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**Case Studies of the EU's Actions in
the Field of Conflict Resolution,
Prevention and Mediation**

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**ENVISIONING A NEW
GOVERNANCE ARCHITECTURE
FOR A GLOBAL EUROPE**



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Executive Summary

Based on the analytical framework advanced in ENGAGE [Working Paper 18](#), this article assesses the European Union's (EU) ability to implement integrated external action in conflict prevention, mediation and resolution. The article builds on the analysis of four crisis/conflict theatres around the world (Kosovo, Somalia, Iran and Colombia), where the EU became involved at different phases of the conflict cycle. Each section thus considers the rationale of the EU's engagement in the specific type of conflict or crisis, as well as its main objectives and interests; then reviews the instruments deployed; and analyses both the horizontal coherence between institutions and the vertical coherence between the EU level and the Member States initiatives, when they exist. Finally, each case study tries to evaluate the EU's performance in terms of how it is perceived by other parties and, above all, whether the EU has the capacity to act autonomously.

Overall, this paper argues that the gap between CSDP and other strands of the EU's external action that fall under the scope of Community policies tends to undermine the horizontal coherence of the EU action in crisis/conflict management. Even if the EU is able to act in profoundly diverse crises and obtain some results, the tools at its disposal do not always enable the EU to translate potential into actual influence. The article also concludes that the EU's ability to act autonomously depends on external factors beyond its control, and that in some cases, such as in the Iran and partially in the Kosovo cases, it is far from assured. The presence and position of third parties – in particular the United States – in the crisis theatres is indeed an important variable that influences the results and autonomy of EU action.

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1 Introduction

For more than two decades, the European Union (EU) has been trying to use both civilian and military tools to enhance its action in conflict prevention, resolution and in mediation (referred to below simply as crisis management). As already highlighted in De Man et al. (2022, [ENGAGE Working Paper 14](#)), the EU adopted a "comprehensive approach" to crisis management in 2013 (European Commission & High Representative, 2013), which later evolved into an "integrated approach" (EEAS, 2016). The latter strives to address all stages of the conflict cycle by mobilising the entire spectrum of European tools in order to enable the EU to act at the local up to the global level in a conflict-sensitive and multilateral spirit (De Man et al., 2022).

The EU's capacity to act autonomously is another key element at the core of this approach, especially since the concept of 'strategic autonomy' has gone beyond the specific context of security and defence and broadened its application to the various areas of EU policy. As a reminder, this term refers to "the capacity of the EU to act autonomously – that is, without being dependent on other countries – in strategically important policy areas" (Damen, 2022, p. 1).

In short, the EU's ambition is simple, at least on paper: being able to act coherently and autonomously in the full cycle of crisis management in order to promote peace and stability. On the ground, nevertheless, things are more complicated, as we will see in the following pages. Based on the theoretical framework developed in earlier consortium publications on EU's conflict management activities, this paper aims to examine the EU's ability to act in a coherent manner, both across its institutions and together with the Member States and vis-à-vis third actors, be they international and regional organisations or sovereign states.

In order to do so, the present working paper focuses on four crisis theatres. Each of them has been chosen to reflect the profoundly diverse conflict typology and contexts, as well as the different phases of the conflict cycle. And each case comes from a different part of the world, namely Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America.

As the first and most important EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions were located in the Balkans, the first case focuses on Kosovo, a crisis fuelled by issues related to national identities (case of state transformation, nationalism and potential EU accession) and where the EU is involved in the peacebuilding process. Considering the non-unanimous recognition of Kosovo from EU Member States, this case study further allows to investigate the vertical coherence of action between EU Member States and EU institutions. The second case study focuses on Somalia, which is an emblematic example of an African failed or fragile state - from which instability and the terrorist threat could spread regionally and internationally. The third case study concerns Iran. Obviously, the EU does not have a CSDP mission in this country, but the Iranian dossier is characterised by major geopolitical rivalries. These make it interesting to see how Brussels manages to adopt an integrated approach and, above all, whether it has the capacity for autonomous action. Further away from usual EU missions theatres, the fourth case study looks at Colombia, a post-conflict country facing the twin



challenges of reconstruction and peacebuilding, were the EU had a role to play in the implementation of the peace agreement.

Different as these cases are, they all focus on the same challenges mentioned above, which have afflicted the EU's external action for several years now: that of coherence and integrated approach and that of the capacity to act autonomously in the field of crisis management. Have EU institutions and Member States been able to act in an integrated and coherent manner? What were their achievements so far? Did they deliver on an agreed agenda? What were the obstacles? And above all, was the EU able to act autonomously, as it promised to do in the early 2000s when it acquired new crisis management competences?

The paper looks at the EU's involvement in conflict prevention, resolution and mediation as a whole, and observes how the many activities carried out in this framework lie at the intersection of these three components of crisis management. It consequently focuses not only on the civilian and military tools at the EU disposal, but also on how other policies of a more economic nature, such as fisheries in Somalia, can be integrated into a crisis management strategy. As already said, the way the European institutions relate to and coordinate with other international actors is also the subject of attention in this study. Finally, the theoretical framework previously elaborated by the ENGAGE project underlines that "increasing the EU's capacity to act autonomously ranks high in the EU's current strategic agenda" (De Man et al., 2022, p. 5). This aspect has therefore been given special attention in the final remarks of each case study and in the conclusions of the paper.

After recalling the typology and context of the crisis they deal with, each case study thus analyses the rationale as well as the main objectives and interests that pushed the EU to act. Then, a selection of tools and policies the EU implemented to manage the crisis are briefly reviewed in order to understand whether the EU has been able to achieve its objectives.

The following four sections of this paper are based on the analytical structure developed by De Man et al. (2022). The analyses developed below are based both on the European Union's regional and global strategic documents and on specialised literature. Interviews have been conducted with EU officials and other relevant actors to shed light on certain aspects and to provide a field perspective to the case studies. The materials from interviews conducted in the framework of previous work of the Engage project have also been reinvestigated in light of this new paper.



2 Kosovo

The EU's action in Kosovo is guided by the Union's neighbourhood and enlargement policies towards the region. Since the 2003 Thessaloniki Summit, the EU has strengthened its regional approach to integration in the Western Balkans, which aims at increasing the EU's credibility and stability in the neighbouring region through the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) (European Commission, n.d.-a). Stable Western Balkans became a 'moral obligation' for the EU, and ever since 1999 the EU has had an active relation with Kosovo (Shepherd, 2009).

Kosovo represents a good example of the EU actions in case of a state transformation, coupled with nationalism issues and future potential EU accession. It is also a case of divergent intra-EU perspective, with five countries not recognising Kosovo as an independent state. The relation between Kosovo and the EU was built upon the responsibilities set out in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) on conflict management activities and originated from the acknowledged necessity for the EU to build its own security and defence policies and apparatus. In 2005, negotiations on Kosovo's future status began between Pristina and Belgrade, with the involvements of Russia, US and the EU as mediators (Bohnet & Gold, 2011). Failed attempts to find a diplomacy-led path for Kosovo through the UN-supported Ahtisaari Plan, Kosovo unilaterally declared independence in 2008. Since then, Kosovo has not been recognised as an independent state neither by Serbia or Russia nor by five EU member states.¹ Despite the lack of unanimous recognition of Kosovo, the EU Council unanimously launched the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) in 2008, the first civilian CSDP mission with an executive mandate,² to support the Kosovo authorities in establishing sustainable and independent rule of law institutions (Council of the EU, 2008).

Improvements in state building and institutions management allowed for the transfer of the vast majority of the mission's initial executive powers to local authorities in 2018. However, the functioning of the judicial system is still not satisfactory, and the country faces problems related to corruption, organised crime and limited freedom of expression, among others (European Commission, 2021a).

In December 2022 Kosovo formally applied for the EU membership and the file is being considered by the EU Council (Al Jazeera, 2022). The lack of unanimous recognition of Kosovo as an independent state might bloc the application process, as the support of the membership would imply some sort of recognition of Kosovo as a state entity (Sarrià & Demjaha, 2021). This could have considerable political and strategic repercussions on the stability of the region and raise doubts on the capacity of the EU to be a reliable actor in the Western Balkans. Since the 2003 Thessaloniki declaration, the EU has strengthened the integration approach with the Western Balkans and in 2007 an SAP – a cooperation tool established with the aim of eventual

¹ These are Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Slovakia and Spain.

² A mission is executive when it is not limited to supporting the host nation but is mandated to conduct actions in replacement of the host nation.



EU membership – was set up with Kosovo. After the Kosovar declaration of independence, cooperation with the EU continued towards the path of a European perspective or European future for Kosovo, and Kosovo worked and is continuing working towards the adoption and satisfaction of EU and European standards. A potential bloc of an eventual application process due to EU internal, national, positions, would put in question the coherence of EU policies.

2.1 Strengthening National Capacity

When EULEX started in 2008, the mission supported improving effectiveness, sustainability, multiethnicity and accountability of political and legal institutions in Kosovo, to make them comply with international human rights standards and European practices.

