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Case Studies of EU and Member State Engagement with Strategic International Organisations

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ENVISIONING A NEW GOVERNANCE ARCHITECTURE FOR A GLOBAL EUROPE

Executive Summary

This working paper examines the European Union's (EU) strategic partnerships with International Organisations (IOs) in dealing with different crises. Through the lens of three distinct case studies, it investigates the EU's collaboration with the United Nations in addressing the Mali crisis, its joint efforts with NATO in response to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, and its partnership with the African Union in the context of climate change.

For each case study, the paper delves into the foundational institutional framework of these partnerships, explores the tangible outputs derived from their collective endeavours in confronting crises, and conducts a comprehensive assessment of key successes and challenges. Leveraging the conceptual framework provided by ENGAGE Working Paper 13, this working paper sheds light the EU's approach to crisis management, drawing insights from the strategies employed by other international organisations. It thereby uncovers areas of consensus, conflict, and contestation. While the primary focus of this working paper is the evaluation of collaboration outputs, it deliberately refrains from venturing into the realm of specific outcomes, such as the attainment of stability in Mali or the resolution of the Ukraine conflict, as these are beyond its defined scope.

The analysis emphasises the dynamic nature of strategic partnerships as well as the importance of adaptability for successful cooperation. Despite partnerships being highly institutionalised, the findings reveal a mosaic of diverse cooperation channels, which do not necessarily translate into enhanced or balanced cooperation to tackle a crisis. Additional factors, including asymmetrical relationships, ambiguous role assignments, and the burgeoning influence of geopolitical competitors, emerge as crucial determinants shaping cooperation patterns and crisis management dynamics within the EU's engagements with strategic IOs.

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1   Introduction

This working paper presents three in-depth case studies of the European Union's (EU) relationships with international organisations (IOs) that can be considered to be its global strategic partners. For the sake of this working paper and following on the framework presented in ENGAGE [Working Paper 13](#), we define strategic partnerships as bilateral arrangements between two international organisations, which are often embedded within broader overlapping sets of relations and potentially evolving into more multilateral forms (Muftuler-Bac, 2022, ENGAGE Working Paper 13). These partnerships can be formalised through written agreements, although the degree of institutionalisation usually involves low commitment costs, with joint statements and regular meetings as the norm instead of treaties. As claimed in the background framework developed in ENGAGE [Working Paper 13](#), strategic partnerships are future-oriented and characterised by a perspective for long-term cooperation, including the progressive deepening of strategic interaction, and focus on strategic goals. These objectives are wide-ranging, targeting policy domains where the EU and its strategic partners hope to gain mutual benefit from cooperation on security or other issues.

With the purpose of assessing the EU's engagement in the partnerships with IOs, seen as Union´s strategic partners, and identifying challenges arising from this inter-organisational cooperation, this working paper presents three case studies that explore cooperation between the EU and NATO, the African Union and the United Nations. In order to ensure the most generalizable conclusions, the case study selection follows the logic of most different cases, also taking into account the output of ENGAGE Work Packages 4 and 5. Against this backdrop, this paper examines the cooperation between the EU and the United Nations in managing the crisis in Mali, the cooperation between EU and NATO in light of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and the cooperation between the EU and the African Union in fighting the climate crisis. Such case study selection allows us to look into different areas of EU's external policies – security and defence, climate and civilian crisis management and explore the three distinct strategic partnerships, which vary in the degree of institutionalisation as well as in the scope and policy domain they cover and the timing of their formation. Moreover, by following this method, it is also possible to examine how the EU's approach to major international crises differs from that of other international organisations, in order to discern areas of consensus, conflict and contestation. Addressing this issue corresponds to the objectives set out for this working paper.

Each case study follows the same 3-step structure. It starts with (1) a brief background on the partnership between the Union and the relevant international organisation. This is followed by (2) a succinct exploration of the crisis, against the background of which the course of bilateral cooperation is analysed, and an overview of the individual response of the EU and the relevant IO to the crisis. The case study then moves on to its core and examines (3) the extent and nature of cooperation between the Union and the international organisation concerned in the face of the crisis, identifying the underlying factors that fostered or constrained inter-organisational cooperation. This systematic approach allows us to assess the course of the inter-organisational cooperation between the EU and the respective IO, perceived as the

Union's strategic partner. Also, due to the comparative perspective, we are able to draw broader conclusions on the nature of the strategic partnerships between the Union and other international organisations. Thus, the findings of this working paper contribute to the academic debate on both the EU's role in crisis management and the way the Union collaborates with other global governance actors. There is an important caveat to be made here: this analysis is focused on assessing the output of the cooperation perceived as features qualifying the various mechanisms of inter-organisational cooperation. It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine the outcomes of the cooperation understood as the effectiveness of the partnership to achieve a specific aim, e.g. bringing stability in Mali, or ending the war in Ukraine.

2 Conceptual Remarks: EU and Inter-Organisational Relationships

Conceptually, this article is based on ´inter-organisational´ theories. These examine the patterns, origins, rationality and consequences resulting from inter-IO relationships that can take place in a variety of configurations, from dyads (as illustrated in this article) and triads to organisational fields and networks (Biermann & Koops, 2017; Cropper et al. 2008). The IR field offers various theoretical approaches to make sense of inter-organisational relations such as sociological neo-institutionalism, resource dependence, network accounts, classical pragmatism and regime complexity (Franke, 2017). The case studies presented in the paper mostly draw the latter and apply its key concepts such as functional overlap, competition and division of labour, to grasp the inter-organisational process of cooperation in crisis situations.

Inter-organisational studies gain relevance when the respective IOs converge at least partially in their scope and interests and seek to address specific policy problems jointly, as it is the case of the inter-organisational relationships examined in this paper. Examining inter-organisational relationships becomes more important when relevant international organisations at least partially converge in their scope and interests and seek to jointly address specific policy issues, as is the case with the inter-organisational relationships examined in this paper. Then the research is concerned with the channels of interactions across different institutional levels of both organisations, the variety of resources exchanged as well as with processes and dynamics of achieving ´policy coordination´ between these organisations in order to more effectively address a particular issue in world politics. As the following case studies reveal, IOs relationships can take different forms from complex formal channels to largely informal coordination and their interaction can be direct or indirect or a combination of both (Biermann 2008; Lomi et al. 2008).

As the European Union's role as a global actor has matured over the past two decades, so has its desire to develop close cooperation with leading powers such as the USA and China, but also with other international organisations. As a prime example of regional integration itself, the EU has strived to cooperate with other inter-regional actors, thereby contributing to strengthening and better coordination of multilateral relations and shifting away from the state-oriented perspective in global affairs. These developments have also constituted a response to the increasingly transnational character of problems that challenge the international order. Consequently, inter-organisational cooperation has increased since the end of the Cold War, resulting in frequent overlap in terms of mandate, membership and geographic realm of operation between various IOs (Hofmann, 2009; Schuette, 2023). The EU describes its relations as strategic partnerships both with international organisations whose membership and mandate overlap with those of the Union (NATO, UN) and with international organisations whose mandate does not overlap in this sense, but which arguably promote values consistent with those of the Union, such as democracy, human rights and free trade (AU, ASEAN) (Cameron, 2008; Del Biondo, 2020; Luis & Martín, 2003; Rein, 2015; Tangör, 2021; Tyushka & Czechowska, 2019).

Similarly to strategic partnerships between the Union and large national actors (Müller et al, 2023 – ENGAGE [Working Paper 25](#))), maintaining strategic relationships with other international organisations can serve different purposes. Broadly speaking, strategic partnerships contribute to building trust and a spirit of cooperation between international actors. Also, maintaining strategic partnerships with other IOs feeds into the Union´s standing as a significant global actor that is able to shape the multilateral order, promoting its values and interests (Smith et al., 2016). At the same time, the EU´s dedication to multilateralism is one of the central objectives of its external action (Art 21(1) TEU). Against this backdrop, strategic partnerships between the Union and various IOs can also be considered as a tool to promote an international legal system based on stronger multilateral cooperation and good global governance. Furthermore, close cooperation between the EU and other IOs can also assist the Union in more effective management of peace and security in the world, or in mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, as the examples of EU-UN and EU-AU partnerships show. Finally, strategic partnerships can also be aimed at specific goals, such as ensuring security on the European continent, as in the case of the EU-NATO partnership.

Regardless of their purpose, the output of inter-organisational cooperation is best revealed during crises, where it becomes apparent to what extent the provisions in the cooperation agreements are implemented and enable the partners to work together effectively to address the crisis. Against this background, the following case studies take a closer look at how three different strategic partnerships have operated during three crises of a distinct nature.

3 The Cooperation between The European Union and the United Nations in Responding to the Crisis in Mali

The United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU) share the same fundamental values and goals in the field of maintaining international peace and security. A stated aim for the EU is to work with partners in addressing crises across the world. The EU Global Strategy emphasises the European commitment to promote "a rules-based global order with the United Nations at its core" (European Union, 2016). The EU's new Strategic Compass from 2022 re-emphasises this notion (EEAS, 2022). The UN, too, has highlighted that the change in crisis management landscape requires inclusive, global-regional partnership (UN, 2015). The UN Secretary-General's vision in the "Our Common Agenda" (UN, 2021a) sets boosting partnerships as a one of the key commitments of the organisation.

The EU's development as a security actor has shaped its relations with the UN. The EU is a relatively recent actor in (civilian) crisis management. Its first civilian mission as a part of its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) was only launched in 2003. Over the last 20 years, the EU has become an autonomous crisis management actor with more than 30 operations and missions (EEAS, 2023). These have shaped a certain EU approach in crisis response. However, the UN has certainly been source of inspiration and a point of reference for the EU's CSDP (Tardy, 2019), and the EU has developed its new crisis management capacities rather clearly as something that could be used to assist the UN (Ojanen, 2017).

The EU documents underlines the necessity for the EU to act in accordance with the UN Charter. The Union has embraced UN's conception of crisis management and supports the global-regional peace and security partnership. Indeed, the very first EU operations in Bosnia and in the DRC were sequential with, or in support of, UN operations (Tardy, 2019). Since then, most EU missions have in some ways cooperated with UN operations, most recently in Mali. Importantly, the UN is also a source of legitimacy for the EU, in particular when it comes to the EU's action outside of its own territory (Ojanen, 2017).

