multilateral cooperation within the region, in terms of large-scale, long-term interorganizational and symmetric cooperation. As a result, there is evidence from discursive perspective that the EU is committed to support the stability of the continent through conflict prevention and peace building in cooperation with APSA.

Observing the genealogy of the military deployment process it is helpful to note that at the very beginning the deployment of the EU was made by using specific and rapid deployment units. Even though the long term tools require permanent civil and military staff on the ground, the short-term interventions require expeditionary forces. In the case of EU NAVFOR, the EU’s deployment was implemented in temporal terms after the launch of the political and strategic process, which has been significant according to its initial goals of installing a permanent and comprehensive model from crisis management perspective, in contrast with what has happened in the Sahel (Hatzigeorgopoulos, 2013). Whenever the situation in Somalia challenged international stability, the EU reacted to the UN SC requests with counter piracy activities through the launch in December 2008 of the EU NAVFOR Atalanta. What is really undermining all these different scenarios in the same region is the idea of the necessity to create a secure environment (*milieu*) in order to enhance ‘capacity building’ as a vehicle to the notion of peace itself. The development of a CA model for foreign policy and security seems to be based on a profound liberal root of international governance which tends to place the central concept of stability, i.e., the logic of the ‘good’ government of populations by encouraging ‘capacity building’. In sum, the definition of the EU’s framework towards the region as well as the choice of the EU for most of the Member States in the case of the Horn of Africa could be conditioned by the specific regional dynamics of Africa and the limited impact of neo-realist strategies (Riddervold, 2014) for one part and, on the other hand, the different object of reference of the security

discourse of the EU –good government of populations in an appropriate environment– and the equivalent policy instruments –comprehensive approach.

As a result, CA model was represented by the deployment of three complementary missions through the CSDP: EUNAVFOR, EUTM and EUCAP NESTOR. All of them operate in conjunction with AMISON, a mission launched by AU, the EU being one of the main supporters of AMISON, together with NATO.

The articulation of the CA through EU ATALANTA (EU NAVFOR): the technical differentials of policy-tools from a normative power

On the bases proposed above, the aim of this section is to analyze what are the potentialities and obstacles of the CA development in Africa (see e.g. Ehrhart and Petretto, 2012, 2014; Knutsen and Pettersen, 2014; Pirozzi, 2013) and to what extent the operational deployment of the EU on the ground in the specific case of the EU ATALANTA (EU NAVFOR) contributed to the ‘struggle’ for hegemony of the EU in international crisis response. The purpose of applying a typology of interfaces to measure the specificities of a security model based on a CA, is to show how the EU’s CA operates within these spaces, the so-called interfaces, to the extent that these interceptions pose problematic spaces because of their still undefined nature. Those intercepting points of operational domains, represents the *locus* where the practices of the UE’s CA model is disputed by a multiplicity of actors and programs (Söderbaum and Stålgren, 2010), supposedly for a better security provision even when it seems not to act with one voice. As a result, the idea is that the resulting strategic thinking emerges from the disputes of the multiplicity of actors about its definitions, which are being canalized through these conjunctions of interfaces characterized by the EU’s CA model. Admitting that the EU supports the effective multilateralism (European Security Strategy, EES) in the region, it has to be taken into account the prevalent role of the United Nations and the AU actions in the region as co-leading security providers (Strategic Framework for the Horn of Africa, 2011).

The EU ATALANTA (EU NAVFOR) could not be understood without the complementary missions EUTM, AMISON and EUCAP NESTOR. In fact, the EU has deployed three missions in Sahel such as EUCAP Sahel Niger, EUCAP Sahel Mali and EUTM Mali. In the Horn of Africa, those missions were finally designed to support the

interior and exterior security of Somalia with a regional perspective correspondent to the Horn of Africa. Equally, the EUMAM RCA should be added to have a broader regional vision.

The EU ATALANTA (EU NAVFOR) general aim was to protect the correct functioning of the World Food Programme and African Union Mission in Somalia Shipping; the deterrence, prevention and repression of acts of piracy; the protection of vulnerable shipping off the Somali coast; the monitoring of fishing activities off the coast of Somalia.

