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EUROPEAN UNION-WEST AFRICA  
COOPERATION: ENSURING SHARED  
SECURITY

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**EUROPEAN UNION-WEST AFRICA COOPERATION: ENSURING  
SHARED SECURITY**

**Abstract:**

The crisis in Mali has been a new challenge for the European Union (EU). The different perceptions of this threat among the countries north and south of the European Union have determined the level and entity of the military mission EUTM Mali. Given the challenges facing Western Africa, which certainly affect Europe, the European Union's cooperation should advance to ensure a space of shared security with this region. In this context, Spain is a key country to enhance a common area of prosperity and stability.

**Keywords:**

EU, Maghreb, Sahel, shared security space, Spain

## INTRODUCTION

The Mali crisis, which has clear repercussions in the Sahel and Maghreb regions, has posed a huge challenge to the international community, and, in particular, to the European Union (EU). Once again, it has not been easy to reach a European consensus to determine the level and the kind of cooperation in Mali. For the moment, this agreement has meant the deployment of a military training mission (EUTM Mali), the most significant effort of the Union in this African country. At the core of the discussions that gave rise to this mission were, above all, the different perceptions that northern and southern countries have regarding the threat the Mali crisis poses, especially the differences between states that share the Mediterranean with the African continent and those that do not. For this reason, the level of commitment in the solution of the conflict is also different.

All the EU countries coexist in a more and more dangerous world, and it is increasingly difficult to discern how global threats can impact their security and stability. These threats do not respect borders, and, whatever their background, they can reach, more or less drastically, any country, however far it is from the source of the instability, the crisis or the conflict. Undoubtedly, the European Union is the perfect organization to face, in a coordinated manner, the common challenges to its citizens' security, but this requires the strengthening of its common foreign policy. Nevertheless, and on the contrary, it is more and more complicated for the major EU powers to accept any cession of powers related to foreign policy to the organization. Such a transfer of powers would not imply, by any means, losing their capacity to defend their own idiosyncrasy or their national interests in this field, but it could be, in many occasions, the needed boost to achieving more consensus and commitment with the Union.

However, there is still a long way to go in order to have an effective Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), to which member countries committed by signing the Treaty of Lisbon in 2007<sup>1</sup>, although it did not come into force until 2009. From then on, common structures have been strengthened, in particular with the designation of the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, but this has not meant new powers for the European Commission, nor has it given more competences in this field to the European Parliament.

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<sup>1</sup> The Treaty of Lisbon, which modified the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty Establishing the European Community, was signed on the 13th of December, 2007. (2007/C 306/1). Official Journal of the European Union, 12/17/2007 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/JOHtml.do?uri=OJ:C:2007:306:SOM:ES:HTML>. **Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.** 6655/7/08 REV 7 <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/documents/treaty-of-lisbon?lang=es>

As a logical consequence of this, the Common Foreign and Security Policy has not been strengthened as planned either. Moreover, although civilian and military operations have been numerous in the last decade (up to 28 in three different continents: Europe, Asia and Africa), these missions have not been as ambitious as they should have. For instance, the “Battlegroups”<sup>2</sup>, which represent the military ambition of a fast deployment to quickly solve conflicts, have never been activated.

Despite the critiques the European Union has received, stemming mostly from the lack of consensus in the fields of security and defense, the efforts it has made in the name of peace and stability beyond its borders should not be underestimated, and they have been especially important in the African continent. Now, with the regional crisis the Maghreb and the Sahel are experiencing (caused to a large extent by the threat that violent and extremist Islamism poses), member countries of the EU must join forces, increase their commitment with the stability and development of this African region and, lastly, make progress in the creation of a security space shared by these neighboring countries. Both parties need, now more than ever, a common, affirmative, strong commitment to overcome the existing differences and to consolidate a wide strategic partnership.

On the one hand, this report analyzes the evolution of the policies and agreements between the European Union and Africa, the results of which can be seen especially in the Joint Strategy agreed on in Lisbon in 2007 and in the European Neighborhood Policy. On the other hand, the paper studies the pending challenges, even more significant after the outbreak of the convulse conflict in Mali. In this regard, Spain, together with other Mediterranean countries of the European Union, must confirm its position as an important, necessary actor by promoting a European Foreign and Security Policy towards the Maghreb and the Sahel based on both effectiveness and solidarity.