3.1 Institutional Foundations of the UN-EU Partnership

The field cooperation in crisis management has started a process of intense institutionalisation of the two organisations. The UN-EU Joint Declaration from 2003 set the basis for this institutionalisation (Council of the EU, 2003). In 2011, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) opened a joint UN Liaison Office for Peace and Security (UNLOPS), establishing a permanent presence in Brussels, which was an additional layer of the UN's institutionalised cooperation with the EU. In 2012, the EU issued a Plan of Action to enhance EU CSDP support to UN peacekeeping (Council of the EU, 2012) that helped revitalise the partnership. In 2015, a new framework on the "UN-EU Strategic Partnership on Peacekeeping and Crisis Management" covering the

period 2015–2018 was being elaborated. The new plan identified priority areas such as support to the African Peace and Security Architecture; Facilitating EU Member States' contributions to UN peacekeeping; Cooperation in Security Sector Reform (SSR); Cooperation in Support and Logistics; and enhanced information exchange (Council of the EU, 2015).

In addition, 2018 Joint Press Statement was released on reinforcing the EU-UN strategic partnership on peace operations and crisis management. In 2020, the EU and the UN signed the Framework Agreement on Provision of Mutual Support in the context of their respective missions and operations in the field. Building on previous EU-UN achievements, the Council adopted conclusions on 24 January 2022, endorsing the eight jointly identified priorities of the EU-UN Strategic Partnership on peace operations and crisis management for the period 2022–2024 (Council of the EU, 2022a). Across all the priority areas, upholding human rights and fundamental freedoms, international humanitarian law and the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda were established as key elements. WPS Agenda has been important goal for both organisations: The EU has established EU Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) 2019–2024 (EEAS, 2019). The implementation of WPS priorities was identified as a political commitment in the Secretary General's Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative launched in 2018 (UN, 2018).

The UN's approach to the EU as a crisis management actor was originally two-fold: there was hope that the new capacity would support the UN operations that were lacking resources and expertise. But there was also concern that the development of CSDP would weaken the European engagement in UN peacekeeping (Koops, 2011). Indeed, the 2012 EU-UN Action Plan mentions "national contributions" to UN peacekeeping operations as a key element of the partnership (Council of the EU, 2012). However, in the field over the last twenty years, EU Member States have been rather passive in UN operations as troop contributors.

Even though the EU-UN cooperation does not include the issue of EU Member States' contributions to UN operations per se, the EU-UN relationship is in many ways dependent on their policies. EU Member States significantly finance UN peacekeeping (about one-third of the total) and are committed to peace operations. However, they have increasingly opted for other frameworks—such as the EU, NATO, or coalitions of states—that better suit their political and military requirements in terms of strategic cultures, command and control structures, or interoperability among troop contributors. For some EU Member States, the UN is perceived as ill-equipped for complex crisis management due to its command-and-control structure. From the point of the view of the UN, this is worrying as their operations could greatly benefit from the military capabilities of European states (Tardy, 2019). However, it is worthy of nothing that European countries' contribution to MINUSMA has been historically high, with great impact on the mission.

3.2   Parallel Operations by the EU and the UN

The Malian government called for international help in 2012, following an attack by the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) and Islamic armed groups. The occupation of Mali's northern regions by these separatist Tuareg rebels and Jihadist groups exposed the Malian state's poor performance in fighting the rebellion. In its 2012 Resolution, the UN requested regional and international organisations, including the EU, to provide coordinated assistance, expertise, training and capacity-building support to the Malian Armed Forces (FAMA), to support the restoration of state authority (UNSC, 2012). Both the EU and the UN has launched their own operations in support of Mali. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) was launched in 2013. The EU's military training mission (EUTM Mali) was launched earlier in the same year, and it was followed by EU's capacity building mission EUCAP Sahel Mali in 2015.

As the EU and the UN conduct parallel operations, the question about the potential issue of duplication becomes relevant. In a big picture throughout the operations the two organisations conduct, the civilian crisis response by the EU and UN seems to be much more about complementarity than overlap and competition (Brosig, 2011; Novosseloff, 2012; Tardy, 2005; Tardy, 2019; Dijkstra et al, 2018). Indeed, there seems to be informal but established division of labour. The mandates vary considerably with the EU focusing on police capacity building and the UN providing monitoring functions. The most common task for an average EU mission is support to police, followed by Security Sector Reform (SSR) and border management. The UN has more comprehensive missions, the most common task being the monitoring of peace agreements (Dijkstra et al., 2018).

Above-mentioned reflects the reality in Mali, too. Each organisation focuses on specific area with different mandates. In 2012, the Council of the EU approved the concept of a military CSDP training mission in Mali, with the main task to provide military training and advice to the FAMA. EUTM Mali started in February 2013 (Council of the EU, 2013a). The main objective of the operations was to support the restoration of the military capability of the Malian Armed Forces (FAMA). The first two mandates (2013–2014 and 2014–2016) focused on the following areas: training and capacity-building activities; training and advice on command and control; logistical chain and human resources; training in international humanitarian law (IHL), protection of civilians and human rights; and strengthening conditions for political control by legitimate civilian authorities (Council of the EU, 2013b; Council of the EU, 2014a). Its original mandate was limited to southern Mali.

EUTM Mali's third mandate (2016–2017) extended the area of operations beyond southern Mali. Other significant changes were related to EUTM Mali's support to G5 Sahel in coordination with MINUSMA. (Council of the EU, 2016). The EUTM Mali's fourth mandate (2018–20) included supporting the operationalisation of the G5 Sahel Joint Force (JF-G5S). (Council of the EU, 2018). Thus, the mission started to conduct decentralised training activities for the FAMA and to help the G5 Sahel process through 'dedicated advice and training support'. From 2020 the strategic objective is twofold: (a) to contribute to improving the operational

capacity of the FAMA under the control of Mali's legitimate civilian authorities; and (b) to support the G5 Sahel through making the JF-G5S and the national armed forces of the G5 Sahel operational. (Council of the EU, 2020; Baudais & Maiga, 2022).

The UN's involvement in Mali, on the other hand, focuses mainly on peacekeeping and stabilisation, but it also contributes to mediation processes and supports initiatives promoting good governance (Baudais et al., 2021). The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) was created with the Resolution 2100 adopted by the Security Council in 2013 (UNSC, 2013), after the Malian Government, with the help of French-led Operation Serval (later operation Barkhane) and African-led AFISMA, had regained control over much of its territory (van der Lijn et al., 2019). The new operation incorporated troops from AFISMA. MINUSMA's mandate contained two key aspects throughout the following years. First, stabilisation and supporting the restoration and extension of state authority, initially in the North, and since 2018 also in the central regions of the country. The second core task was supporting and implementing the peace process, which later became the Algiers Agreement (van der Lijn et al., 2019). MINUSMA was part of the Algerian led mediation team that facilitated the 2015 Peace and Reconciliation Agreement (Baudais et al. 2021). In its original mandate, the Security Council "Welcomes the deployment of the European Union Training Mission (EUTM) in Mali" and "[…] calls upon the EU, notably its Special Representative for the Sahel, to coordinate closely with MINUSMA, and other bilateral partners of Mali engaged to assist the transitional authorities of Mali in the Security Sector Reform (SSR)" (UNSC, 2013, para. 22). MINUSMA had 11,200 military personnel and 1,440 police personnel (UNSC, 2013).

In 2015, the EU established EUCAP Sahel–Mali as a civilian support mission, in addition to the EUTM. The mission aims to strengthen the police forces of the country, as well as the judicial authorities, to establish the best possible conditions for guaranteeing a constitutional and democratic order. The main mandate of the EUCAP Sahel mission was to provide strategic advice and training to the three Malian internal security forces, i.e. the police, the Gendarmerie and the National Guard and to the relevant ministries with the perspective of 'modernising' the Malian security sector (Council of the EU, 2014b; Jayasundara-Smits, 2018). The action of EUCAP Sahel Mali is complementary to that of the police component of the MINUSMA, with which a series of joint training sessions have been launched since 2015.

In terms of the mandates, the two organisations manage to operate in Mali without grave duplications. Cooperation in the field, then, is another question. A lot of similarities exist between the approaches of the two organisations. Both EU and UN peace operations are consent-based and support rather than substitute local authorities. The EU has, in many ways, adopted the key principles of UN peacekeeping—impartiality, limited resort to force and consent. The EU and the UN are closer on the issue of the use of force compared to NATO and AU, both being more comfortable with the idea of "enforcing peace" through military operations (Tardy, 2019). However, the UN operations have traditionally been more extensive, larger and longer than EU operations. EU's approach mainly focuses on rather short-term and consensual activities, almost always in support of existing state authorities. Indeed, all the

EU's CSDP missions in the Sahel are relatively small without executive mandate. Their combined personnel are less than 1,000, while MINUSMA alone has more than 15,000 personnel (Iso-Markku & Tammikko, 2020). EUTM Mali is the smallest mission operating in Mali in terms of budget and personnel. In October 2021, it amounted to 730 military personnel (Immenkamp, 2021).

In Mali, the coordination often takes the form of direct liaison between the UN and EU missions. For instance, a strategic meeting is held every three months between the EU Head of Mission and the UN Police Commissioner to identify strategic objectives and possible actions at political and national levels to support mandate implementation. At lower levels, a monthly technical meeting is held between EU Head of Operations and UN Deputy Police Commissioner, whereas technical experts have more frequent exchanges. When going beyond diplomatic support and funding, exchanges of capabilities are more limited (Dijkstra et al., 2018).

Although EU's CSDP operations can be quite ambitious, due to their limited nature, they cannot be expected to generate the kind of strategic impact that UN operations have. A significant difference lies in the UN's global and universal mandate that creates an expectation to respond to crises, which does not exist in any other regional organisation. Consequently, the EU is more selective with the intervention decisions. However, some European countries have been active in pushing others in returning to peacekeeping in Africa. France has been the driving force most notably through the mutual-defence clause (Article 42.7 of Lisbon treaty) following the 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris. This, in part, caused Germany to reevaluate its foreign and defence policy and influenced its decision to contribute troops to MINUSMA, which it framed as an effort to support French troops in the Sahel (Boutellis & Beary, 2020; Tardy 2015; Tardy 2019). Moreover, France's own operation Barkhane with 2,400 troops certainly has had an impact on the dynamics of the region. Barkhane, too, was suspended in 2022.