Concerning civilian-military and internal-external interfaces, the complementary nature of the EU ATALANTA (EU NAVFOR) with the following AMISON and EUTM missions shows how something has been designed in these both levels. The coordination of these three operations has an impact on the planning and organizational culture. While the EU ATALANTA (EU NAVFOR) was deployed as a maritime mission; an operational action on land was required. The AMISON, which consisted of the formation of a Somali National Security, was made through a peace enabling mission with the objective of supporting the Transitional Federal Institutions and giving protection to the key infrastructures on the correct and structural functioning of the country. Concurrently, EUTM was launched in 2010 to train Somali forces by transferring expertise and performance to the local actors (EEAS, Delegation to Somalia) with the aim of strengthening the Transitional Federal Government and Somali institutions. Therefore, in the internal-external interface, the aim was to contribute to the formation of a stable environment by controlling the external and internal domains of the state territory with the objective of consolidating institutional and economic processes strongly enough. EUTM is working in the external dimension by co-working with AMISON, the UN and the USA. In this sense, the EUCAP NESTOR was launched in 2012 at the regional level with the objective of strengthening the state capabilities of the region to govern effectively their territorial waters (EEAS, 2013). Among the main tasks of the mission is the enforcement of the rule of law in this sector or the development of a Coastal Police Force, i.e., the development of civilian capabilities with the support and collaboration of military expertise (see e.g. Ehrhart and Petretto, 2012). In this regard, the own AMISON and also the UE/NATO cooperation off the Somali coast also show different initiatives according to these interface.

For its part, the activation of the EU Operations Centre was designed to palliate the difficulties of articulating the flow of information circulating throughout the networking of both, the civil-military and internal-external actors and the operational programs involved. It could represent a key role for a CA to the extent that it connects the multiplicity of involved actors forming a more integrated regional apparatus of security (Hatzigeorgopoulos, 2013).

On March 2012, the EU Operations Centre was activated for the first time to coordinate the three missions in the Horn of Africa deployed within the CSDP. This initiative points out the key task of coordinating the civil-military (civil-military coordination, CMCO) and the internal-external dimensions in order to govern properly the social activity through the territorial border of the state, which reflects another measure which signaled the nature of the EU policy to the region. Focusing on the tools themselves and the way they are related which each other, it is possible to contribute to define more precisely the nature of the EU policy in Africa in addition to the common and very necessary normative or institutional analysis (Hatzigeorgopoulos, 2013). Currently monitoring and conducting the EUNAVFOR Operation Atalanta and EUTM, the EU OpCen is conducting simultaneously the EUCAP NESTOR, a civilian mission to enforce the maritime capabilities and law enforcement in the region, augmented with military units.

In the structural-operational interface, what is clear is the transversal role that the security approach has played in relation to humanitarian aid, development, trade and foreign policy fields. While measures were taken in the development field like the transmission of expertise to the local authorities and the provision of material, the foreign policy of the EU was focused in order to enhance multilateral diplomacy.

Some of the economic measures related to this interface represent important initiatives not only in the short-term period, i.e., humanitarian aid from the World Food Programme for instance, but in what have to do with structural economic agreements derived from developmental initiatives, like the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) (security-trade) and the Supporting Horn of Africa Resilience (SHARE) (Joseph, 2014; Knutsen and Pettersen, 2014). The development of Somali capacities in economic and security policy was supported by the EU through the assistance to the Federal Government, to the AU peacekeeping operation mission AMISOM and the EU Training Mission (EUTM) to training more than 3,000 soldiers which would help to

maintain a secure environment for trade and community development; now extended to December 2016 (EUTM–Somalia). Related to this last purpose, in coherence with EU NAVFOR (ATALANTA), the EU development aid supports alternative livelihoods in order to contribute to reduce potential pockets of recruitment for piracy activities.