The numerous reiterations of the EULEX mandate – each with a length of two years – show a limited EU capacity to formally commit long-term in the performance of CSDP missions. The unanimous political support required to start CSDP missions and operations prevents the Union to commit from the beginning in longer deployments abroad. Nonetheless, the renewals of the mission are representations of the Union support to the long-term goals, despite mandate renewals might cause a start and stop of activities to be performed and trigger uncertainty in the relations with the local authorities. In the framework of the first mandate, when the mission reached its full operational capacity in 2009, EULEX became the largest civilian CSDP mission with around 3000 staff members (Cadier, 2011). Since the first renewal of the mandate in 2010, the mission started being recalibrated in both focus and level of personnel, according to the gradual improvements of the local societies in taking on more responsibility. The transfer of EULEX executive powers to the local authorities was concentrated during the fifth mandate of the mission (2016–2018) (Sabatino et al., 2023 (ENGAGE [Working Paper 19](#))). The current mandate, based on Council Decision CFSP 2021/904, covers the period until 14 June 2023 and tasked the mission with monitoring activities and limited executive functions. The effectiveness in approach to state-building and crisis management in Kosovo is further limited due to the length of appointment of personnel to the mission that does not allow for an exploitation of resources, delaying potential outcomes, due to the high turnover of personnel (Sabatino et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, the mission did help in developing judicial institutions whose advancements are periodically assessed by EULEX through annual monitoring reports on the improvements of the judicial system and by the EU Commission on the country's progress in the application of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) framework. Against the backdrop of Kosovo's participation in the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA) mechanism, Pristina agreed to a Country Level Implementation Plan as part of the Gender Action Plan III 2021-2025, developed with inputs from the CSDP mission (EU Office in Kosovo, 2021).

Further external bodies helping in the performance of judicial proceeding are the Kosovo Specialist Chambers (KSC) and the Specialist Prosecutor's Office operating since 2017 (Kosovo Specialist Chamber, n.d.). The KSC strengthened the judicial capacity of Kosovo, through delegation, and led to the arrest of the former President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaçi, in November 2020 for war crimes perpetrated when he was Commander of the Kosovo



Liberation Army (KLA) (Kosovo Specialist Chamber, 2023). This caused a change in the political leadership of the country and the last mayoral and municipal elections of October-November 2021 were evaluated by the EU as being well-administered and competitive (European Commission, 2022a, p. 8). In late 2022, the EU further deployed an election follow-up mission in Kosovo to verify eventual improvements on the recommendations presented after the elections and support Kosovo in the improvement of the electoral system (EEAS, 2023a).

2.2 Promoting Regional Stability and Dialogue

The lack of stabilised relations between Kosovo and Serbia is considered one of the major potential sources of instability in the Western Balkans. The EU-facilitated Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue is a clear example of how the EU pursues its role as conflict mediator in the Balkans. This type of mediation effort is indeed in line with the EU's official *Concept on EU Peace Mediation* (Council of the EU, 2020).

Since the beginning of the dialogue in 2011, several agreements have been reached (Government of Serbia, 2013), but it can be argued that the EU has not been very effective yet in reaching the final expected result of the mediation. Good neighbourly relations between Pristina and Belgrade are considered a precondition for the advancement of the membership process in the EU for both countries (Conference on Accession to the European Union, 2015), as also highlighted during the EU-Western Balkans Summit of December 2022 EU-Western Balkans Summit (2022).

The dialogue slowed down several times, also as a consequence of domestic decisions impacting on Kosovo's bilateral relations with neighbours, such as the 2018 decision from Kosovo to increase tariffs for Serbian and Bosnian goods. Despite the EU promptly condemned the Kosovar decision as unlawful, Serbia perceived the EU stance as not active enough, suggesting that Belgrade does not perceive the Union as an impartial mediator (Center for Social Dialogue and Regional Initiatives, 2019). From 2018, meetings eventually resumed in 2020 and have been further supported through the newly created position of "EU Special Representative (EUSR) for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue and other Western Balkan regional issues" (Council Decision 489, 2020) with the mandate to facilitate advancements in the dialogue and ensure coherence and effectiveness of EU actions in the Western Balkans.

The dialogue addressed both high-level and practical issues, such as the issuance of car license plates, for which a working group composed by the EU, Belgrade and Pristina began its work in October 2021. The relevance of such a technical issue is directly related to the recognition of authority and free movement of people between the two countries. During the UN protectorate years, UN car plates were issued by Kosovo, but after the end of their validity in 2021 Kosovo started to reject the use of Serb-issued plates with names of Kosovo cities. As a retaliation to the issuance of fines to Serbs drivers using Serbian-issued license plates, a considerable number of Kosovar Serbs policemen, judges, prosecutors, parliamentarians in Northern Kosovo decided to quit their jobs, showing how delicate stability in north Kosovo is. Kosovo and Serbia eventually came to terms only after the mediation of the US (Brzozowski,



2022b), as the EU failed to advance the process (Medović, 2022, p. 11). US support and activities in Western Balkans have been present since the dissolution of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1991. The US have a military base in Kosovo in Camp Bondsteel (US 21st Theater Sustainment Command, n.d.) and are militarily present in the country also as part of the NATO Kosovo Force (NATO KFOR) deployed since 1999. Its diplomatic weight in the advancement of normalisation of relations between Serbia and Kosovo has been evident particularly in the last years. Washington engages in bilateral dialogues with both Belgrade and Pristina and steadily supported the EU-led Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, considering talks the “only way to resolve open issues” (Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2022). Interestingly enough, the EU-led mediation seems to have experienced advancement following US declarations on the necessity to move forward towards the normalisation of relations and resolution of divergences (US embassy in Serbia, 2022). The agreement on the path to normalisation between Serbia and Kosovo was indeed signed at the end of February 2023 (EEAS, 2023d). Parties also managed to agree on how to implement the agreement, although the agreement is said to be less ambitious than what was proposed by the EU (EEAS, 2023c).

EU mediation is not perceived by the Kosovar population to lead to any meaningful results in the short term and the EU is perceived by the Kosovar population as not being effective enough in the advancement of the process (Fetiu & Vrajolli, 2022, p. 14). The signing of the agreement on the path to normalisation can be considered a major improvement in the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue as it strongly paves the way for the normalisation of relations among parties, but it remains to be seen how countries will advance in the normalisation process and, as importantly, how effectively the EU will be able to support in the process. So far, a few problems affected the EU capacity to act as a meaningful mediator. Firstly, the lack of an EU unified position towards the end-goal of the dialogue affects its very potential outcomes: is the aimed normalisation entailing the recognition of Kosovo as a state by Serbia, or is normalisation referring to good neighbourly relations? Furthermore, verification mechanisms on the dialogue inside EULEX were lacking, thus not allowing for a verification system to keep track on the proper application of the agreements. As part of an effort to rationalise competences, the operational support performed by EULEX until late 2022 has been now transferred to the EUSR for Kosovo (Council Decision 122, 2023; Council Decision 1969, 2022), but it is unclear how the work of the EUSR for Kosovo will interact with the EUSR for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue and other Western Balkan regional issues.

Furthermore, the dialogue is affected by different approaches and policies of EU member states towards Kosovo. On the one hand, countries such as France and Germany appear to favour state-sponsored mediation over the EU-led dialogue. Paris and Berlin co-led the 2019 Berlin Summit (Kreizer & Janjevic, 2019) and proposed a new dialogue framework between Serbia and Kosovo (Brzozowski, 2022a). Whilst their proactive attitude is positive in terms of policy goals, the presence of alternative national initiatives could potentially undermine the effectiveness of the EU-led activities. On the other hand, there are divergent views among member states on the EU regional approach towards the Western Balkans and on Kosovo, as



in the case of Spain that criticised the EU Strategy for the Western Balkans for referring to Kosovo as to a state entity (Zalan, 2018).

2.3 Other Instruments

In Kosovo, crisis management, mediation and resolution are performed also through the “carrot and stick” approach of the EU accession mechanism. Towards the path of a potential EU membership, in 2016 the EU agreed a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) for Kosovo which constitutes the framework to implement the SAP (European Commission, n.d.-a). However, given the different stances on the status of Kosovo, the SAA assumed the form of an EU agreement without an official signature from the Kosovar authorities (Medović, 2022, p. 12). The lack of unanimous recognition of the country also resulted in delayed action from the EU side, as in the case of visa liberalisation. Kosovars remain the only citizens from the Western Balkans requiring a visa to enter the Schengen area (Berghof Foundation, 2022). Following the 2016 proposal from the European Commission to grant Kosovars visa-free travel, the government fulfilled the relevant requirements already in 2018, but the final decision on visa liberalisation waited for Council approval for years (European Commission, 2022a). It was only in November 2022 that the EU’s permanent representatives eventually decided to start negotiations to lift the visa requirement by January 2024 (Council of the EU, 2022).

In past years, EULEX has been coordinating with the EU Foreign Policy Instruments, a financial and operational component of the EU foreign policy (European Commission, 2022b). Kosovo is further assisted via the IPA III for the period 2021-2027 (Regulation of the EU 1529, 2021) which provides financial and technical support to advance on human rights, good governance, economic development, infrastructures, among others. During the IPA II period (2014–2020) Pristina received 562 million Euro and the total amount of IPA financing between 2007 and 2023 is valued at around 1.3 billion Euro (EEAS, 2023b). Moreover, since 2018 Kosovo has joined further Union programmes, such as Erasmus+, COSME, Europe for Citizens, Creative Europe, Customs 2020 and Fiscalis 2020 (European Commission, 2022a).