3.3 Assessing UN-EU Cooperation in the Field: Achievements and Challenges

MINUSMA provides support to the two EU CSDP mission in Mali, mostly in logistics (van der Lijn et al., 2019). MINUSMA and both EU missions also hold joint training courses in Mali, which is the first time in their inter-organisational history. For example, MINUSMA, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and EUTM Mali have provided joint assistance to the national specialised judicial unit in charge of the fight against terrorism and transnational crime. In addition, MINUSMA trains the FAMA, police and gendarmerie on human rights, in collaboration with EUTM Mali and the UN Police. MINUSMA and EUTM Mali have adopted standard operational procedures for the disposal of improvised explosive devices (UN, 2018). EUTM Mali and MINUSMA cooperate in training ex-combatants of signatory armed groups and compliant armed groups that were registered for integration into the national armed forces in the framework of Mali's disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) process (van der Lijn et al., 2019). The collaboration between MINUSMA and EUTM Mali have resulted in the training and integration of large numbers of former combatants into the FAMA (UN, 2021b).

Even though there has been some improvement in UN-EU technical cooperation, a shared strategic vision for the stabilisation of Mali seems to be lacking. Several UN and EU staff has stated that more efforts are needed to develop a coherent approach, particularly in the field of Security Sector Reform (van der Lijn, 2019). Even though EUTM Mali is part of the national SSR strategy, its role in the reform of the Malian defence sector is limited: its mandate does not focus on the SSR–DDR process. However, it does participate in the MINUSMA-driven process along with other peace operations. As part of the DDR process, EUTM Mali and MINUSMA train ex-combatants who will be integrated into the reconstituted units to be deployed in the north. The process of DDR, however, remains slow and sensitive (Baudais & Maiga, 2022).

When it comes to EU Member States' contributions to MINUSMA, the UN operation has generated European interest and resulted in contributions unprecedented in UN peacekeeping operations in Africa since the mid-1990s. The UN invested effort to onboarding troops from EU Member States, as they were expected to bring capabilities and political capital to MINUSMA. Despite the increase in European interests, two-thirds of MINUSMA's uniformed personnel were African. A major challenge of the European contributions to MINUSMA was that they did not sufficiently integrate into the rest of the Mission (van der Lijn et al., 2019). Interestingly, in the past few years, there has been an increase in the presence of German diplomatic corps and security units. These include significant troop contributions both to MINUSMA and EUTM Mali (Lebovich, 2020). However, some Malian partners have been wondering why European countries chose to provide certain capabilities through EU operations rather than within MINUSMA (van der Lijn et al., 2019).

An area where more intense cooperation is needed is the set up and the location of the headquarters of the missions. While MINUSMA is decentralised with offices in central and northern Mali, EUTM Mali is centralised with its headquarters in Bamako and no offices in the field. EUTM Mali aims to contribute to the stabilisation efforts in central Mali, but its staff have limited engagement outside their base and that also limits their understanding of the Malian context. EUTM's training courses are conducted at the Koulikoro Training Camp due to its proximity to Bamako. Issue raised by Malian partners is Koulikoro's difference from the field environment where operations take place. Only since 2016 during the third mandate, the mobile training team has had the opportunity to provide training in the FAMA's decentralised bases in Sévaré, Gao, Kayes and Timbuktu. Since the fifth mandate, training is regularly conducted in different regions of Mali and in Burkina Faso. To carry out the decentralised activities, MINUSMA provides logistical support to EUTM Mali in a large area of air or ground transportation, logistics in the field and medical assistance, against payment on the condition that 'it does not affect the mandate of the mission'. For this purpose, EUTM Mali signed a memorandum of understanding with MINUSMA in 2018 (Baudais & Maiga, 2022).

Further areas of cooperation can be identified in the field of human rights and gender equality - themes that have been identified as core values of both organisations. Ever since 2013, EUTM Mali has been working with different UN entities on courses about training in international humanitarian law (IHL) and the protection of civilians, while MINUSMA, in collaboration with UN Women, has been training soldiers on the protection of women and children in situations

of conflict. Gender issues, conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and IHL are integrated into the training curricula during the training of the Malian units. EUTM Mali gender focal point has been appointed at the Ministry of Defence to facilitate the work. Working group on promoting gender equality within the FAMA has been established and human rights training in EUTM Mali's courses is provided by the mission itself, together with the International Committee of the Red Cross and MINUSMA's Human Rights and Protection Division (Baudais & Maiga, 2022). In addition, MINUSMA has gradually integrated WPS agenda into peace and security decisions at all levels. MINUSMA ensured the inclusion of gender issues in the Algiers Agreement and its subsequent monitoring. The Mission has become active promoter of gender equality and responsiveness in the political, civil, judicial and economic reconstruction process of Mali (van der Lijn et al., 2019). However, the WPS agenda does not seem to be concretely integrated into EUTM Mali's activities, except in training activities (Baudais & Maiga, 2022). In EUCAP Sahel Mali, on the other hand, the promotion and transfer of gender equality norm via SSR is part of the mandate of the mission (European Court of Auditors, 2018) and it has launched some gender-focused projects (Sabatino et al., 2023, (D4.3)).

Mali has geopolitical value for regional powers like Algeria and Morocco. Algeria has played an important role in the North, being mediator in Malian peace processes in the 1990s, 2006 and with finally in the Algiers Agreement in 2015 (van der Lijn, 2019). The Maghreb countries would have the necessary understanding of the context to make relevant contributions to peacebuilding in the Sahel (Baudais et al. 2021). The international actors have faced criticism in framing the conflict too narrowly as a war on terrorism with focus on their national security interests. AS both the EU and the UN have addressed cooperation with the regional actors as a priority, further multilateral cooperation with actors such as Maghreb countries, AU and ECOWAS would be welcomed.

To conclude, as Baudais & Maiga (2022) underline, there is a place for the parallel stabilisation and peace operations if the sharing of activities and coordination is effective. The two IOs manage to cooperate in a vast area of tasks, at least in the operations conducted in Mali. For the future, even though cooperation should be intensified, it would be important to respect the division of tasks: MINUSMA focusing on SSR and EUTM Mali on advice, training and education. However, as Dijkstra et al. (2018) point out, the actual synergies between the two remain limited. The most common support the two organisations provide to each other is diplomatic support through statements or financial support for projects. On the ground, the material support in terms of personnel and equipment exchanges remains modest, even though in Mali the logistical cooperation has increased throughout the years. The unity of effort remains largely a parallel exercise but is lacking extensive coordination.

Assessing the UN-EU cooperation in Mali remains difficult considering the current situation in the country. The security situation is dramatically deteriorating, and the Russian-affiliated military presence surely is not helping. Due to the unstable local situation and to the inability to prevent the engagement of EU-trained Malian forces in violent activities (Human Rights Watch, 2022), in April 2022 the EU decided to suspend operational training for the Malian

armed forces and the National Guard, thus suspending a relevant part of activities of both EUTM and EUCAP (Sabatino et al, 2023). Very recently, on 30 June 2023, the Security Council followed by unanimously voting to end its peacekeeping mission in Mali, too. The end of MINUSMA is a consequence of a series of tension since Mali teamed up with Russia's Wagner group in 2021 (Nichols, 2023). This indicates that both the EU and the UN are confronted with Russia's increasing power in the region, as it manages to present itself as a better alternative to the Western IOs in the Global South.

However, during the almost ten years of both IOs operating in the country, some remarks about the cooperation can surely be made. Although the end result of the stabilisation of the region does not give promising credit for either organisation or for effective partnership, it is to be reminded that the current situation is a sum of multiple external factors. Therefore, the success level of the strategic partnership between the two IOs cannot be meaningfully separated from it. What could be perhaps fruitful with future improvements in mind is an analytical review of the quality of the cooperation that aims to review the output rather than merely the outcome.

Most importantly, the already existing institutionalised structure could be utilised even more deep and effective partnership. The potential of EUMS contributing effectively to the UN operations would need thorough investigation. This would be beneficial for both sides, as the UN could really use European states' expertise and capabilities in the field, and the EU in many ways would benefit from the legitimacy the UN can provide.

4   The Cooperation between the European Union and NATO in the Context of the Russian Aggression against Ukraine[1]

Russia's unprecedented attack on Ukraine in February 2022 shuddered the European security architecture. The war in Europe has led to a reorientation of the defence policies of many EU Member States. Particularly profound changes have been taking place in countries that seemed not to fully believe the warnings of Poland, the Baltic states or Ukraine itself against Russian imperial ambitions and were surprised by the outbreak of a full-scale war at the EU's borders (Brighi & Giusti, 2023; Bunde, 2022). At the same time, Russian aggression has given a new dynamic to relations between the two most relevant security organisations in this part of the world: the European Union, until recently predominantly concerned with the so-called soft dimension of security (cyber security, humanitarian aid, civilian missions etc.), and the transatlantic alliance – NATO, focused on deterrence and territorial security. Both organisations have condemned Russian aggression and expressed strong support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity (European Council, 2022). In the face of war, their inter-organisational cooperation has taken on a new importance, becoming an indispensable element in ensuring stability and security in the region.