## REACHING CONSENSUS IN EUROPEAN SECURITY

The European Union’s security and defense should be in the minds of all European citizens, as a sign of their commitment to peace and stability in the world and, therefore, to our own peace. Because of this, it is necessary to raise awareness among European society and

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<sup>2</sup> Since January 2007, the European Union has enough capacity to undertake two fast-deployment operations with two tactical groups (1,500 men) called Battlegroups. If it were necessary, both operations could be done almost simultaneously. Decisions regarding deployment are taken by the ministers of the EU countries gathered in the Council of the EU. However, until now there has never been a consensus to deploy these joint, combined European units, either in EU missions or in United Nations operations.

authorities about the convenience of guaranteeing security and defense. Particularly, some key factors would be to further the idea of a Europe of Security and Defense, to analyze old and new threats affecting all European peoples and, especially, to think about common solutions to ensure peace and stability in the European continent, which is more and more affected by crisis and conflicts taking place in Africa.

Currently, Europe is still one of the world's epicenters, and therefore it is a crucial actor regarding international peace and stability. In a changing geopolitical context, where there are many threats that do not take into account distances nor borders, the European Union must keep moving forward to become a single actor committed with the world order through a solid, agreed-on foreign policy. Its goal must be to confront these threats, wherever they may be originated, to preserve our security.

Often times, the multiple national interests, the divergent perceptions regarding what a threat to security is, or the different public opinions of the countries comprising the European Union make it difficult to achieve a common and strong stance. This is especially evident when measures have to be taken, in the fields of politics, diplomacy and the military, in order to eradicate or neutralize the common dangers that all EU countries and their populations face.

However, apart from the quest for our own security, the European Union has shown, since its very beginning, that its commitment with peace goes beyond its external borders. Its commitment is common and agreed on, and must be ever stronger and caring. It is what made it possible for the Union to be awarded, in 2012, with the Nobel Peace prize for its contribution to "peace, reconciliation, democracy and human rights" in the European continent. In the award ceremony, president of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy stated that "the European Union is the greatest institution for the establishment of peace ever created in the history of humanity, and we maintain our mission of promoting peace, democracy and human rights in the rest of the world."<sup>3</sup>

## **STRENGTHENING THE STRATEGIC ALLIANCE WITH AFRICA**

On the grounds of this firm and proven commitment, there is a need to address the challenges that peace in African nations entails for the European Union. Africa is a neighboring continent with which Europe shares history and interests, a continent Europe

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<sup>3</sup> Joint statement of José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, and Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council on the award of the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize to the EU. Available at [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release MEMO-12-779\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-12-779_en.htm). Date of the search: 06/17/13.

should strengthen all its relations with. Today, due to the serious crisis the region of Sahel is going through, all policies and agreements related to security and defense are particularly important, for both Africa and Europe.

The Sahel countries have repeatedly suffered alarming political and humanitarian crisis for years, and everything indicates that European policies, despite their cost and the effort put on them, have only attenuated, but not definitively eradicated them. From this perspective, it seems logical to think that, in order to accomplish this goal, new initiatives are needed. These initiatives should focus on supporting the different countries of the Sahel, a vast African region characterized by deficient governance, which has negative effects on state institutions, the management of shaky borders, the promotion of sustainable development, social participation in politics and the protection of human rights.

All this has a malicious influence in bordering regions, especially in the Maghreb, and, without a doubt, it has an impact on Europe's stability, because of its proximity and common interests. In the Sahel, the security, development and governance crisis has worsened with the Mali conflict, which has made the country collapse since early 2012. The international community as a whole is trying to solve the situation, and so is the European Union.

The situation of permanent crisis in the Sahel, especially in its western part, has rendered states in this African region more and more vulnerable to armed conflicts, jihadist violent actions and organized crime, based on illegal arms traffic, drug traffic and human traffic. A combination of violence and danger very hard to solve. The willingness and commitment of the international community, and of the European Union in particular, must be the cornerstone of a new cooperation policy towards Africa.

Peace in the Sahel is threatened, but so is peace in the European Union. In other words, in a world that is more and more globalized and interconnected, risks and threats do not respect borders anymore. If Africa suffers the scourge of violence, underdevelopment and poverty, Europe will also have to bear its evil consequences. Therefore, all European governments must be aware that our security borders begin wherever risks and threats begin. The European Union will only be able to confront this crisis successfully if it uses an comprehensive, cooperative approach regarding its African policies, an approach based on solidarity, respect and mutual dependence. This is a goal all of us, as European citizens, must be committed to.

## OF DEVELOPMENT AID AND THE COMMITMENT WITH SECURITY

In spite of the huge challenges that have to be confronted in EU-African cooperation, the Union's aid to this continent is a determination that has gone a long way. It started with the independence of African countries. With the creation of the European Economic Community in 1957, aid to Africa was included in development programs through direct financing to the newly independent countries. However, save very few exceptions, this cooperation did not mean the formation of stable, democratic countries in Africa, nor did it promote the development of its peoples. Above all, it did not become the basis for the establishment of solid relations in all fields between both continents.