In addition to the aforementioned instruments and activities performed to sustain and help Kosovo in its path towards the development of stable and democratic institutions, Kosovo has been the recipient of funding and material to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Support to limit the social and economic consequences of COVID-19 included a loan provided by the European Investment Bank in the framework of Team Europe initiative (European Investment Bank, 2021). The consequences of the pandemic and the increasing energy and food costs are further restrained by the Resilience Contract signed in 2020, a financial liquidity instrument to support Kosovo strengthen the socio-economic resilience of population and businesses (EEAS, 2022a) or by the Energy Support Package agreed in February 2023 (EEAS, 2023e). Furthermore, thanks to the REPowerEU Plan, the Western Balkans can access the common purchase of gas, LNG and hydrogen (EU-Western Balkans Summit, 2022). Finally, the EU sustains Kosovo in the energy transition and improvement of the sectoral infrastructures. Kosovo is almost entirely dependent on coal energy (Western Balkans Investment Framework, 2022). To reverse this trend, the country agreed in 2022 on a complete phasing out of coal-



fired energy resources by 2050, in line with the EU energy objectives (Todorović, 2023). The compliance of Kosovo with the EU standards on energy is also part of the reforms necessary for Kosovo to proceed with its potential membership in the EU.

Despite the plethora of available tools and mechanism, the EU activities in conflict prevention, mediation and resolution lack effectiveness. Furthermore, in terms of time efficiency of the process results of EU actions are often delayed or missing. While the inability to conclude the mediation process between Belgrade and Pristina cannot be entirely attributed to the EU, it is nonetheless evident that the different positions of member states on the status of Kosovo impact the EU's capacity to be a stable and strong actor. The reluctance of some member states to recognise Kosovo as an independent state has caused delays and required to change policy documents and procedures, putting in question the vertical coherence between the activities and policies performed at Member State and EU levels, diminishing the credibility of the EU in the eyes of the local population. Coming to the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue, the capacity of the EU to advance in the dialogue process was further rendered opaque from the presence of the US that instead is perceived from both Serbia and Kosovo as a more reliable and powerful interlocutor. As a consequence of this imbalance of perception and power between the EU and the US, the EU-led Belgrade-Pristina dialogue advanced particularly after the call from the US to make improvement in the process. Furthermore, the inability to propose a unified approach towards Kosovo made different procedural solutions necessary (i.e. the signing of the SAA only from the EU side). Finally, the results of the EULEX mission can be truly appreciated only if one looks at the achievements reached since the first deployment of the mission in 2008 and not at those reached at the end of each EULEX mandate. Despite this being a positive outcome, a longer engagement from the beginning would have triggered a more positive perception to the mission and would have allowed for a longer and more effective planning of its activities.



3 Somalia

3.1 30 Years of Conflict

The concept of the 'failed state' was coined in the early 1990s based on the Somali case (Véron, 2011). After more than thirty years of violence, and despite a relative stabilisation of the country over the past decade, Somalia is still marked by severe human insecurity and remains deeply divided. Al-Shabaab terrorist attacks regularly hit major cities despite the federal government's gradual takeover of the country's territory. Almost half the population faces imminent risk of famine in the wake of the fifth consecutive dry rains season and because of the impact of the war in Ukraine on wheat supplies (Davies, 2022).

The civil war erupted in Somalia in 1991, when the President of the Somali Democratic Republic, General Siyad Barre, was overthrown by opposition movements that engaged in a violent struggle for power. Territorial disintegration provoked by Somaliland's secession also destabilised the country. After 1991, the international community mobilised to help the Somali population, which had been cut off from humanitarian aid by the hostilities. UN peacekeeping forces arrived in Somalia in 1992 and left in 1995, after the gradual militarisation of three successive missions that failed to achieve a political settlement of the conflict. A new international mission, led by the African Union, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), was launched in 2007 and received heavy financial support from the EU through the African Peace Facility. International mediation finally bore fruit in the early 2000s and led to the establishment of transitional governments in 2000 and 2004, but their fragility allowed new forms of violence to arise. Against the backdrop of political instability, terrorism and piracy, the EU launched three missions in Somalia between 2008 and 2012: NAVFOR ATALANTA, EUTM Somalia and EUCAP Somalia.

The transitional period ended in 2012 with the establishment of a Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and its international recognition. From 'failed state', Somalia has then become a 'fragile state' in the eyes of western political theorists. Two presidential elections have since been held with varying degrees of political and social turmoil. On the security agenda, the priorities of the FGS and the international community were – and still are – to build national security forces and combat piracy. A first comprehensive roadmap – the Somali compact agreed by the FGS, the international community and the Somali regions – was adopted in 2013 for the period 2014–2016. It was succeeded by the New Partnership for Somalia in 2017 and the Transition Plan for Somalia in 2018 established by Somalia and its international partners.

The withdrawal of the AU mission, now called African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), and the transfer of its responsibilities to the Somali security forces is planned for 2024. The current mandates of the EUTM and EUCAP missions run until the same date.



3.2 EU Strategies and Goals

The European Union has adopted over the years several strategic documents where the objectives it pursues in Somalia can be identified. In November 2011, the Council adopted the EU strategic framework for the Horn of Africa in order to align its various policies and programmes towards good governance, human rights, security, economic growth and fight against poverty. The Global Strategy adopted in 2016 and the Strategic Compass adopted in 2022 also contain objectives that concern Somalia. On May 10, 2021, finally, the Council approved conclusions to update the EU's *New strategy for the Horn of Africa – a geo-strategic priority for the EU*. Three general orientations can be deduced from these documents:

- 1) In a globalised world characterised by transnational threats, the EU's engagement in Somalia partly reflects a desire to outsource its internal security. The Global Strategy stresses that "Internal and external security are ever more intertwined: our security at home entails a parallel interest in peace in our neighbouring and surrounding regions" (EEAS, 2016, p. 14). The instability in the Horn of Africa is a catalyst for the growth of insecurity that risks spilling over to other regions through terrorism and piracy and threatens directly the interests of EU Member States (Council of the EU, 2011, p. 6). This category also encompasses "irregular" migratory flows to the EU, which are seen as a potential channel for the export of insecurity (Council of the EU, 2011, pp. 4–5).
- 2) EU action in Somalia is also driven by the geostrategic importance of the Horn of Africa (Council of the EU, 2011, p. 2). In 2022, around 25% of the EU maritime supply transited through the Gulf of Aden (Borrell, 2022). The fight against piracy off the Somali coast is therefore in line with the EU's economic interests. Besides, in its assessment of the strategic competition that characterises the EU's security environment, the Strategic Compass makes explicit an important new rationale for European engagement in Africa: "Where the EU is not active and effective in promoting its interests, others fill the space" (EEAS, 2022b, p. 8).
- 3) Finally, European action is guided by the values on which the Union is founded, the promotion of a rule-based order and multilateralism (Council of the EU, 2021, p. 2) as well as a "strong sense of responsibility" (EEAS, 2016a, p. 17) rooted in the "the EU's historic engagement with the countries of the region" (Council of the EU, 2011, p. 4). EU's security assistance to Somalia is primarily aimed at building an efficient and credible defence and security sector in Somalia.

Beyond those rationale that emerge from the main strategic documents adopted by the EU, two key strategic objectives of the European approach in Somalia should be highlighted.

- 1) The first is the notion of "African ownership", closely linked with the support to regional cooperation. The diagnosis of the lack of a strong regional organisation, able to "mediate conflict and foster cooperation" has been posed in the 2011 Council conclusions (Council of the EU, 2011, p. 4) and the objective to remedy this situation has been reaffirmed in the EU Global Strategy (EEAS, 2016a, p. 34) and in the last



Council conclusions on the Horn of Africa (Council of the EU, 2021, p. 4). Since 2007, the African Peace Facility (APF) and then the European Peace Facility (EPF) have backed the African Union (AU) and the AMISOM with the aim of strengthening African capacities to manage the continent's crises. The APF was indeed originally created to help the AU to no longer depend on developed countries in crisis management, and the Somali/AMISOM theatre were to lead the way in such a direction.

- 2) Secondly, one should not forget the underlying fundamental objective of CSDP: to provide the EU with an autonomous capacity for action in crisis management abroad. Africa has often been a field where the EU has developed and tested its capacity for autonomous action in crisis management, notably through its CSDP missions, and the Somali example is of particular importance in this context.

"African ownership" and "European capacity to act autonomously" have therefore to be considered as two key strategic objectives pursued by the EU in Somalia.

3.3 EU Actions in Somalia: A Multidimensional Engagement

The European Union's approach in Somalia can unhesitatingly be described as multidimensional. While trade relations with this country are limited to the "Everything but Arms" provisions of the Generalised System of Preferences (Council of the EU, 2011, p. 9), the EU is striving to participate in Somalia's political dialogue, notably through the support of the electoral process and the deployment of election observation missions, as well as by having played a decisive role in the elaboration of the Somali Compact in 2012–2014. European action also aims to cover all phases of conflict management from humanitarian aid, to development aid and defence/security.