Acknowledging the importance of this particular strategic partnership, this case study analyses EU-NATO cooperation in the context of the Russian war in Ukraine. In a nutshell, the partnership of these organisations faces challenges as the competences and areas of interest of the EU and NATO have increasingly begun to overlap over the last few years. Already since 2016, i.e. since the adoption of the EU's Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy (EEAS, 2016a) and a number of documents implementing it (Council of the EU, 2016; Mogherini & Katainen, 2017), the nature of the EU's security and defence policy has begun to change. The Union decided to expand its competences in areas that previously remained the exclusive domain of NATO and the France-initiated debate on the EU's strategic autonomy gained momentum (Helwig & Sinkkonen, 2022; Michaels & Sus, forthcoming). Against the backdrop of the deterioration of security environment at the EU doorstep (Sus & Hadeed, 2020), EU Member States decided to adopt a number of new policy instruments to strengthen security policy cooperation, such as Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), European Defence Fund and the European Peace Facility (EPF) (Sus, 2019; Tocci, 2018). The outbreak of war in Ukraine provided a further impetus for further strengthening of EU's capabilities to act in security and defence, as evidenced by the use of the EPF to supply Ukraine with arms and ammunition (Council of the EU, 2022b). This decision represents a departure from the EU's

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[1] This case study draws on the article that M. Sus wrote for the "Polski Przegląd Dyplomatyczny", 3(2023). The author would like to thank Alexander Buhler for providing excellent background research for this part of the paper.

principle of not supplying lethal weapons to regions of armed conflict until recently (Bilquin, 2022). At the same time, changes have also taken place within NATO over the past decade. In recent years, the Alliance has expanded its functional scope into areas where the EU already has competence such as crisis resilience, innovation policy or energy security (Bocse, 2020). Given the increasingly overlapping spheres of interest of these two IOs, it is worth considering to what extent there is a danger of duplication between the Union and the Alliance and whether it could jeopardise their partnership and effective peacekeeping.

This case study is structured in three parts. After a brief introduction outlining the institutional foundations of EU-NATO partnership, it provides a brief overview of the activities of the two organisations since the outbreak of war in Ukraine and then focuses on the extent and nature of cooperation between the Union and NATO in the face of the crisis, identifying the underlying factors that fostered or constrained the inter-organisational cooperation. The insights presented here draw on documents published by both organisations and the secondary literature (policy papers and academic articles).

4.1   The Institutional Foundations of the EU-NATO Strategic Partnership

Since the end of the Cold War, both the EU and NATO evolved considerably, in terms of their geographic scope, the level of integration and the variety of policy domains, both organisations cover (Reichard, 2006). Accordingly, the question of the cooperation between these two IOs became increasingly important and has been tackled by leaders of both organisations throughout the 90s (Santer, 1998; Solana, 1997) and the wars in the Balkans showed that close cooperation was necessary. During the Franco-British summit in St. Malo in 1998 and the EU summit in Cologne a year later, the EU Member States expressed their ambitions to build security and defence capabilities, charting the emergence of a new era in EU-NATO relations. The first reactions of the American administration to the Union´s rising ambitions in the defence realm were rather cautious and are best illustrated by the so-called "three D´s" formulated by Secretary Madeline Albright. She stated that U.S. support for greater European efforts would be contingent on avoiding "three D's:" discrimination against non-EU NATO members, decoupling of European and North American security and duplication of NATO's operational planning system or its command structure" (Binnendijk et al., 2022). Against this backdrop, the first foundation for bilateral cooperation was taken within the framework of the Berlin Plus agreement, signed in Washington in 1999. Under this agreement, the Union gained the right of access to NATO assets, capabilities and planning data when conducting peacekeeping operations without the participation of the United States (Cladi & Locatelli, 2020). Indeed, the arrangements have been used successfully in Bosnia and Herzegovina where under the EUFOR Althea Mission EU peacekeeping forces took over from NATO's SFOR operation (Cameron, 2008). The 9/11 provided a further impetus to formalise the cooperation and in 2002 the EU-NATO declaration on European Security and Defence Policy was signed (Luis & Martín, 2003).

From then on, the development of political relations progressed gradually and included formats of such as summit meetings between the Presidents of the European Commission and the European Council and the NATO Secretary General, informal meetings between EU and NATO heads of state at so-called 'transatlantic dinners' as well as formal consultations between the North Atlantic Council and the Political and Security Committee of the Union. Yet, the formal partnership has been limited since 2004 due to the conflict between Turkey and Cyprus (Smith & Gebhard, 2017). Since EU accession of Cyprus, Ankara has opposed proposals by other NATO members calling for closer cooperation between the Alliance and the EU. Formal cooperation channels have been paralyzed (Reichard, 2006). At the same time, the reluctance of Cyprus and Greece to include Turkey in the Union's activities has complicated and delayed the adoption of an agreement on the participation of third countries in the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) framework (Leuprecht & Hamilton, 2021).

Against this backdrop, the first comprehensive EU-NATO declaration was signed in 2016, announcing adding "new substance to the NATO-EU strategic partnership" (Tusk et al., 2016). It was perceived as a landmark document that confirmed the willingness of both organisations to fill with content the idea of 'strategic partnership' first mentioned back in 2003. The 2016 declaration announced cooperation in strategic areas such as hybrid threats, operational cooperation (including maritime issues), cyber-security, defence capabilities, industry and research, coordinated exercises and military capacity building, pointing to 42 concrete actions implementing cooperation (Tusk et al., 2016). Two years later, the two organisations decided to expand cooperation into further areas such as cyber-security and counterterrorism, and signed another bilateral agreement (Tusk et al., 2018).

The outbreak of the Russian war in Ukraine coincided with strategic reflection processes taking place in both the EU and NATO since 2020. In March 2022, EU Member States adopted the Strategic Compass for Security and Defence, which emphasises the crucial importance of the strategic partnership with NATO for Euro-Atlantic security and the willingness to reinforce it (EEAS, 2022). The document highlights the Alliance's key role in providing collective defence and announces a number of mechanisms to strengthen, deepen and expand political dialogue and cooperation with NATO in all previously agreed areas, as well as in strengthening resilience, new technologies, climate policy and space policy. In turn, the strategic reflection process taking place within NATO culminated in June 2022 with the adoption of the Strategic Concept 2022. It presents the Union as a special and key partner and calls for an expansion and strengthening of the Alliance's strategic partnership with the Union (NATO, 2022). The document emphasises that members of both organisations share the same values and play complementary, coherent and mutually reinforcing roles in supporting international peace and security.

The strengthening of cooperation announced in both strategy documents was further elaborated in the latest bilateral declaration, signed in January 2023 by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, European Council President Charles Michel and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen (Michel et al., 2023). Many experts attribute primarily symbolic significance to the document: in addition to deepening cooperation and

expanding it into new areas, the declaration was intended to show Russia that Europe and the US have converging interests and a coherent vision of European security (Monaghan et al., 2023). Others note that it took the two IOs almost a year and a half after the Russian invasion to put together a joint document (Droin, 2023). The organisations announced a joint focus on resilience, protection of critical infrastructure, disruptive technologies, space, the security implications of climate change and the effort to counter disinformation. In addition, the decision of Sweden and Finland to apply for membership in the Alliance was important for strengthening of the bilateral cooperation. The acceptance of these two countries into the Alliance will increase the overlap of members of both organisations from 21 to 23 (see also: Schuette, 2022).

4.2   EU and NATO Action Towards the War in Ukraine

In the face of full-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine, the EU and NATO have taken a number of measures to assist the country, showing political support for it and condemning the violation of its sovereignty and territory.

Above all, both organisations aim to strengthen Ukraine's ability to defend itself against Russia. NATO has intensified its military presence on the Alliance's Eastern flank as part of the NATO Enhanced Forward Presence in the Baltic States and Poland, and extended it to Slovakia, Hungary and Romania (Budjeryn, 2022) The Alliance has also taken other measures to increase deterrence, among other by deploying Patriot missile defence units and fighter aircraft to increase protection of Alliance airspace. At the same time, NATO countries are continuing to develop the so-called New Force Model, under which it will be possible to rapidly deploy many more troops on the Eastern flank than before (Zandee, 2023). This model also assumes that troops will be assigned to the defence of specific countries, which will make it easier to conduct defence taking into account local circumstances. In addition, as part of the NATO Enhanced Opportunities Partners initiative, the Alliance is assisting Ukraine with soldier training and military modernisation. NATO also conducts joint manoeuvres and military exercises for its Member States and Ukraine. These are intended to strengthen Ukraine's defence preparedness and improve operational cooperation between the country and Alliance countries. To this end, NATO has extended the so-called Comprehensive Assistance Package and thus provided Ukraine with all kinds of assistance, from medical supplies to unexploded ordnance and drone disposal equipment.

The Union's activity in strengthening Ukraine's defence capabilities against Russia is of a slightly different nature due to its different profile and capabilities. To support Ukraine's military capabilities, the EU primarily uses the aforementioned off-budget funding mechanism for EU actions with military and defence implications – the European Peace Facility, refinancing the supply of lethal weapons and ammunition that flows from Member States to Ukraine. A total of €3.6 billion has been allocated by EU countries for this purpose and as for July 2023 the negotiations on the further increase of the EPF budget are ongoing (Barigazzi, 2023). Moreover, in the spring of 2023, the governments of 23 EU countries and the government of Norway signed an unprecedented agreement on joint ammunition purchases

to accelerate the delivery of equipment to Ukraine and replenish the Member States' arms arsenal (Brzozowski & Pugnet, 2023). The budget of the European Defence Fund, an instrument financed from the EU budget and coordinated by the European Commission, which supports the development and integration of the European arms industry, is also being successively increased (Briane, 2022). Furthermore, in responding to Kiev's request, in October 2022, the Union established the EUMAM Ukraine military mission under the Common Security and Defence Policy (Brzozowski, 2023). The aim of the mission is to provide individual and collective training to the Ukrainian military and to coordinate Member States' activities in this regard. The target for 2023 is to train 30,000 Ukrainian soldiers, mainly in Germany and Poland.

In addition, both the EU and NATO have been sending observers and expert missions to Ukraine. Their reports and analyses provide important information on the development of the conflict, human rights violations and the situation on Ukraine's borders. Both organisations maintain a regular political dialogue with each other and with partner countries, exchanging information on the situation in Ukraine. Of particular importance are the analyses and reports provided by the NATO Conflict Prevention Centre.

On top of these activities, each organisation is also involved in assisting Ukraine within the scope of its specific competencies that go beyond the hard security domain. The European Union has granted Ukraine (and Moldova) the status of candidate country and has started preparations for the negotiation process. As the EU is Ukraine's most important trading partner, by keeping up the bilateral trade, EU countries are supporting the Ukrainian economy. At the same time, since the outbreak of the war, the Union has approved 10 packages of sanctions against Russia aimed at weakening its economy and forcing the country to take steps to end the conflict. Furthermore, by using tools previously used to assist other countries in military conflicts, the Union is providing humanitarian aid to Ukraine and support in the reconstruction of devastated regions. These activities include: providing medical aid to the civilian population, supplying water and food and participating in the reconstruction of transport infrastructure or housing.