The Structural measures are related to institutions, where the state building processes have focused their efforts on building strong administrations with the objective of consolidating the transition process. The EU has invested 113 million Euros to encourage the Rule of Law and the security sector. Police officers and experts on law were trained and law faculties were constructed. At the same time, legal aid is provided to the most vulnerable people, women and displaced communities (The Somali Compact, 2013). Supporting a Somali constitutional process was one of the most important initiatives in this regard to achieve the holding of a constitutional referendum and a general election process for a more democratic regime. In this sense, the public financial and civil service reform as well as public consultation was incorporated in order to reinforce local government and democratization to enhance the notion of effective governance, a core concept in the EU's foreign policy (ibid.). The European Development Fund is contributing to the Justice sector, not only Somali police sector, and the struggle against money laundering activities and counter-terrorism. Concerning the promotion of Human Rights, strengthening of Non-governmental actors represents the strategic contribution of the EU regarding active civil society (The EU Somalia Unit and DfID, 2012). Promoting women's rights and capabilities to play an active role in the democratization and emancipation of the diverse social collectives was taken into account in the EU engagement (The Somali Compact, 2013). In a more operational level, one of the lessons learnt resides in the need to supply and provide basic military training equipment to partner nations. The equipment supply is basic to enhancing a correct performance of the local unit in order to meet their goals and to capitalize on the effective capacity building and EU military efforts (EUMC Newsletter, 2015).

Due to the fact that the EU is basing its security provision under a doctrine of CA, in accordance with the aforementioned conceptualization of the CA, this case consists of the strengthening of stable governance structures and critical infrastructures on the one hand, and controlling and monitoring the focus of instability around the region on the other, there seems to be no lack of obstacles.

The EU's CA in Africa: defining the operational identity of normative power Europe in the international system.

What are the general implications of this perspective of analysis/this definition of the security environment? Regarding the possible potentialities, this paper contributes firstly to the evidence that the normative power is not the only the EU asset to capitalize on, but also the technical power to the extent that the EU is able to deliver better responses to the emergent objects of security discourse since the end of Cold War. In relation to such a dilemma, as the geopolitical environment continues to be more complex, in terms of unclear enemies or threats, increasing risks, overlapping security scenarios, proliferation of actors and the dissolution of policy-areas, the EU would dispose of an enormous potential. Apart from that, the EU is also able to deploy more clearly its model of peace operations and peace building operations when it means a provision of any 'common good' recognized by the rest (Aggestam, 2008), even if sometimes the EU itself experiences a normative refusal *ad extra*.

However, the obstacles will be exposed in a threefold model: The main obstacle is that in a realist geopolitical context, the EU finds huge difficulties in offering its policy-tools potentialities beyond the realist discourse. Definitively, the EU finds real difficulties in vying for the hegemony of geopolitical visions by imposing its normative terms. But the question is that it could not be so difficult to vie for hegemony in this domain by emphasizing in certain contexts its technical advantages rather than directly in its ethical dimension. Another debate would be if the EU, whatever its normative values be, could be legitimized or not to intervene abroad.

Secondly, in the EU's normative or transformative terms, what makes the difference in the EU's foreign and security policy for conflict resolution in Africa seems to be that, when analyzing the geopolitical situation in terms of strategic thinking models, a relation of the EU's CA seems to predominate an internal analysis of this model, instead of focusing more on external processes, as it was made by focusing on its relation with the simultaneous missions which are taking place.

Thirdly, it is equally true that those references to the security-centered CA model of the EU (Ehrhart and Petretto, 2012) could tend to fall in some way into a type of a *mission civilisatrice* or Western bias remarked by some works from different perspectives and approaches (Nicolaidis and Howse, 2002; Cebeci, 2012; Langan, 2012; Onar and Nicolaidis, 2013; Knutsen and Pettersen, 2014).

In order to contribute to solve that, the author's intention does not consist in pointing directly to the ethical or normative differentials of the EU as an alternative security provider in multilateral institutions, but in conducting this research to the question of the real differentials in application of its instruments on the ground (see e.g. Juncos, 2011). The idea consists in de-centralising the commonly proposed normative and ethical analysis in order to analyse the EU power from a different perspective, assuming that the operational process of international actors also entails normative visions and, then, ethical principles. The CA doctrine means, therefore, a broader and comprehensive delivery of the EU normative power orientated to the stabilisation and transformation of international conflicts and regional instability, whose analyses could lead again to understanding in more empirical terms the transformative possibilities of the normative dimension of the EU's international role.