The coordination of the latter two components has been at the heart of European efforts, both because security is seen as a prerequisite for long-term development prospects (Ehart & Petretto, 2012), and because the creation of economic opportunities in Somalia addresses some of the root causes of instability.³ To help securing the country, three complementary CSDP missions were launched between 2008 and 2012 and are still ongoing. EUNAVFOR ATALANTA is the EU's first naval mission and was launched in 2008 with the main task of protecting UN World Food Programme vessels and preventing and repressing piracy (EEAS, n.d.). ATALANTA's mandate progressively evolved and broadened through time, "from an anti-piracy [operation] off the coasts of Somalia into a [...] a full security provider for the maritime roads along the coast of Africa" (Borrell, 2023). EUTM Somalia, which is also the first in its kind, started in 2010 and contributes to the reinforcement of the Somali defence forces (8000 Somali military had been trained by the end of 2022 (Borrell, 2022)). Finally, EUCAP Nestor,

³ The absence of regulated remunerative activities and extreme poverty – compounded by climatic insecurity which severely affects the agriculture and livestock-based Somali economy – created a financial incentive for alternative strategies. Piracy is a well-known case, but the promise of economic opportunities has also been an important recruitment lever for the terrorist group al-Shabaab.



now EUCAP Somalia, has been supporting the development of Somali maritime security capabilities (EEAS, 2022c) since 2012.

The three missions have had varying degrees of effectiveness. On the ground, a gap has appeared between the military and civilian components embodied by EUTM and EUCAP. While EUTM responds to specific needs related with a clear mandate on military training, EUCAP is characterised by a broader mandate, with less clear objectives and scope of action. EUCAP personnel therefore struggle to establish a clear narrative for their mission and to define precisely the areas targeted by their support.⁴ As already mentioned, in addition to military missions, the EU also supports the AU mission in Somalia (AMISOM/ATMIS) through the APF/EPF for a total of €2.4 billion since 2007 (Council of the EU, 2023). It is important to note that, from 2007 to 2020, €2.2 billion of a total budget of €3.61 billion of the African Peace Facility has been earmarked for AMISOM, via the AU (European Commission, 2022c). Military aid to Somalia may soon take a new turn: EU High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell has announced the forthcoming adoption of measures on the transfer of lethal equipment to certain African countries, notably Niger and Somalia, via the EPF (Borrell, 2023). However, this announcement raises the question of the application of the UN arms embargo on Somalia.

With regard to development cooperation, most of the European aid for Somalia is financed by the European Development Fund, with €708 million between 2008 and 2020 (EEAS, 2021b), to which €257 million under the Multiannual Indicative Programme 2021–2024 should be added (EEAS, 2021b). The latter's objectives include peacebuilding. Somalia is also a beneficiary of 8 projects of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa which focus on peacebuilding efforts and migration management, for a total amount of €326 million (EU Trust Fund for Africa, n.d.). The link between security and development is ensured in particular by the Instrument for Stability and the Instrument for Contributing to Stability and Peace (ICSP), which combine short-term assistance managed by the European External Action Service (EEAS) and long-term assistance managed by the Commission. Under this instrument, 18 projects have been conducted in Somalia since 2014 for a total of more than €55 million (European Commission, n.d.-b). More recently, the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI – Global Europe) was designed to support both long-term development objectives and assistance in capacity building of military actors (Council of the EU, 2021, p. 14).

Finally, an important strand of the EU comprehensive action in Somalia focuses on ocean governance and aims at fostering sustainable economic development building on the fisheries sector (EUCAP, 2022). These initiatives aim at addressing one of the root causes of piracy in the region, namely the precariousness of fishermen directly resulting from international overfishing in the Indian Ocean – to which the EU seems to have taken its part, including in Somali waters in 2017–2018 (Blue Marine Foundation, 2022). One of the tools of such a strategy are the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPAs). SFPAs are designed to improve fisheries governance by ensuring “equal rules, scientific management and social

⁴ Interviews with officials.



empowerment” in third countries' exclusive economic zones, where the EU has been allowed to fish for surplus stocks by the said agreement. No such protocol has been established with Somalia yet, but the latest update of the EU strategy for the Horn of Africa foresees a reinforcement of action in ocean governance, notably through SFPAs (Council of the EU, 2021, p. 13). Co-management of the Somali fisheries, by improving the sector's governance, could enable the country to take advantage of the fish-rich waters off its coasts and help the sector to grow. The fishing industry only contributed 1 to 2% of the Somali GDP in 2022 (Meester, 2022) and therefore represents huge development and food security potential for the country. EUCAP Somalia is thus working in relation with the Somali Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources to improve administrative structures (EUCAP, 2022; EEAS, 2022d). In 2023, for example, EUCAP Somalia delivered a Workshop on Sustainable Fisheries Management to Somali civil servants (EUCAP, 2023).

3.4 The Difficult Coordination Between Development Policy and CSDP Missions

Coordination between these different EU civil, security and military actions, however, have produced only mixed results on the ground. Synchronisation between development cooperation and CSDP missions has been hampered by the different programming and timing of these two areas of action, thus compromising the EU's ability to act in a coherent way.⁵ The development cooperation, indeed, is programmed within the EU's seven-year Multiannual Financial Framework, whereas the mandates of the two CSDP missions in Somalia are renewed every two years by member states. Such kind of separate procedures certainly do not favour the development of an integrated approach at EU level.

On the humanitarian front, the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) of the European Commission has provided nearly €476 million in aid to Somalia since 2017 and €79.5 million in 2022. But the coordination of EU humanitarian aid with other branches of EU action is equally complex, due to the specific place of humanitarian policy within EU foreign policy stemming from International Humanitarian Law and reaffirmed by the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid (Christou et al., 2022 (ENGAGE [Working Paper 17](#))). Several studies (Egger, 2016) point to a form of isolationism of DG ECHO, which enjoys important resources and acts mostly through its own network of NGOs to safeguard its autonomy vis-à-vis other European "political" actors. The European commitment to Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development and the implementation since 2012 of the Supporting Horn of Africa Resilience initiative aim to promote coordination between humanitarian aid and development aid. Despite these efforts, relations between DG ECHO on the one hand and DG INTPA and EEAS on the other hand remain superficial.

⁵ Interviews with officials.



At a more general and political level, the overall coherence of European action in Somalia and the region is ensured by the EU Special Envoy to Somalia and the EU Special Representative for the Horn of Africa (EUSR). Since 2011, the EUSR has had a strong mandate to coordinate the various EU instruments, set priorities for action and cooperate with other international actors (De Langlois et al., 2014, p. 21).

3.5 Vertical Coherence Between the EU and its Member States' Action

EU member states – in particular France, Italy and the UK until 2016, due to historic ties and geostrategic interests – have developed some bilateral initiatives with Somalia in the three policy areas mentioned above, and have exercised as much as possible their prerogative to define the EU's external strategy. The strategic direction of the comprehensive approach in Somalia has thus been largely shaped by member states preferences, especially France and the UK (Egger, 2016).

The EU is also putting in place tools to ensure the coherence of its action with that of its Member States, particularly in the field of maritime safety, through the Coordinated Maritime Presences (CMP). On a voluntary basis and while retaining their assets within national chains of command, Member States use the EDA's MARSUR network to exchange operational maritime information and services in Maritime Areas of Interest defined at EU level. A CMP was launched in the North Western Indian Ocean in February 2022 to strengthen the EU's naval presence and partnership in the region (EEAS, 2021c).

3.6 Cooperation with Third Actors

The UN and the AU are the EU's main international partner in Somalia. Cooperation between the EU and the UN has been facilitated since 2013 by the UN Integrated Mission (UNSOM), which brings together all UN programmes and provides the EU with a single interlocutor in the person of the Head of Mission and Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Somalia (Egger, 2014a, p. 48). In the humanitarian field in particular, DG ECHO actively contributes to the coordination of humanitarian aid carried out by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (Egger, 2014, p. 50). In the development field, the EU cooperates with numerous UN agencies to develop and implement projects aimed at increasing stability in Somalia by creating economic opportunities. For example, the Resilient Fisheries and Livestock Value Chain for Inclusive and Sustainable Growth project was launched in 2021 as a three-year €14.7 million project funded by the EU and implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations and the FGS. It focuses on quality production, access to markets and institution building to "unlock the potential of the fisheries and livestock sectors in Somalia" (EEAS, 2021d), within the EU framework of the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa.

The EU's relations with regional organisations are very ambivalent. The EU's strategic documents indeed define privileged partnerships with the eastern african Intergovernmental



Authority on Development (IGAD) and the AU, which struggle to materialise on the ground due to IGAD's inability to exercise a political coordination role and criticism of AMISOM/ATMIS for its limited respect for human rights and humanitarian law. EU funding for the African mission is increasingly being questioned given the lack of results on the ground. As the EU is gradually transferring funds to the Somali National Armed Forces, budget cuts for ATMIS are fuelling tensions between the AU and the EU.⁶

However, the objective of encouraging cooperation within the region has been one of the main principles of the EU's action as soon as 2007, as evidenced by the launch of the Horn of Africa Initiative (HoAI) this year – initially to develop regional infrastructure programmes – and by the EU's support to regional organisations. In the field of anti-piracy, the EU set up in 2010 a maritime security programme, MARSIC (Enhancing Maritime Security and Safety through Information Sharing and Capacity Building), bringing together IGAD, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the East African Community and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa. But this initiative ended in 2015 without having led to any real cooperation (Egger, 2014b, p. 67). This difficulty for the EU to anchor itself with regional partners runs counter to one of its objectives, namely local ownership of the crisis management.