In turn, NATO, despite the initial opposition of Turkey and Hungary, has accepted Finland and Sweden as candidate countries, with the former joining NATO in April 2023 and the latter expected to join in the near future, most likely in 2024. The enlargement of NATO improves the security of its Eastern and Northern flanks, not least because of the considerable military potential of the two Nordic states. Moreover, there has also been a discussion within the Alliance about security guarantees for Ukraine and its potential membership. In June 2023, the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling for Ukraine to be invited to join NATO and to integrate the country quickly into the Union, and Jens Stoltenberg has repeatedly spoken about Ukraine as a future member of the Alliance (Stoltenberg, 2023). At the summit in Vilnius in July 2023, NATO countries expressed their willingness to admit Ukraine to NATO but remained ambiguous on the date of the accession (NATO Heads of State and Government, 2023). They stressed their commitment to inviting Ukraine to join the Alliance after the end of the war and announced that their focus was now on providing military assistance to Ukraine and intensifying cooperation between the country's armed forces and those of NATO members.

4.3   Challenges for the EU-NATO Strategic Partnership

The Russian aggression against Ukraine has demonstrated the need for close cooperation and coordination between the EU and NATO to effectively ensure Europe's security and has served as a testing moment for the functioning of the strategic partnership. The activities undertaken by the two IOs since the outbreak of war allow three conclusions to be drawn about the extent and nature of this strategic partnership, as well as the underlying factors that fostered or constrained inter-organisational cooperation and coordination.

Firstly, the ongoing political dialogue and existing cooperation mechanisms laid by the first comprehensive declaration on bilateral cooperation in 2016, have facilitated consultations between the Union and the Alliance regarding the response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Undoubtedly, further institutionalisation of contacts, e.g. in the form of more frequent meetings between the North Atlantic Council and the Political and Security Committee, is desirable. The existing cooperation formats, while sufficient for partial coordination of EU and NATO actions and positions, have largely depended on personal and ad hoc contacts between officials at different levels (Tardy, 2020). NATO and EU ambassadors, that is: the North Atlantic Council (NAC) and Political Security Committee (PSC) hold multiple joint meetings per year, that are facilitated by the co-location in Brussels. Yet, there is no actionable joint decision-making governing these meetings (Smith et. al., 2017, p. 374), and therefore their effectiveness remains limited. Further improvement of coordination and coherence of activities, e.g. through the creation of a secure communication system that would allow the Union and the Alliance to exchange classified information and through a solid network of organisation-to-organisation relationships will be crucial for the effective strategic partnership (European Parliament, 2021). Strengthening formal channels of cooperation appears to be of particular importance given the experience of how internal disagreements between members of the two organisations have affected the effectiveness of their partnership. The EU-NATO cooperation is crucial for maintaining the support for Ukraine and there are at least two factors that might harm their partnership: the possible re-election of Donald Trump, or a Trump-like figure to the US President, and the ambivalent role of Turkey within the Alliance. The former might lead to the recurrence of debates on the American commitment to Europe and Europe´s still too-low defence spending. In turn, Turkey with President Erdogan, continuously challenges the policy of EU and NATO by keeping up relations with Moscow, not fully participating in the Western sanctions on Russia and undermining the Western response to the Russian threat by, i.e. purchasing the Russian S-400 air defence system or closing the Bosphorus for NATO deployments. Erdogan's policy already complicates EU-NATO cooperation over Ukraine and might challenge the cooperation patterns in mid- and long-term perspective.

Secondly, the war has shown that in the face of the full-scale war on the borders of EU and NATO members, the strategic cooperation between these IOs remains fairly limited (Cladi, 2022; Droin, 2023). It is overshadowed by the still ambiguous concept of European strategic autonomy (Bond & Scazzieri, 2022) and the response of the US administration to the attempts to strengthen EU's defence capabilities (Monaghan et al., 2023; Retter et al., 2021).

At the same time, the above-presented differences between the Union and NATO regarding the response to war clearly indicate the operational complementarity of these organisations. On soft security issues, the Union has a comparative advantage as it can use non-military tools (humanitarian and development aid, loans, grants, trade concessions, technical support in the introduction of economic reforms and economic sanctions against the aggressor) that can enhance the stability and resilience of countries at war. Therefore, in areas such as energy policy, critical infrastructure protection, or cyber security, for example, the EU is better equipped than NATO to act as a leader in coordinating a European response to threats in this domain (Bond & Scazzieri, 2022). Also, through the EPF the EU partially reimburses Member States for deliveries of ammunition and missiles to Ukraine from their stocks (Maletta & Héau, 2022). In turn, the Alliance undoubtedly has an advantage in the area of engagement of a military nature, especially in terms of training soldiers, organising joint military manoeuvre and strengthening the interoperability of units within NATO and partner countries.

However, "complementarity is not tantamount to cooperation" and both organisations have been rather leveraging their own competencies, instead of stepping up bilateral cooperation, which "could have multiplying effects and provide solid foundations for the future of the Euro-Atlantic community" (Droin, 2023). This indicates that there is definitely room for improvement in terms of the division of labour between both organisations that is necessary to leverage their complementarity. The Russian war in Ukraine shows that it is not enough for both institutions to agree that it is NATO that is responsible for providing territorial defence. As indicated above, war is hybrid in nature and affects multiple political domains. Therefore, responses to it are multidimensional and go far beyond territorial defence and the division of competences between the EU and NATO needs to be more clearly defined and implemented. In particular, as experts argue "despite the collective might of NATO, it cannot do everything, and the commitment at the 2015 Warsaw Summit for a '360-degree approach to security – both thematically and geographically – risks overstretch" (Arnold, 2022). When facing mounting security challenges, the Alliance should seek support from other actors, and the EU is the best partner when it comes to the security of the European continent.

The "strategic coherence" between the EU and NATO already called for by Javier Solana in the late 1990s (Solana, 1997) also applies to other policy areas. After a year and a half of armed conflict, the biggest challenge in terms of further assistance to Ukraine is proving to be the insufficient amount of military equipment available to European countries. The war has clearly demonstrated the extent of Europe's dependence on the United States, which is a pillar when it comes to transferring arms to Ukraine and without whose involvement European states would not be able to effectively deter Russia. Decades of reduced investment in defence and armaments policy in many Western European countries and the need to provide military support to Ukraine in the face of war have led to shortages in armaments arsenals. Both EU and NATO Member States are confronted with this problem (Bond & Scazzieri, 2022). It is necessary to replenish equipment stocks quickly - so that arms deliveries to Ukraine can continue – and to develop a long-term investment strategy and strengthen the European arms industry. In June 2023, defence ministers of NATO countries discussed with representatives of the 25 largest Western arms companies the need to continue their efforts to increase the

production of munitions. At the same time, as part of the NATO Industry Forum, further meetings are planned with those representing the arms industry to address other types of weapons. In parallel, the European Union is making efforts to provide Ukraine with the necessary arms and ammunition, inter alia within the framework of the aforementioned joint purchases of ammunition (Brzozowski & Pugnet, 2023) and on the basis of the European Defence Industry Reinforcement Through Common Procurement Act (Briane, 2022). It seems necessary, therefore, for EU and NATO cooperation with the defence industry to be conducted in a coordinated manner so as not to duplicate efforts and to ensure the long-term compatibility of equipment produced by individual defence companies (Andersson, 2023; Aries et al., 2023). In the face of China's growing geopolitical assertiveness, the progressive shift in the focus of US security policy towards Asia, and the growing fatigue of some political elites in the US with the need to defend Europe, the European members of NATO and the EU are confronted with the need to redefine their approach to defence policy investment. Only their coordinated efforts will result in strengthening Europe's role as a military player capable of effectively deterring Russia and add a new dimension to the EU-NATO strategic partnership.

Thirdly and arguably, the war in Ukraine has provided NATO and the EU with a "short window of opportunity to create a lasting strategy for the security of Europe" (Arnold, 2022). To this end, the EU-NATO partnership should go beyond the necessary division of labour described above and develop an overarching strategic vision for their bilateral cooperation. The course of the relations between these two IOs in the last two decades shows, that despite a significant process in terms of institutionalisation of the cooperation and the development of comprehensive arrangements, such a strategic vision is still missing. There are examples of close cooperation such as the Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, of which NATO and the European Union are founding members, or the PESCO project on military mobility, to which the US and UK have joined (Council of the EU, 2022c). Yet, as Droin rightly noticed "NATO and the European Union are what their Member States make of them" and their partnership depends on the political will of their members to cooperate with each other. The undermining of the US commitments to the Alliance during Donald Trump's presidency, President Emmanuel Macron's comments about the brain death of NATO, the recent opposition of Turkey and Hungary to Sweden and Finland joining the Alliance, and ongoing intra-EU debate about its strategic autonomy, which, in the absence of consensus on this concept, is interpreted by some as attempts to weaken NATO, and the rising but still insufficient defence spendings in many of the European NATO members, demonstrate the political limitations to the strategic partnership. At the same time, "treating cooperation as the default setting, rather than the exception" by both EU and NATO members (Monaghan, 2023) is urgently needed in the light of growing geopolitical challenges and there is no alternative to it.

5   The Cooperation between the European Union and the African Union in Dealing with the Climate Crisis

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) most recent assessment report sheds light on the profound effects of the climate crisis, portraying a stark and alarming picture of the planet's present and future condition. The consequences of rapidly rising global average temperatures are becoming increasingly evident, with widespread impacts on the environment, ecosystems and human societies. From intensifying heatwaves and extreme weather events to rising sea levels threatening coastal areas and island nations, the climate crisis is exacerbating natural disasters and displacing vulnerable communities (Calvin et al., 2023). While the Paris Agreement strives to keep global average temperature from rising above 1.5ºC by 2100, an increase to 2.7ºC is expected under current global efforts to tackle global warming, and 2.4ºC if the 2030 commitments in Nationally Determined Contributions are met (Climate Action Tracker, 2022). In Africa, despite the fact that the continent contributes only about 4% of global greenhouse emissions (von Czechowski, 2020), the effects of climate change are being acutely felt. The continent, where temperatures are rising faster than the global average (World Economic Forum, 2022), is particularly vulnerable to its impacts. Prolonged droughts and erratic rainfall patterns have led to water scarcity and crop failures, posing significant challenges to food security and agricultural livelihoods (IPCC, 2022). Sub-Saharan Africa is projected to experience more frequent and severe heatwaves, which can exacerbate health issues, strain energy resources and lead to economic disruptions. Rising sea levels and extreme weather events also pose a threat to coastal communities, with the potential for increased flooding and coastal erosion (Trisos et al., 2023).