The EU's intervention in Somalia and the Gulf of Aden was based on a multilateral consideration of 'common good' that permitted the EU to contribute to the security of international maritime routes and regional stability against piracy, organized crime and subversive armed groups, famine, corruption and trafficking among others. In other words, the choice of the alternative of the EU intervention in Somalia instead of a feasible NATO intervention was not only related to a realist calculus but the consideration of the value and possibilities of the EU as a security provider to the extent that the provision of security in the region would produce a 'common good' for all with a more comprehensive and appropriate response (Riddervold, 2014; Knutsen and Pettersen, 2014). In part, due to specific regional dynamics of the Horn of Africa, where the realist logic of *friend-enemy* or *power balancing* has not operated sufficiently.

The EU differential here that the case of Somalia shows is that, as long as the EU provides 'common goods' for the international community in response to the UN calls for multilateral action and the way the security environment is changing globally, the EU may play an active role due to its technical gap in relation, for instance, to NATO (Riddervold, 2014). By operating with a CA doctrine, a strategic possibility to enhance its own transformative power is open for the EU.⁶ But it should not be exaggerated as the UE certainly does not seem to influence great powers' rationality when an outbreak occurs in a situation of opposite encounter among great powers (ibid.). This obstacle is partially due to its lack of effectiveness as an international actor and also using the CA doctrine, as it could be considered in the case of Ukraine.

Conclusions

This paper follows the line of research which affirms that the EU should continue refining its normative power. Whether the EU should develop its Defense policy and whether it is necessary to confront great powers (realist strategic thinking) or to project its transformative power, these questions still cause controversial discussions. The aim of this paper was to think about the underlying conceptions of the transformative power of the EU and how they inform political processes. Assuming that different strategic thinking implies a different set of policy-tools and, in reverse, a different set of policy-tools available implies a different definition of *actorness*, the author's intention was to assume that there exist conditions to enhance the EU's power in operational terms insofar as any ethical proposal entails a technical proposal and vice versa. From this different starting point, this analysis tries to contribute to this debate by questioning the identity of the EU by focusing on its operational dimension in order to grasp differently its current transformative capacity and possibilities as a normative power. Regarding the increasing refusal of the EU normative power (Barbé, 2012; Torreblanca, 2011; Youngs, 2010), the true differential of the EU comes from its broader policy-tool potentialities and the broader potential of its delivery in contrast to the narrower framework of great powers. The EU foreign and security policy towards Africa could demonstrate empirical evidence of this potentiality, and furthermore, could be articulated in order to advance in a more consolidated formulation of the ethical power of the EU to reverse its current decline.

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¹ According to this last assumption, the author's analyses of the relation between the normative principles and the strategic doctrine could be synthesized in the following two assumptions: in discursive terms, i) different strategic thinking implies different types of conflict regulation dynamics and regulative principles; simultaneously, in material terms, ii) different strategic thinking requires different instruments and a different operational development to materialize it.

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- ² This application of the notion of hegemony, therefore, does not refer to everywhere and everything that have to do with foreign and security policy. In other words, it is assumed that the behaviour of actors in world politics is more complex such that what it is called State is not a homogeneous pool but wider than the possibility of experts of statecraft could manage strategically (Agnew, 1994). Furthermore, the conditions for peace and stability related to security policy terms have become more difficult to measure today. The State has experienced a weakening of its power in world politics due to, in part, the increasing predominance of trade policy or commercial policy described by the European security architecture since the end of the Cold War.
- ³ While it is true that many works in this context propose ‘the return of geopolitics’ (Mead, 2014; Guzzini, 2012), from the author’s perspective the EU normative power and great power’s logics mentioned are more intertwined than could be considered, mostly because of the emergent hybrid war phenomena.
- ⁴ Many works focused on the conceptualization of the CA are generally dispersed or tend to focus on different particular fields, whereas other works advocate a global conceptualization of the term (Gebhard and Norheim-Martinsen, 2011). In this sense, the EU has made of the CA a type of doctrine for an environment where, in spite of its changing nature as we will see, the realist strategic vision from great powers seems to return as a dominant explanation on security.
- ⁵ Due to the lack of space to define extensively the principles of the CA doctrine, the author’s intention consists in listing them in order to shape a preliminary categorial map in a certain level of abstraction to display, in some way, their underlying rationality.
- ⁶ Another question should be to elucidate for whom the regional stability is a ‘common good’ in order to understand why they could have been possible to deploy a relatively successful CA in Somalia. This question would become appropriate, among other things, when there is evidence that not all EU missions are seen as a ‘common good’ due to, to some extent, the inertia of the realist thinking of the States.

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