The EU has also developed important coordination procedures with other third countries operating in Somalia. Since 2008, the EU has been working in parallel with the United States, the United Kingdom and Turkey (Williams & Elmi, 2023). The US-led Military Coordination Cell in Mogadishu and the UK's Operation Tangham regularly exchange information with EUTM Somalia (Williams and Ali, 2020). The American and British military missions are considered to be more comprehensive than the EUTM mission, which does not follow up its action with mentoring of troops in the field (Williams & Elmi, 2023). In the fight against piracy, ATALANTA coexisted with the NATO Ocean Shield mission between 2009 and 2016 and even cooperated with Chinese, Indian and Japanese ships (Egger, 2014a, p. 48). Several contact groups exist in this field, notably at the tactical level with the Shared Awareness and Deconfliction group, which aims to coordinate the action of more than thirty countries. The EU also participates in the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia, which became the Contact Group on Illicit Maritime Activities in the Western Indian Ocean in 2022. ATALANTA's ships participated in joint exercises in the Indian ocean with Asian partners (in particular Japan and South Korea in 2021) (EEAS, 2021e) and with the US Navy for the first time ever in March 2023 (EEAS, 2023f), thus enhancing EU's presence in the Indo-Pacific, as foreseen in the 2021 Council conclusions on the Horn of Africa (Council of the EU, 2021, p. 13).

In general, EU coordination with other international actors is strong at the political level, although it is challenged by the difficulty, for third actors, to distinguish the EU distinct entities and to understand their different hierarchical affiliations and modes of operation.⁷

⁶ Interview with officials.

⁷ Interview with officials.



3.7 Outcome of European Actions in Somalia

Somalia is a textbook case for the EU's integrated approach. Firstly, because the EU has deployed countless civilian and military tools in this country (including three CSDP missions) that had to be coordinated with each other. Secondly, because the EU had to coordinate also with many other international actors, and in particular with the AU, whose engagement in Somalia through AMISOM is unique in Africa. And finally, because it was in Somalia that Brussels first tested two models of military missions, the EUTM-type training missions and the EUNAVFOR-type naval missions, which were later deployed in other crises.

To cope with this multitude of actions and actors, a real coordination effort has been put in place by the EU, as evidenced by the many mechanisms mentioned in this paragraph. However, the proliferation of sometimes random initiatives from the various EU institutions and bodies has not made the task any easier. The heavy degree of overlapping between EU strands of action not only challenges coordination but also represents a waste of resources. At the origin of this problem arises the old dichotomy between the intergovernmental and community systems, which are based on different modes of action, programming, timing and actors.

Notwithstanding some limitations, the scale of its efforts and the sums invested have enabled the EU to become a major player in the region. The fact that Somalia is not considered a priority country by the main EU member states, as well as by the United States – although this must be nuanced by Biden's decision to redeploy some 450 US troops in Somalia in 2022, reversing his predecessors' policy on the matter, as well as the country's place as one of the main theatres of the American 'fight against terror' –, has also allowed the EU to enjoy some margin of manoeuvre and a relatively autonomous capacity for action. However, it cannot be said that the EU's objectives in Somalia have been achieved. After more than three decades of war, the country remains extremely fragile and unstable. Above all, the Somali drama did not allow the AU to become a strong and autonomous actor in crises management, as the EU wanted. Despite the structural assistance provided through the African Peace Facility for many years, the AU has remained dependent on EU financial support, in Somalia as elsewhere.



4 Iran

The EU's policy towards Iran, in a way, is like the EU itself: *sui generis*. True, every country, every conflict is different, but when it comes to how the EU and member states have dealt with the Islamic Republic over the past three decades, there really is no comparator. The reasons have as much to do with *how* the EU acts as with the nature of the Iranian challenge (ranging from nuclear non-proliferation to regional security to human rights) and with the importance of international partners or multilateral institutions.

Under scrutiny here is the less visible part of the EU's approach vis-à-vis Iran: it takes the areas of cooperation outside nuclear non-proliferation as a case of possible conflict prevention. Organisationally, the EU's role in the nuclear negotiations and its evolving sanctions policy vis-à-vis Iran have already been analysed in ENGAGE [Working Paper 17](#) (Christou et al., 2022). Substantially, this broader approach allows for a more inclusive view of the issues at hand, whereas the 'nuclear file' – as the international community's effort to rein in Iran's nuclear programme came to be called – has become highly securitised over the years (International Crisis Group, 2018). In that sense, the Joint Statement of April 2016 of the EU and Iran outlined a "comprehensive agenda for bilateral cooperation" shortly after the (temporary) settling of the nuclear dispute, including anything from economic cooperation, trade and investment, to energy, climate and the environment, to science, education and culture (European Commission, 2016).

The EU's more recent approach could therefore also address economic and societal issues as well as concerns over women's and human rights – policy fields the EU had pretty much neglected once the nuclear file had emerged as the dominant issue back in 2002. Another stumbling block hampering cooperation has been the Islamic Republic's aggressive regional posture and its propensity to engage in terrorist activities: Tehran has been involved in many of the region's numerous latent and potent violent conflicts, from the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria to continued civil war in Afghanistan to its own power projection through proxies in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen (Katzman, 2017). Addressing any of these issues with a country engaged in such activities creates conflicts in need of resolution.

4.1 A Conflict Like No Other Makes for Difficult Policy Development

The European approach indeed harks back to the so-called 'critical dialogue' of the 1990s, when the EU for the first time established more structured relations with post-revolutionary Iran. What began as human rights dialogue was soon complemented by an effort to develop trade relations once Tehran had started to economically open up with the end of the 1980–1988 Iran-Iraq war (Calabrese, 2004). Much to the displeasure of the United States and Israel, which saw Iran as a major opponent, the Europeans would increase commercial ties so that the EU became Iran's leading trade partner by the early 2000s (Coville, 2014). The following decade, however, was one of steadily decreased contacts as sanctions increased – both from



the UN and the EU, but most powerfully from the United States. Iran, in turn, would begin to look East, to Russia, China and India (Zamirirad, 2020).

After the signing of the 2015 nuclear deal, the EU and Iran laid the groundwork for a new and comprehensive approach. Trying to “turn the page” in bilateral relations, as EU HR/VP Federica Mogherini announced during her April 2016 trip to Tehran, the EU would from then on follow an approach of the “4 C’s”: comprehensive, cooperative, critical if needed, but always constructive (Iran Task Force, 2016). However, a fifth C might have been added early on: *complicated*, as it has remained hard for the EU to implement its policies, given in particular the deterioration over the nuclear file and the escalation of regional tensions.

The rationale of the EU’s engagement in the specific situation around Iran needs to be seen against the backdrop of the high-stakes involvement in the nuclear file as much as of the volatile regional situation. This makes Iran a different type of crisis, hardly comparable to ‘known’ ones like low-scale military conflicts in the neighbourhood and beyond.

For one, it is hard to find close look-alikes from which the EU could draw some policy inspiration. Iran is different from other medium-sized regional powers such as Iraq (strife-torn ever since the 2003 US invasion), Saudi Arabia (an absolute monarchy and oil-rich US ally), Turkey (an EU candidate, still, and a somewhat estranged NATO member), or Kazakhstan (also oil-rich and autocratic, but in the post-Soviet sphere). Then again, Iran is not a natural part of any regional grouping, so it cannot be approximated as, for example, Argentina might be with respect to Mercosur or Indonesia as a member of ASEAN.⁸ Instead, a “strategically lonely” Iran aims at a global presence via very heterogeneous organisations like the Non-Aligned Movement and the OIC (Slavin, 2011; Warnaar, 2013). The EU, therefore, cannot use any ‘lessons learned’ from its practices with third countries such as through enlargement or trade policy.

4.2 Analysing the EU’s Capacity to Act vis-à-vis Iran

The EU’s capacity to act, in turn, is defined by its stated interests and specified goals as well as by the strategic and operational approach derived from these. That said, the first two – interests and goals – are more clearly discernible for the dominant nuclear file than for the across-the-board engagement in this paper’s focus. There, by engaging Iran diplomatically, the EU aimed to avert another war in the Middle East, to heal the intra-EU split induced by the Iraq invasion and to defend the international non-proliferation regime (Adebahr, 2017). Here, with ‘anything but the nuclear file’, the overarching interest is to engage the Islamic Republic – a resource-rich country with a population exceeding 85 million and located at the crossroads of Europe, the Arabian Peninsula and Central Asia – despite the various and profound differences

⁸ This notwithstanding, Iran is a founding member, with Turkey and Pakistan and later joined by most Central Asian states, of the Economic Cooperation Organisation. This group, however, rather amounts to a framework for bilateral trade agreements than a proper common market.



in countless policy areas. Or, as the goal was quite modestly formulated 30 years ago, “a dialogue should be maintained with the Iranian Government” (European Council, 1992).

That said, if the EU was fairly process-oriented back then, boasting its “critical dialogue” with Tehran whenever appropriate, it began to focus more on actual outcomes once the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, allowed for a re-engagement. To further develop the EU’s broad approach building on the nuclear agreement, the Council in November 2016 formulated a “coordinated EU strategy of gradual engagement with Iran”. It encompassed all “areas of common interest such as political dialogue, human rights, economic cooperation, trade and investment, agriculture, transport, energy and climate change, civil nuclear cooperation, environment, civil protection, science, research and innovation, education, including through university exchanges, culture, drugs, migration, regional and humanitarian issues” (Council of the European Union, 2016).