Moreover, climate change can exacerbate key drivers of conflict and fragility, thereby increasing risks to international peace and security. Already in 2003, the European Security Strategy acknowledged the threats to security posed by environmental degradation and competition for natural resources (Council of the EU, 2008). This embryonic acknowledgment was developed further in the 2016 EU Global Strategy, when climate change was mainstreamed into the overall foreign and security policy of the Union. The Global Strategy described climate change as a "threat multiplier" for conflicts, to which the EU should respond by bringing climate change to the fore in multilateral fora and engaging in bilateral partnerships on climate change with key stakeholders (EEAS, 2016). More recently, the EEAS and Commission issued a Joint Communication on the climate-security nexus which highlights the security risk posed by armed groups and organised criminal networks that instrumentalise climate and environmentally induced instability to perpetrate crime. The document identifies the Sahel and the Horn of Africa as geographical areas that are especially vulnerable to these circumstances (European Commission & High Representative, 2023).

Addressing the climate crisis is one of the cornerstones of collaboration between the African Union (AU) and the European Union. Their interinstitutional cooperation ranges from

diplomatic dialogue on joint actions in climate diplomacy and common strategies to tackle climate risks to concrete capacity-building projects in mitigation and adaptation. Given the urgent nature of the climate crisis and its potential security-related impacts, this case study analyses EU-AU cooperation on climate, in a context where other powers (e.g. China and India) are also active in the region (Müller et al., 2021 (D2.1)). It provides an overview of the significant milestones and drawbacks in the relationship while identifying the primary challenges that hinder further progress. The analysis argues that although the EU managed to regain momentum in promoting joint climate action after a period of stalemate following diplomatic failures in multilateral fora, certain challenges persist within the AU-EU Partnership on Climate. These challenges include the EU transposing its strategic frameworks on Africa rather than developing frameworks jointly with the AU, overlapping collaboration structures between the EU and African countries, underlying mistrust regarding unmet financial commitments, and disagreements over some EU Green Deal initiatives that are perceived as detrimental to African economies.

This case study is structured in three parts. The first is an introduction to the institutional foundations of the partnership between the AU and the EU. The second section delves into collaboration between both organisations in addressing the climate crisis, providing an overview of diplomatic dialogue, shared policy outputs and capacity-building projects. Finally, the case study identifies the main challenges hampering further AU-EU cooperation on climate policy. Analytical insights are drawn from policy documents published by both partners and a review of existing literature.

5.1   Institutional Foundations of the AU-EU Partnership

Given the EU's role as the highest provider of foreign investment in Africa (Robert Schuman Foundation, 2018) and the continent's largest trading partner (Lejarraga, 2022), some state it is the African Union's most important external partner (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), n.d.). Ever since the AU's creation in 2002 – replacing the Organization for African Unity (OAU) – regular summits have been held between both international organisations. Before that, the EU's relations with the continent were mainly guided by development agreements signed with the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries – namely, the 1975 Lomé Convention, which was later replaced by the 2000 Cotonou Agreement. The first AU-EU summit[2] took place in 2000 and laid the foundation for the Africa-EU Partnership, providing a formal political channel for cooperation. The Partnership is the overarching collaboration framework between both organisations. As a multi-actor framework, it involves the EU and AU organs, Member States of both organisations, non-state and civil society organisations, youth bodies, economic and social actors and the private sector. It encourages an ongoing dialogue to address contemporary challenges and set political priorities. Further solidification occurred in 2007

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[2] This summit formally took place "under the Aegis of the OAU" (European Commission, 2000); however, 2000 was a transition moment between the AU and its predecessor. The OAU ceased operations in 1999; the AU was formally created in 2002.

during the Lisbon summit, where the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) was adopted: the JAES serves as the political document guiding the aforementioned partnership, and therefore forms the cornerstone of Africa-EU relations (Directorate-General for External Policies (DG EXT), 2017).

The Africa-EU Partnership's key events include summits, ministerial meetings and Commission-to-Commission engagements. The summits, traditionally held every three years, alternate in location between Africa and Europe and offer political guidance for future cooperation. During the most recent EU-AU Summit, held in Brussels on 17-18 February 2022, leaders adopted a "Joint Vision for 2030" (African Union & European Union, 2022), encompassing four core deliverables to reinforce the partnership. One core deliverable was the Global Gateway Africa-Europe Investment Package, which is supported by the EU budget with EUR 150 billion in grants and investments to promote sustainable economic growth and development between Africa and Europe. Partners also renewed their commitment to peace and security, recognising the importance of stability and conflict resolution in the region. The Joint Vision furthermore includes the objective to uphold multilateralism and a rules-based international order, with the United Nations at its core, promoting cooperation and collective problem-solving. More concretely, when it comes to climate change, this objective emphasised commitments to the implementation of the Paris Agreement and COP outcomes, a recognition of the vital role that the energy transition plays in Africa and support for a new global biodiversity framework in Africa.

In addition to the summits, ministerial meetings between AU and EU Member States are convened on an ad-hoc basis, fostering dialogue and progress in specific fields. The second meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, for instance, took place in Kigali, Rwanda, from 25-26 October 2021, focusing on topics such as the COVID-19 pandemic response, digital and green transitions, peace and security and migration and mobility (European Commission, n.d.-a). Meanwhile, Commission-to-Commission meetings between the European Commission and the African Union Commission occur annually, alternating between Brussels and Addis Ababa. These meetings monitor progress achieved between summits and seek to enhance cooperation between the two institutions. The most recent encounter of this type was the eleventh meeting of the European Union and African Union Commissions, held on 28 November 2022 in Brussels. Both parties discussed their strategic partnership and reviewed the implementation of joint commitments. Finally, in January 2021 the AU launched the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), constituting the world's largest free-trade zone (Madueke, 2020). The EU has recognised the significance of this, and connecting with it, has laid out a vision of a "long-term perspective to create a comprehensive continent-to-continent free trade agreement between the EU and Africa" (European Commission, 2018).

In sum, the partnership's significance lies in facilitating dialogue to develop solutions to a series of shared challenges, from mobility and migration to the response to the COVID pandemic and climate change. The AU values the EU's support to implement its flagship strategic framework – called Agenda 2063 (African Union Commission, 2015) – to reposition Africa as a prosperous global actor. Nevertheless, the AU-EU Partnership is subject to

limitations and challenges, including a struggle to turn rhetorical commitments into concrete policy proposals, unbalanced capabilities and a lack of clarity on shared purposes and priorities (Madueke, 2020; Olutola, 2021). These challenges, as further analysed below, also affect cooperation on initiatives to tackle climate change. Voices on both sides of the Partnership call for it to be strengthened by, among others, realigning key priorities and increasingly involving non-state actors (Di Ciommo, 2023). Steps in that direction were taken by the European Commission in its 2020 Communication on a stronger, more ambitious partnership with Africa (European Commission, 2020). However, further efforts are required to translate new commitments from rhetoric to reality.

5.2 Addressing the Climate Crisis through AU-EU Collaboration

The following section provides an overview of cooperation between the EU and the AU in addressing the climate crisis, both through adaptation and mitigation measures, as well as consideration of the climate-security nexus. This cooperation has taken the shape of joint statements in multilateral climate negotiations at the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) and summitry to outline joint targets, as well as concrete capacity-building efforts. A subsequent section will provide an assessment of the cooperation up to the present.

5.2.1 Political Dialogue, Climate Diplomacy and Summitry

Within the 2007 JAES, eight partnerships were established between the EU and AU, with climate and environmental issues explicitly included for the first time as one of those key guiding areas. The Partnership on Climate Change framed climate change and environmental degradation in the context of challenges to sustainable development and aimed to link cooperation on climate change to a positive economic and social agenda. Furthermore, the AU and EU committed to working together in fora of climate multilateralism, for example by jointly pushing for an ambitious post-2012 UNFCCC climate framework (Adelle & Lightfoot, 2018). Additionally, in the concrete implementation of the partnership, it focused on addressing land degradation through the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and Sahel Initiative (GGWSSI) (European Commission, 2010).

An important moment when it came to multilateral diplomacy on the climate crisis was the 2008 Joint Africa-EU Declaration on Climate Change: this declaration laid the ground for a common interregional position ahead of the COP15 meeting in Copenhagen the following year and highlighted the need to provide climate adaptation funding. However, operationalising the declaration's commitments proved challenging due to disagreements among EU actors on financing (Adelle & Lightfoot, 2018).

Despite these efforts, the promise to hold a common position at COP15 was not kept. Diplomatic efforts by the EU during COP15 turned out to be unsuccessful (Çelik, 2022) and African partners sided with emerging countries such as China, India and Brazil instead (Dodo,

2014; Groen & Niemann, 2013). Consequently, progress on climate action cooled down, and partners refused to sign a second declaration on climate change during the subsequent 2010 AU-EU summit in Tripoli.

The stalemate in the Climate Partnership continued until the next summit four years later, when momentum in UNFCCC negotiations was generally picking up and a new governance model was being considered. The EU and AU issued a second joint ministerial declaration on climate change, in which they made commitments to bridge the climate adaptation gap in Africa and adopt a legally binding UNFCCC agreement in 2015 – including an aim to keep the increase in global temperature below 2 or 1.5°C (African Union & European Union, 2014). The importance of considering the principles of equity in tackling the climate crisis, including Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities, was also acknowledged (Adelle & Lightfoot, 2018; Tondel et al., 2015), and the EU committed to supporting African states in the development of their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions for the UNFCCC process.

However, another output of the 2014 summit, the 2014–2017 Roadmap, seemed to simultaneously downgrade the importance of climate change cooperation in the EU-AU relationship. As the European Commission itself points out, climate change was arguably demoted in this document: while it was one of the eight central "Partnerships" of the AU-EU relationship in the 2007 JAES, the 2014–2017 Roadmap relegated climate issues to one of the discussion points under the broader area of "Global Challenges Priority" (Directorate-General for External Policies (DG EXT), 2017).

Following the successfully signing and entry into force of the Paris Agreement, the EU and AU held their fifth summit in 2017. This encounter was considered by many as a disappointment on multiple fronts, as there was a lack of meaningful commitments across all areas, including climate policy (Locke, 2018). The EU's proposal to include climate change considerations into conflict mediation and peacebuilding (Council of the EU, 2017), for example, did not make it into the final document. The final summit declaration contains only rather vague references to climate change, such as a commitment to the full implementation of the Paris Agreement, and an arguably imprecise statement on the EU abiding by existing climate finance commitments (African Union & European Union, 2017). Some more concrete mentions are made of support for the development of renewable energy and energy efficiency, through the African Initiative on Renewable Energy (AREI) and AU-EU Energy Partnership (AEEP).

Overall, for the first two decades of the cooperation, African stakeholders argued that the AU did not stand on equal footing in its relations with its European counterpart (Locke, 2018). It was not until the arrival of the von der Leyen administration that the situation started to shift. In a show of goodwill during the AU-EC Commission-to-Commission meeting in 2020, the von der Leyen Commission strived to address several of the aspects causing imbalances in the partnership, including a pledge to review progress on the climate finance commitments made in COP15 (ACCORD, 2020). This resulted in the issuance of a Joint Commission communication on a new "Comprehensive Strategy with Africa," outlining five thematic partnerships, including the green transition and energy access (European Commission, 2020).

This initiative aimed to support the implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions and collaborate with Africa on green finance, while also scaling up efforts to combat unsustainable practices such as illegal fishing.

The new strategy was well received by stakeholders on both sides of the partnership. The European Parliament advocated for taking it even further and establishing an "AU-EU Green Pact" (European Parliament, 2021). African commentators, in turn, referred to it as a "step in the right direction" (Tadesse Abebe & Maalim, 2020) and a more "down-to-earth" (Nogueira Pinto, 2020) strategy, responding to African calls for increased self-sufficiency. This shift in position by the EU is also seen as a reaction to increasing relations between Africa and non-Western global players (Nogueira Pinto, 2020).

Despite the positive reception of the new strategy in 2020, challenges persisted in the run-up to the sixth AU-EU summit, which was originally scheduled for 2020 and pushed to 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Both partners came to the table to increased ambition, but efforts to resume political dialogue on climate change simultaneously clashed with underlying issues of mistrust – especially following some of the EU's policy responses to COVID-19, capacity differences and a lack of policy operationalisation of the commitments made by the EU (Olutola, 2021).

Tensions persisted, in particular, over financial promises made at COP 26 (Hege et al., 2022) and the inability of the EU to engage with longstanding climate justice demands (Knaepen & Dekeyser, 2023). In addition, African states saw EU's proposed Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) as unfair and protectionist, and they were hoping for concessions in this area at the summit (Hörter, 2022). Finally, and continuing a longstanding trend, African partners sought to reorient discussions away from aid to a true economic partnership (Fakir, 2021). In spite of these tensions, the 2022 summit was seen as a diplomatic success, especially for the EU, as it was able to articulate its development package for Africa (Bilal, 2022), The Global Gateway Africa – Europe investment package which plans to deliver €150 billion through Team Europe initiatives in several areas, including green energy, climate resilience and adaptation.

The EU also emphasises the role that private finance must play to complement insufficient public investment. Von der Leyen insisted on this issue in her speech at the September 2023 Africa Climate Summit, where she announced the allocation of €1bn in the form of Global Green Bonds to de-risk private investment for green initiatives in emerging markets, arguing that "public money from major economies, however crucial, is not enough to cover climate finance needs" (Von der Leyen, 2023). Likewise, Von der Leyen announced that the EU strives to work with African partners to put forward a proposal on global carbon pricing at COP28, as a tool to accelerate the path towards net zero and take advantage of new income streams for Africa's carbon sinks.

5.2.2 Capacity-Building Efforts

In addition to, and partly based on the political dialogue described above, AU-EU collaboration on climate encompasses a series of capacity-building projects. The foundation for this was already laid out in the 2007 JAES, which included the objective of boosting Africa's ability to tackle climate change, especially through enhanced data collection and reporting capacities (Adelle & Lightfoot, 2018).

The EU has contributed to a number of existing African-led initiatives. Successful examples include the ClimDev-Africa Programme, which received support from the EU through an allocation of €8 million from the tenth European Development Fund. This programme has played an important role in providing African actors with climate data, assisting in climate policymaking, and integrating adaptation and mitigation objectives into development strategies (Tondel et al., 2015). Another programme, established by the African Development Bank, is the Great Green Wall of the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative (GGWSSI). Bringing together 20 African states bordering the Sahara, the project initially aimed to grow an 8,000km-long line of trees and plants across the entire Sahel, from the Atlantic coast of Senegal to the East coast of Djibouti (UN Environment Programme, 2022). However, its scope later expanded to include supporting local communities in adapting to climate change risks. The EU mainly supports this initiative through policy processes and capacity development activities together with other multilateral organisations such as the FAO and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (Adelle & Lightfoot, 2018).

EU-AU collaboration in this field also extends to broader environmental issues. The Global Monitoring for Environment and Security Support Programme, for example, which is jointly financed by the European Commission and the African Union Commission, dedicates €30 million to adapting and utilising the Copernicus Programme's data and services in Africa (Global Monitoring for Environment and Security and Africa (GMES & Africa), 2018). This initiative aids in environmental monitoring and security, further enhancing Africa's ability to address environmental challenges effectively.

More recently, and as mentioned above, various Team Europe initiatives have been launched to enable Africa to better address climate-related impacts and risks. The Team Europe Initiative for Climate Adaptation and Resilience in Africa, for instance, was announced at the EU-African Union (AU) summit in February 2022. The initiative is led by the European Commission, together with Denmark, France and Germany and it aims to bring together new and existing climate change adaptation programs of over €1 billion, including €60 million for loss and damage.

5.3 Assessing AU-EU Cooperation on the Climate Crisis: Achievements and Challenges

AU-EU collaboration on climate change has been fruitful on many fronts. When it comes to climate multilateralism, aligning specific positions prior to key UNFCCC summits through joint declarations can be an important tool and political signal. Though this approach has at times failed (e.g. prior to COP15 in Copenhagen) and at times been more successful (e.g. prior to COP21 in Paris, with the mention of both 1.5 and 2 degree targets), this type of collaboration can help to advance global climate diplomacy.

At the level of political dialogue between the AU and EU, climate change has been on the agenda since 2007 at least, but with highs and lows. As analysed further below, challenges persist – particularly when it comes to adaptation finance, where mistrust exists on the African side because global financial commitments made at COPs have not been fully fulfilled. At the same time, momentum in the relationship has changed in a positive direction since the von der Leyen Commission's initiative to develop a new strategy towards Africa, aiming to strike a balanced partnership with the AU. In addition to joint strategies and diplomacy, AU-EU collaboration has taken the shape of capacity-building projects. The EU's support in these initiatives, often alongside other multilateral actors, has empowered African efforts in climate adaptation and mitigation (Lightfoot, 2020), though there is still much room for support, especially when it comes to adaptation.

The main criticism the EU faces in its climate relations with Africa refers to its tendency to export European development and investment frameworks rather than jointly designing them along with African stakeholders. Most recently, this was the case at the AU-EU summit of 2022, which has been described as a missed opportunity to build on African initiatives and engage with civil society (CONCORD, 2022). Civil society actors from Africa and the EU note that the summit was mostly dominated by the EU agenda and the branding of its flagship Team Europe initiatives in a way that reflected the approval of the recipient party (Bilal, 2022). Therefore, the EU is sometimes accused of perpetuating a paternalistic model towards the AU which is hampering progress on climate goals. While putting forward interesting interinstitutional collaboration with development banks, some see Team Europe Initiatives as another example of programmes "centred on European mechanisms and institutions" (Bilal, 2022). As such, those who criticise this approach find that the initiatives do not strive for a balanced partnership with Africa – instead, they argue for a switch to a "Team Europe-Africa" approach (Bilal, 2021). In fact, many success stories in climate collaboration are the ones that follow a joint approach, by supporting African-led capacity-building initiatives which are aligned with priorities on the ground (Lightfoot, 2020).