Based on the Council’s strategy, the EU would kick into action by making concrete proposals for cooperation in these fields. The natural place for them to originate from is the European Commission as the EU’s main administrative body. The post-nuclear deal policy shift thus also implied a change of institutional focus on the part of the EU. On the nuclear file, the Council as the key actor in the CFSP and in particular the E3 group of countries (France, Germany and the United Kingdom) leading the negotiations with Iran, were critical. In turn, once the nuclear deal had unfrozen relations in by mid-2015, the European Commission moved up in importance, as it covers the broad portfolio of EU policies outside CFSP – including those with money to disburse.

So, when the HR/VP and chief nuclear negotiator, Federica Mogherini, led an EU delegation to Tehran in April 2016, it was her other hat as Vice-President of the European Commission that gained prominence. This is evidenced by the group of seven Commissioners who travelled with her and who represented the breadth of the EU’s aspired involvement: their portfolios ranged from the Internal Market, Industry and Transport, to Climate Action, Energy, Environment and Fisheries, to Education, Culture and Science as well as Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management (European Commission, 2016).

With the field finally opening, also the European Parliament became eager to provide input to the EU’s policy formulation. It began with a resolution in November 2016 outlining possible areas of cooperation, sensing “an opportunity for reforms in the country and for improvement of its relations with the European Union” (European Parliament, 2016). Unheard of previously when the securitised nuclear file dominated the proceedings, this included a call on the EU and member states “to continue to raise issues relating to gender equality in bilateral engagement with the Iranian authorities” (ibid.). Then followed the resumption of parliamentary delegation visits, which had been effectively suspended between 2008 and 2015, i.e. during the height of the nuclear confrontation. The one exception was trip of European parliamentarians to Tehran in December 2013, which was roundly criticised from all sides: from Iranian hardliners for meeting human rights activists (Esfandiary, 2014) and from other European policymakers for potentially undermining human rights concerns (Rezai, 2013).



At an operational level, the EU therefore brought the depth of its reservoir to play, literally everything except trade policy and CSDP. Regarding the former, early plans for a Trade and Cooperation Agreement were shelved in 2005 and dusted off in 2016 but have since been put on ice again. About the latter, no civilian or military mission in the area was ever considered. However, there is another missing part in the EU's approach toward Iran post-JCPOA: Despite the European Parliament's above-mentioned 'encouragement', the foreign policy framework developed then "does not account for a gender-aware approach of inclusive security" (Adebahr & Mittelhammer, 2020).

Finally, precisely because Iran has been such a difficult partner over the years, the EU has placed a premium on cooperation through third parties, such as multilateral and regional organisations. On trade, Brussels had long supported Iran's application for membership in the World Trade Organisation, which was blocked by the United States until 2005 but has not made much progress since then. In turn, much of the cooperation on cross-border pollution, water scarcity, biodiversity and desertification has been channelled through the United Nations Development Program and Environmental Program, UNDP or UNEP, respectively. For critical issues such as the presence of Afghan refugees in Iran and the blossoming drug trade across the Afghan-Iranian border, the EU funded work of the International Organisation for Migration and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Because of remaining US sanctions especially on financial transfers, the EU often used such multilateral bodies to channel funds to Iranian partners. Its willingness to engage and its available means – both programmatic and financial – made the EU a preferred partner for these UN organisations.

4.3 Mostly Coherent, with Considerable Capacity to Act, but Reliant on Others

The EU's main achievement with Iran so far has been outside the scope of this case study, i.e. the nuclear deal of 2015. Even there, however, the United States' unilateral withdrawal from the agreement in 2018 and the ensuing diplomatic escalation, coupled with the Iran's internal revolt centred on "woman, life, freedom", have worsened relations. This notwithstanding, the initial expectations – both on the part of the EU and among external partners – was that the EU's involvement in this situation would allow all actors to move beyond the period of (nuclear) confrontation and begin an era of broad-based cooperation. Or, as the nuclear agreement stipulated in its preamble: "full implementation of this JCPOA will positively contribute to regional and international peace and security" (E3/EU+3 & Iran, 2015).

However, under the circumstances described above, it is not surprising that the EU has not been able to live up to the expectations it helped create with the 2016 Joint Statement and the following European Parliament resolution and Council conclusions. Still, the primary obstacles to delivering on this agreed agenda have been on the external side: a highly contentious regional climate with kinetic attacks and terrorist activity in different countries around the Persian Gulf as well as renewed barriers to international trade with Iran due to a resurrected – and reinforced – US sanctions regime (European Parliament, 2020).



EU institutions and Member States have, at least in comparison, acted more or less in concert in their pursuit of the agenda. A legacy of the nuclear negotiations has been the elevated role of the E3 among the members of the Council, as well as of the Iran Task Force (now: Iran Division) within the EEAS. Once Washington had moved into confrontation mode again by 2018, the broad-based initiatives led by various Commission directorates were gradually slowed down at first and later put on hold, as internal processes became centralised – first in the EU’s push against US secondary sanctions and then in the confrontation with Iran over the country’s nuclear advances.

This only serves to underline how much the EU’s policies and activities depend not only on the target country, Iran, but also on relations with the United States. The latter, under the previous administration, saw the EU as an unreliable partner and even an economic foe, viewing any type of engagement with Iran as short of – or beyond – appeasement. While this has changed under the current administration, there is still no room for cooperation given the US President’s reluctance – despite an earlier campaign pledge – to re-enter the 2015 deal (Petti, 2020). The Islamic Republic, in contrast, now sees the EU mainly as a paper tiger that is mostly irrelevant to its concerns. With Washington reneging on the deal and the EU unable to maintain trade relations despite reimposed US sanctions, the leadership in Tehran has turned eastward, looking mainly to China but also to Central Asia and India for commercial ties and political support (Yazdanshenas, 2021). Iran’s rapprochement with Russia over military support for the war against Ukraine appears only as a logical if cynical extension of this re-orientation.

As things stand today, the EU will not be able to fully re-engage, as intended in 2016, with Iran under the current Islamic Republic. While the priorities and policies developed over the period under consideration are in principle still valid, they lack a credible and reliable implementing partner in Tehran – and support, or at least acquiescence, from Washington. Moreover, the Russian war against Ukraine has fundamentally changed the geopolitical landscape. Based on the coherence it has acquired over the decades and given its actual capacity to act, the EU will have to devise a new approach to Iran that is apt to this new situation.



5 Colombia

5.1 From Violence to Peace: A Background of the Colombian Conflict

Depending on the source's perspective, the armed conflict in Colombia can be said to have lasted nearly seven decades, or at the very least half a century. It finds its origins in the first half of the 20th century, when struggles related to reforms on property of agricultural land, the commercial exploitation and social function thereof, led to the so-called *La Violencia* period. In April 1948, the Liberal political leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán – supporter of protests to achieve further reforms – was murdered; this is an illustration of the then-frequent use of force to do politics. The assassination triggered the so-called *Bogotazo*: a series of riots and lootings in the capital, which in turn caused the conflict to expand to the rural areas, accompanied by repressive action. In the countryside, this was the context that gave birth to a series of guerrillas intent in bringing about agrarian transformations. A military coup, led by Gustavo Rojas Pinilla in 1953, was followed by the demobilisation of a majority of liberal guerrillas; those of communist inspiration, however, refused to do so.

By the end of the decade of 1950, an agreement reached between the two traditional political parties – the Conservative and Liberal Parties – was put in action: *El Frente Nacional*, whereby they would alternate at the head of the Executive every four years, as well as arrange the distribution of public offices and political representation across the country. While this effort succeeded in calming tensions between the political parties and the numbers of fatal victims in comparison to the *La Violencia* period, other more radicalised sectors saw it as the seed of an increasingly hermetic system, which could only be faced with armed force. Over the following years, failure to implement an “agrarian reform” with the redistributive effects expected by the population, along with the intervention of foreign (armed) forces, led to the development of so-called “independent republics” of peasant communities that had found refuge in the mountains. These groups did not feel bound in any way by the agreements reached by the political parties and, instead, sought to bring about a revolution that should reshape Colombia's economic, political and social structures. Chief amongst these groups were the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), founded in 1964.

Towards the end of the decade of 1970, violence started to worsen sparked by a series of union strikes that were followed by a string of restrictive measures from the Government, eventually developing into a spiral of violence. By the beginning of the following decade, the administration of President Belisario Betancur attempted a “bilateral ceasefire” with the view to finding a political solution to the conflict. This, however, did not resonate with the opposition, especially in view of the increased violent activities of the guerrillas, including kidnappings and extorsions. Moreover, the agreement was contemporary with the conflict's new element: drug traffic as a source of revenue. While until that time it had concentrated on the production of marijuana, in the 1980s the groups involved in the armed conflict ventured into the production of cocaine, taking advantage of its restriction in Peru and Bolivia as a



consequence of the United States' "war on drugs" under the Reagan Administration. The economic advantage for the guerrillas led them to offer protection to the people involved in the growing of the coca plants, thus growing their support amongst the population. The spiral of violence would, however, soon put the guerrillas, paramilitary groups and drug mafia at odds, leaving a high toll – both amongst them and civilian population – of victims of murder, kidnappings, torture, "forced disappearances", arbitrary arrests and car bombs.