Climate finance is another important bone of contention. Most recently, for example, critics have argued that the newly announced financial packages – such as the Team Europe Initiative on climate change and adaptation in Africa announced at COP27 – are nothing but a repacking of existing allocations, given that the €1 billion envelope largely consists of a mix of already allocated projects (Knaepen & Dekeyser, 2023). More broadly, African partners complain about
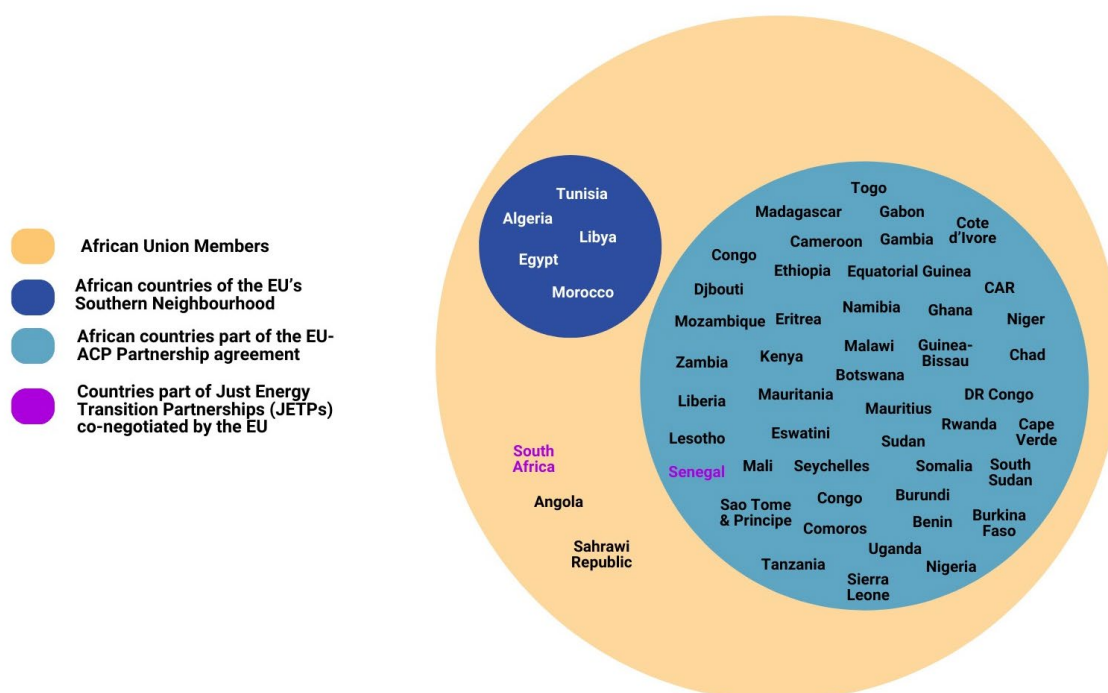
the European Investment Bank's (EIB) focus on mitigation rather than adaptation finance: the EIB dedicates only 15% of overall climate financing to the latter (Knaepen & Dekeyser, 2023). Africa's low share of global greenhouse gas emissions and its vulnerability to climate-related disasters requires greater support for adaptation projects. Moreover, this type of support is in line with the differentiation commitments that all UNFCCC partners signed up to, including the EU and its Member States. However, adaptation projects typically offer lower returns and are therefore less attractive for investors, making development finance generally harder to mobilise. The EU, however, insists on its role as the major donor of climate finance to developing economies, far ahead from other Western powers (European Commission, n.d.-b) and on its efforts to convince all Member States to put forward ambitious initiatives to align their goal to become a net-zero continent with support to Southern partners (Knaepen & Dekeyser, 2023).

Beyond financial disagreements, structural challenges also hamper cooperation on climate change between the AU and the EU. Ever since the launch of the JAES in 2007, concerns have come up about its overlap with other EU-supported frameworks (see Figure 1). In that sense, recipients of EU development and financial support (including support for climate initiatives) are split into different structures. ACP countries, which include most African Sub-Saharan states, receive support through Cotonou and post-Cotonou partnership agreements. North-African countries, in turn, are subsumed under the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) Action Plans. Therefore, collaboration with the AU through the JAES overlaps with these legally agreed frameworks, while the latter has a much softer structure and no mandate to impact on the negotiation of economic partnership agreements with ACP or ENP countries (Bach, 2010). As regions with different priorities on climate-related goals, AU Member States might decide to side with AU initiatives on climate, or their regions' own initiatives, depending on the type of support they want to receive from the EU. This in turn can lead to a lack of coordination in climate efforts and competition for the allocation of resources (Lightfoot, 2020).

Disagreement between the AU and the EU also arises on specific policies. African partners regard certain EU Green Deal initiatives as protectionist and unfair for their economies. The so-called CBAM, an initiative to tax imports of CO_2 emission-intensive products, is the focus of concerns in the AU. African states fear its potential negative impact on their production capacities (Hörter, 2022), claiming unfairness towards their developing economies. Likewise, while the increasing EU demand for clean hydrogen offers economic opportunities for African countries, it also raises concerns about energy access for the African population (Bhagwat & Olczak, 2020). While both partners agree on the importance of expanding renewable energies, the disagreements described here can and sometimes do hamper progress towards concrete measures on energy, climate change and green industrialisation (Hörter, 2022). Similar concerns have been expressed regarding the "Farm to Fork Strategy" which aims to reduce the usage of pesticides in EU food imports (Knaepen & Dekeyser, 2023).

Figure 1: Overlap of cooperation structures between the EU and AU Member States

Legend:
- African Union Members
- African countries of the EU's Southern Neighbourhood
- African countries part of the EU-ACP Partnership agreement
- Countries part of Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs) co-negotiated by the EU

Southern Neighbourhood: Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Morocco

EU-ACP Partnership: Togo, Madagascar, Gabon, Cote d'Ivore, Cameroon, Gambia, Congo, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, Djbouti, CAR, Mozambique, Eritrea, Namibia, Ghana, Niger, Zambia, Kenya, Malawi, Guinea-Bissau, Chad, Botswana, Liberia, Mauritania, Mauritius, DR Congo, Lesotho, Eswatini, Sudan, Rwanda, Cape Verde, Senegal, Mali, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Sao Tome & Principe, Congo, Burundi, Comoros, Benin, Burkina Faso, Uganda, Tanzania, Nigeria, Sierra Leone

African Union Members (outer): South Africa, Angola, Sahrawi Republic

Source: own elaboration

Finally, the AU and its Member States increasingly have the option to cooperate with emerging powers such as China and India, whose influence on the continent is growing. As noted by Damptey & Zakieldeen (2020), the African Group of Negotiations has already showcased remarkable proactivity in climate adaptation negotiations in multilateral fora by reaching out to China and the G77 to find common narratives and positions. The EU may thus want to continue working on "rebalancing asymmetries" (Treyer & Okereke, 2021) in its relationship with the AU – not just due to the imperative of climate justice, but also to counter rivalries with other global powers.

6   Discussion and Conclusions

The three case studies explored different strategic partnerships between the EU and international organisations which differ in terms of scope and functions. There are three conclusions we can draw from the above-presented analysis. First of all, despite the fact that all three inter-organisational partnerships are formal and institutionalised, they differ substantially with regard to the format and channels of cooperation, as presented in the following table.

Table 1: Institutionalisation of the Strategic Partnerships between the EU and UN, AU and NATO

EU-United Nations	EU-NATO	EU-AU
2003: Joint UN-EU Declaration on Cooperation in Crisis Management	1999: Berlin Plus Agreement	2000: Africa-EU Partnership
2012: Plan of Action to Enhance EU CSDP Support to UN Peacekeeping	2002: EU-NATO declaration on European Security and Defence Policy	2007: Joint Africa-EU Strategy
2015: UN–EU Strategic Partnership on Peacekeeping and Crisis Management: Priorities 2015–2018	2016: Joint Declaration on strategic partnership	2014: 2014–2017 Roadmap
2020: Framework Agreement for the Provision of Mutual Support	2018: Joint Declaration on EU-NATO Cooperation	2019: 1st EU-AU ministerial meeting
2022: EU-UN Strategic Partnership for the period 2022-2024	2023: Joint Declaration on EU-NATO Cooperation	2022: Joint Vision for 2030

Source: Own elaboration

The importance of formal channels of cooperation, elaborated in more detail elsewhere (see: Muftuler-Bac et al., 2022) has been demonstrated in the case of the EU-NATO partnership. Due to the low level of institutionalisation of this partnership prior to 2016, the EU-NATO cooperation has been hampered by, i.e, continuing internal political blockage between Cyprus and Turkey. With the progressive development of formal channels of cooperation, the partnership has become closer and appeared to cope better with Turkey's ambivalent attitude, for example, its hesitation regarding Finland's or Sweden's NATO membership. However, as the analysis of the EU-AU cooperation in fighting the climate crisis has shown, the high level of institutionalisation does not necessarily guarantee smooth or balanced cooperation in tackling a crisis, nor does it guarantee that a crisis is treated with the necessary prominence in the policy documents resulting from the joint work of both organisations. In the same vein, the UN-EU case demonstrated that the high level of institutionalisation does not necessarily mean that the institutionalised structure is used efficiently to tackle a crisis. As argued above, more tangible benefits could be taken from the already existing channels of formal

cooperation. This argument challenges the commonly held assumption in the literature that strategic partnerships are more likely to produce concrete results when they are more densely institutionalised (Muftuler-Bac et al. 2022 (ENGAGE Working Paper 13)); Tyushka & Czechowska, 2019).

Secondly, the division of labour as the central aspect of inter-organisational cooperation is also very different in the cases, ranging from a rather unspecified division of responsibilities such as in the case of EU-NATO, to an informal but established division of labour in mandates between EU and UN regarding tackling the crisis in Mali. The latter reflects complementarity rather than competition, as the two IO's mandates in Mali vary considerably. At the same time, the division of labour can be harmed by asymmetries within the partnership. As Bierman argues using the example of the EU and NATO, with the former dependent on the use of NATO military resources, such asymmetries imply "dependence and hierarchy" (2008, p. 168) and limit the results of inter-organisational cooperation.

Finally, as all three cases show, cooperation between the Union and other international organisations is increasingly influenced by competition between them and other global actors, in particular China, India and Russia. The rising geopolitical ambitions of these emerging powers have led to their increasingly assertive involvement in significant international conflicts and crises. This growing competition has multiple implications for the Union. As the case of the EU-AU partnership has shown, when it comes to climate multilateralism, African countries can and sometimes do choose alternative partnerships. African countries increasingly have the option of choosing to cooperate with China and India, whose influence on the continent is growing. The competition can also hinder the inter-organisational partnership. As demonstrated by the case of UN-EU cooperation in Mali, the Russian-affiliated military presence led to the dramatic deterioration of the security situation on the ground. As a result, due to the inability to prevent the engagement of EU-trained Malian forces in violent activities (Human Rights Watch, 2022), the EU decided in April 2022 to suspend operational training for the Malian armed forces and the National Guard, thereby freezing the relevant part of both EUTM and EUCAP operations (Sabatino et al., 2023, D4.3). On June 30, 2023. The UN Security Council voted unanimously to end the peacekeeping mission in Mali. The termination of MINUSMA follows a series of tensions since Mali joined forces with Russia's Wagner Group in 2021 (Reuters, 2023). These events indicate that both the EU and the UN are facing Russia's growing power in the region. This geopolitical rivalry between global powers is also evident with regard to the ongoing Russian war in Ukraine. The ambivalent attitude of China and India, which refrain from explicitly condemning Russia as an aggressor, makes it easier for other countries to adopt a similar approach and fend off calls from the EU, NATO and the UN.

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