The decade of 1990 initially heralded a period of calm, started with the new 1991 Constitution. Peace talks were conducted with the armed groups and institutional reforms were put in place, enjoying support from most sectors of the political spectrum. However, the scenario would soon end after news that President Samper Pizano's 1994 campaign had been funded by the drug trafficking *Cartel de Cali* became public, thus unleashing a legitimization crisis and leaving the State institutions in a precarious situation. The *Plan Colombia*, aimed at solving the drug trafficking problem through peace negotiations with the remaining guerrilla groups, particularly FARC. These were utterly unsuccessful, leading to the election of President Álvaro Uribe Vélez in 2002, under whose administration the conflict was rebranded as a "terrorist threat" in the wave of the post-September 11 global fight against terrorism. While some armed groups demobilised and some peaceful negotiations were attempted, such as humanitarian prisoner exchanges, acts of violence by FARC brought about a hardening of the approach. Examples thereof are the notorious rescues of hostages by military operations and incursions into Ecuadorian territory to attack guerrilleros beyond the national borders (Luna, 2019).

At the end of Álvaro Uribe's second mandate in 2010, former Defence Minister Juan Manuel Santos was elected President. During the previous decade, Colombia's GDP grew an average of 5.5% a year, without being able to substantially achieve social improvements in its population (Luna, 2019). In this context, President Santos announced in his inaugural speech his will to sow the seeds of true reconciliation between Colombians and declared that the door for dialogue was not closed under lock and key (Santos, 2010). In 2012, peace talks between the Colombian government and the FARC began in Havana, Cuba, with a reduced number of participants: Norway and Cuba as guarantors and Chile and Venezuela as observers; the US, Germany and the EU with appointed special envoys. Both parties announced a final peace deal in August 2016, declaring a permanent ceasefire. The Final Peace Agreement, signed in Colombia in September 2016, marked the successful conclusion of negotiations between the Colombian government and the FARC rebel group.

5.2 EU Engagement in Colombia: A Comprehensive Approach to Peacebuilding

At the turn of the century, while *Plan Colombia* was being implemented under the initiative of the United States, the European Union positioned itself taking a non-military approach to the Colombian conflict moved, *inter alia*, by the historical and cultural ties between several



Member States – notably, but not exclusively Spain – and the region.⁹ Furthermore, it encouraged the Colombian government to implement reforms to improve social conditions and stop the ongoing concentration of land, so as to give access to the rural population that live from it (EP Resolution 2001/2512(RSP), paras. f, 8, 9). At the same time, the EP recognised that not only Colombians had fallen victims of the violence in Colombia, but European citizens as well (EP Resolution 2001/2512(RSP), para. j). Throughout the years, the EU has pursued a holistic approach, favouring political dialogue, trade cooperation and financial aid, so as to achieve long-term peacebuilding (Ioannides, pp. I, 9). Some aspects to which the EU has given special relevance are child rights and the re-integration of child combatants, as well as women’s (Ioannides, 2019, p. 12; EP, 2021, para. g), Afro-Colombian and indigenous groups’ (EP, 2021, para. n) participation and integration in the peacebuilding process.

The EU's political support for the Colombian peace process began even before the 2016 agreement. As a counterbalance to *Plan Colombia*, the EU implemented its project-based “Peace Laboratories”, “Regional Development Peace and Stability” programme and “New Peace Territories” project, totalling €230 million between 2002 and 2017 (Ioannides, 2019, p. 16). While recognising that the impact on the peacebuilding process was small, the EU highlights the institutional changes they sparked not only at a local, but also national and international level (Ioannides, 2019, p. 17). At the time of the 2016 Peace Agreement’s signing, the EU declared that its initiatives will follow the fundamental objective of contributing to Colombia’s peace and stability. To that end, they shall address the root causes of the armed conflict (EEAS, 2016). The latter directly relates to the call expressed in the 2016 Peace Agreement for the EU to serve as an international supporting actor (*Instancia de acompañamiento internacional*) for specific areas foreseen therein: (1) integral rural reform; (2) re-incorporation of FARC combatants into civilian life; and (3) the establishment – within the Prosecutor General’s Office – of a special investigation unit (Peace Agreement, point 6.4.2., p. 215; Ioannides, p. 37). By means of the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (ICSP), the EU has fundamentally supported projects related to the protection of victims and the environment, rural development and removal of landmines, *inter alia* (EEAS, 2016b).

One of the most visible actions taken by the EU was the appointment in 2015 of Irish diplomat and former Deputy Prime Minister, Eamon Gilmore, as EU Special Representative for the Peace Process in Colombia. Originally entrusted with this responsibility by HR/VP Mogherini, Mr. Gilmore was confirmed in this posting by HR/VP Borrell; he periodically travels to Colombia to meet “...with victims, human rights defenders, government, opposition, FARC-EP, civil society and media” (Ioannides, 2019, pp. 12–13). This appointment showcased the EU’s commitment to supporting the country’s journey towards sustainable peace. Gilmore is perceived as an efficient interlocutor for multiple stakeholders¹⁰ and, as a Special Representative, played an essential role in facilitating dialogue between the conflicting parties, building trust and

⁹ Interview, Senior staff member of the EEAS delegation to Colombia, 13 March 2023, online via Zoom.

¹⁰ Interview, Senior official in the Colombian Mission to the European Union, 23 March 2023, Brussels.



ensuring a smooth negotiation process. Politically, his appointment also highlighted the EU's willingness to engage in conflict management and support peacebuilding initiatives.

Following the peace agreement, the EU established a peace fund to support Colombia's peacebuilding efforts. The EU Trust Fund for Colombia (EUTF), also known as the "Colombia in Peace" Fund, aims to support various projects that promote the implementation of the peace agreement, encourage economic and social development and ensure the protection of human rights. In 2015, the EU and its Member States agreed to create, at the request of the Colombian government, an EUTF to help finance the peace process, enabling a "pooling together of resources". This mechanism allows for different donors to ready "quick, flexible, and collective" financial support (Ioannides, 2019, pp. 38–39), and the fund currently receives contributions from the EU 21, Member States,¹¹ as well as the United Kingdom and Chile (EP, 2021, para. m; EUTF, n.d.; EEAS, 2022a, p. 2). Through the development of projects, the EUTF provides aid in the reintegration of former combatants, localised economic development and the implementation of the Integral Rural Reform (EEAS, 2022e, p. 2; EP, 2021, para. 17). The fund has supported numerous projects in Colombia, including initiatives focusing on rural development, the reintegration of ex-combatants and strengthening local governance (García Duque & Casadiego, 2021). Additionally, it has backed efforts to improve access to education, healthcare and infrastructure for communities affected by the conflict, which are areas seen as importance for long-lasting peace and social cohesion in Colombia.

One of the most critical challenges in Colombia's peacebuilding process is addressing the issue of landmines and unexploded ordnance. The conflict has left the country with a vast number of landmines, posing a significant threat to local populations and hindering development in affected areas. Recognising the importance of addressing this issue, the EU has provided substantial financial and technical assistance to support de-mining actions in Colombia. Through the EU Trust Fund, the EU has funded projects aimed at clearing landmines and raising awareness about the dangers of unexploded ordnance among local communities. These efforts have not only saved lives and improved security but also enabled the return of displaced populations and facilitated the development of previously inaccessible areas.

Beyond financial assistance, the EU has also contributed to peacebuilding in Colombia through diplomatic efforts, technical assistance and capacity building. The EU has used its diplomatic influence to encourage other international actors to support the peace process and ensure the agreement's successful implementation. Colombia is, along with Cuba, the only Latin American country mentioned by name in the 2016 EU's Global Strategy. Building on this priority, the Union has promoted dialogue and exchange between Colombia and other countries that have undergone peace processes, allowing for the sharing of best practices and lessons learned. Other actions taken by the EU aiding in the implementation of the peace process are the 2016 EU Council decision to suspend sanctions against FARC (Council of the EU, 2016) and the sending of observers to the 2022 elections in Colombia. The latter were of

¹¹ Austria, Cyprus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.



special significance given that not only were they the second presidential election held with the Agreement in force, but also the first process to elect the 16 representatives of “special transitional peace constituencies”, foreseen in the Peace Agreement (EEAS, 2022f).

Furthermore, the Union has provided technical assistance to Colombian institutions to strengthen their capacity in implementing peacebuilding initiatives, including support for the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, a key Colombian institution responsible for transitional justice. The EU provides support to the Prosecutor’s Office Special Investigation Unit¹² in the improvement of strategic investigation methodologies, as well as technological equipment (FIIAPP, n.d.) and continuously assessing the current situation of human right defenders (Ioannides, 2019, p. 41).

Pursuant to the elements of integration of vulnerable population contained in the Peace Agreement, the EUTF has funded a series of projects directly aimed at the social and cultural initiatives, generation of income and human rights protection of women, youth, indigenous, Afro-Colombian population and other minority groups (EUTF, p. 5; Ioannides, 2019, p. 18; EEAS, 2022e, p. 1). Finally, other actions were not directly connected to the negotiation or implementation of the Peace Agreement, but nonetheless had a significant impact on EU-Colombian relations, such as the signing and entering into force of a Free Trade Agreement between Colombia, Peru and the EU,¹³ as well as the 2015 Agreement on the short-stay visa waiver (EP, 2021, second consideration).

5.3 Challenges and Obstacles for Coherent, Sustainable and Effective Peacebuilding in Colombia

Despite these efforts, there remain challenges and obstacles linked to the EU’s engagement in support of the Colombian peace process. First, a critical challenge has been ensuring the successful and sustainable transition of ex-combatants into legal economic activities. The reintegration process is complex, as it requires providing former fighters with adequate resources, capacitation and opportunities to pursue new livelihoods while avoiding the risk of recidivism into armed fight. The EU’s efforts to fund reintegration programs have faced obstacles observed in other processes, including limited resources, lack of coordination with other actors and difficulties in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the initiatives. However, the main lesson refers to the constant need of need to rethinking education and training of ex-combatants in line with the changing economic opportunities in the Colombian

¹² Created by Decree-Law No. 898 of 2017, charged – *inter alia* – with dismantling organised crime, investigating and prosecuting activities aimed at social and political leaders, human rights defenders and persons implementing the Peace Agreement, as well as criminal organisations deemed successors of paramilitarism (art. 1).

¹³ The Agreement was signed by the EU and its Member States, on one side, and by Colombia and Peru as Member States of the Andean Community on the other, on 26 July 2012; it entered provisionally into force in 2013. Ecuador accessed the Agreement in 2016, being provisionally in force since 2017, and Bolivia can seek accession as a Member of the Andean Community (EU Commission, n.d.).



context.¹⁴ On top of these challenges related to the current process of de-mobilisation of FARC, peacebuilding has still a long way to go, considering that other armed groups – notably ELN – are still active; their disarmament and reintegration to civil society will require a separate effort.¹⁵

The change in government from the presidencies of Juan Manuel Santos to Iván Duque has presented another significant potential obstacle for the effective and sustainable EU's engagement in the Colombian peace process. While Santos was a key figure in negotiating the peace agreement, Duque's administration was less committed to the peace process and was criticised for not prioritising the implementation of the peace agreement. This change in government stance has made it more difficult for the EU to effectively support the peace process and ensure the success of its initiatives. Nevertheless, the institutionalisation of the EU's support in the form of the Trust Fund and regular bilateral contacts¹⁶ between the Colombian government and the EU institutions have contributed to the long-term sustainability of the programs, ensuring EU's continuous support.¹⁷ As such, a key challenge for the EU's support in Colombia is the possibility that the EUTF may not be renewed and Colombia drops in the priority list of EU's external action. The EUTF has been crucial for funding peacebuilding initiatives in Colombia, and its potential phase-out raises concerns about the future sustainability of these projects.

The EU's approach to funding peacebuilding projects in Colombia has faced criticism for not adequately involving local civil society organisations in the design, implementation and evaluation of projects. This lack of participation has led to concerns that the EU's projects may not fully address the specific needs and priorities of local communities affected by the conflict. Furthermore, the limited involvement of local actors can result in a lack of ownership and sustainability of the projects, undermining their long-term success.¹⁸ This challenge highlights the need for the EU to re-evaluate its approach to ensure that local civil society organisations play a more significant role in the peacebuilding process.

The EU's engagement in the Colombian peace process has been challenged by the increasing risks and dangers faced by human rights defenders in the country. Since the signing of the peace agreement, Colombia has seen a surge in violence against human rights defenders, including social leaders, environmental activists and indigenous and Afro-Colombian community leaders. This violence has been attributed to, amongst other factors, illegal armed groups and criminal organisations seeking to control territories previously occupied by FARC. Despite the EU's efforts to support human rights initiatives and protect human rights defenders, the persistent violence against these individuals remains a significant obstacle: “[...] more than 250 social leaders and HR defenders have been murdered and 75 massacres have

¹⁴ Interview, Senior staff member of the EEAS delegation to Colombia, 13 March 2023, online via Zoom.

¹⁵ Interview, Senior official in the Colombian Mission to the European Union, 23 March 2023, Brussels.

¹⁶ Interview, Senior official in the Colombian Mission to the European Union, 23 March 2023, Brussels.

¹⁷ Interview, Senior staff member of the EEAS delegation to Colombia, 13 March 2023, online via Zoom.

¹⁸ Interview, Senior official in the Colombian Mission to the European Union, 23 March 2023, Brussels.



taken place since the beginning of 2020 and the situation worsened throughout the processes of implementation of the Peace Agreement” (Sebastiao & Guimaraes, 2022, p. 106).

5.4 Conclusions to the Case Study

The European Union’s engagement in the Colombian Peace process and subsequent peacebuilding efforts is, for the most part, seen as a success story. Broadly speaking, the EU’s actions have aimed at the protection of human rights, better equipping civil society and land governance and rural development (Vanelli & Ochoa Peralta, 2022; see also: Pérez de Armiño, forthcoming). Qualitative frame analysis of online media diplomacy (Montoya Londoño, 2020) shows that the European Union has fundamentally focused on the implementation of the peace agreement tackling the root causes of conflicts, which contrasts with the United States’ approach to the agreement as a function to the war on drugs. In sum, the EU “positioned itself as a local mediator and peace guarantor, while the United States profiled itself predominantly as a security guarantor” (Montoya Londoño, 2020, p. 78).

One key element behind this effective engagement is the institutionalisation of EU’s actions and policies by means of the Trust Fund. The Fund has provided for certain autonomy vis-à-vis national politics of EU Member States and stability in relation to domestic changes in the Colombian government, thus allowing for stability in this long-term involvement. Admittedly, this is to a considerable extent owed to a responsible administration of the funds, which does not necessarily coincide with the experiences made in other similar initiatives. Likewise, the figure of the EU Special Envoy is especially appreciated by multiple stakeholders, giving “a face” and notably “a friendly ear” to the European Union’s engagement in the peacebuilding process.

Room for improvement can be found in the inclusion of local actors in the implementation of the projects related to the EU’s engagement. On the one hand, it would contribute a relevant input of local knowledge regarding needs in the national context, so as to make an efficient use of the resources. On the other hand, this approach could help further develop local ownership in the outcomes of the process.



6 Conclusion

The four case studies presented here come to a first, unsurprising common conclusion: the EU has a plethora of tools and policies implemented by different institutions and bodies, which have enormous potential but often end up juxtaposing each other. The overall coherence of its action, as well as its effectiveness, is thus often compromised. At the same time, the analysis also shows that the EU is able to act in very different contexts and has many assets to influence crises, although it is not always able to capitalise on them politically in order to be more influential.

The problem of the EU's external action coherence is as old as the CSDP. Because of its intergovernmental dimension, it has been disconnected from Community policies (and thus from the European integration process) since its launch in the early 2000s. Over time, however, the EU has developed several instruments to deal with this. It has become accustomed to periodically writing strategic orientation documents both at global and regional level, with the aim of identifying common guidelines for all actors involved. It has also created several coordination mechanisms, both in Brussels and in the field, which work better or worse, depending on the type of crisis, the context and the goodwill of the officials involved. But these efforts cannot solve the root problem that undermines the horizontal coherence of the EU action, i.e. its institutional fragmentation and the consequent proliferation of competences and initiatives arising from it. As long as Member States do not commit to establishing clear hierarchical relationships between EU bodies and institutions, which is ultimately a matter of political integration, the EU will have to devote considerable time and resources to ensure that its external action follows a coherent strategic framework.

Beyond the perpetual problem of coherence, the examples of Kosovo, Somalia, Iran and Colombia illustrate above all how much the EU's capacity to act depends on external factors beyond its control. The Somali case suggests that when the EU acts in peripheral regions of the world, which are not the main focus of attention of its main Member States and the United States, it can enjoy significant room for manoeuvre, becoming a central and relatively autonomous actor in the management of the conflict in question. A similar observation can also be made for the Colombian case. The European support for the Colombian peace process is an example of the EU being able to act and position itself in distant crises that do not directly challenge European security. Here the EU has been able to support its partner in a sustainable and predictable way over time, notably through the creation of a Peace Fund and through the organisation of regular meetings at strategic and operational level. This example also shows how the EU acts with non-military means in conflict prevention.

The Iranian and Kosovar examples, in contrast, tell us that if the crisis theatre is at the centre of major geopolitical and security issues, the Union's room for manoeuvre inevitably shrinks. Leaning on and coordinating with allies like the United States to adopt a joint stance becomes as important as working with the conflict state in question. The Kosovo and Iran examples allow us to conclude that on the most important international issues, the EU has only partially achieved the capacity for autonomous action that it aspired to when launching CFSP/CSDP.



This does not mean that the EU is an insignificant actor on the international scene, far from it. Despite the difficulties it may encounter in implementing a coherent and autonomous strategy, and despite the divisions which may persist between the Member States, the vast panoply of instruments at its disposal to influence crises must not be underestimated. As the four examples mentioned here have shown, the EU is able to act in all phases of the cycle of a crisis, as well as in radically different contexts. Most of these instruments, however, have a structural purpose. They are intended to influence the factors underlying the crises in the long term, but they usually do not allow the EU to play a protagonist role when a major crisis breaks out. Rather, the EU will be able to intervene at a later stage, in support of decisions taken at NATO or Member State level, to support them structurally and financially. The situation was only slightly different in the Colombian case because the context gave the EU room for autonomous action: the peacebuilding process had a clear framework (the Peace Agreement itself) which required cooperation for development and was institutionalised by means of the Trust Fund. The EU therefore seems to be able to act effectively only after strategic decisions have been taken in other frameworks.



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