Until the end of the Cold War in 1989, the Union's financial contribution to African development was virtually the only link with Africa. A few years later, in 1992, the Treaty of Maastricht became the starting point of a new European foreign policy, one in which cooperation in crisis management and conflict prevention was more important. Thus the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) was born, and it became the current Common Security and Defense Policy after the Treaty of Lisbon of 2007. This foreign policy has increased the Union's strategic dimension, but it still needs to play a much more prominent role in the international stage, especially in Africa.

In the fields of security and defense, Africa has also made major progress during the last decade. In 2002, the African Union (AU) stated that governance, democracy and human rights were to be the basis of its common continental policy. It also affirmed that achieving peace and security was the most indispensable and guiding principle for any political, social and economical development. In its Constitutive Act<sup>4</sup>, African countries agreed on the idea that they needed to reinforce international cooperation and promote peace, security and stability throughout the continent. To materialize this goal, they created the Peace and Security Council as a basis to create a regime of continental security able to prevent, manage and solve conflicts.

Today, relationships between the European Union and the African Union are determined by their respective foreign policies, particularly in the fields of peace and security. Thus, they have consolidated a political dialogue that has moved on from financial aid and trade exchange to the establishment of a joint and integral project of equals. This integral project pays special attention to the management, prevention and resolution of conflicts and crisis in Africa. All this is based on the EU recognition of Africa's efforts and leadership to create conditions that definitely favor economic and social development among its peoples.

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<sup>4</sup> *Constitutive Act of the African Union*, adopted in Lome (Togo) on July 11, 2000. Two years later, in July 2002, it came into force. Available at [http://www.au.int/en/about/constitutive\\_act](http://www.au.int/en/about/constitutive_act). Date of search: 07/09/13.

## EUROPEAN POLICIES AND STRATEGIES TOWARDS AFRICA

With the goal of supporting this thesis, it is useful to go through the different European and African policies and strategies, because they are the basis of the relationship between both parties. In 2007, during the Lisbon Summit, leaders from both continents signed the first Joint Strategy of the European Union and Africa<sup>5</sup>, which became an unprecedented milestone in their common history. In addition, they decided that the EU would take care of the formulation of regional strategies, such as the one created for the Sahel or the European Neighborhood Policy, which specifically strengthens the links between Europe and countries neighboring its external borders, both by land and sea. Today, the recent crisis in the Sahel and its potential projection beyond its borders question the suitability of analyzing the instability of a given region in an independent way. On the contrary, it has underlined the pressing need to adopt measures that reduce instability and the high levels of violence from a more integral and inclusive perspective.

Thus, from a critical but constructive point of view, there must be a revision of the cooperation between Africa and the European Union. This revision should be the basis to consider a fundamental issue, an issue that is to become the cornerstone of the EU Common Security and Defense Policy: today, European security borders are located in Africa, in the regions of the Maghreb and the Sahel, in the Mediterranean coast and in the Gulf of Guinea. Therefore, it is necessary to promote and encourage strong, committed policies aiming at guaranteeing peace, security and stability in Africa as well as in Europe. In this way, all the initiatives attempting to advance in the consolidation of a shared security space become even more important, as this is a wide European and African area from which both continents, and especially their inhabitants, benefit.

In 2007, the Joint Strategy agreed on in Lisbon became the cornerstone of cooperation between Africa and the European Union. The main goal of this cooperation is to consolidate democracy as a basis to overcome the crisis and conflicts that still make many African regions tremble. It is for this reason that, currently, the deployed European missions and regional strategies materialize the European Union's commitment with Africa. Thus, from an integral perspective, relationships have been strengthened on the grounds of mutual cooperation, which was absent for too many decades.

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<sup>5</sup> The Africa-EU Strategic Partnership. A Joint Africa-UE Strategy. Council of the European Union. Lisbon, 12/09/2007. En [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/er/97496.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/er/97496.pdf). Fecha de consulta: 14/06/13.

In addition, the European Neighborhood Policy<sup>6</sup> was created in the context of the European Union enlargement of 2004. Its goals were to avoid the rise of new divisions between the EU and neighboring countries and to consolidate all states' security, stability and welfare. Thus, the Union offers a privileged relationship to neighboring countries, aiming at creating a mutual commitment based on common values: democracy, human rights, rule of law, good governance, market economy and sustainable development. Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia, as Mediterranean countries, participate in this Neighborhood Policy. The projects carried out in the context of this cooperation are also combined with other activities within the Joint Africa-EU Strategy.

As a result, today Africa is the European Union's first priority in its commitment with international peace. Despite the fact that the situation the continent is going through is, to a great extent, a consequence of European intervention in the colonial era and in the subsequent decolonization, the link between both continents has been based for decades on bilateral relations. Because of this, there has never been a truly common policy between the two neighboring continents, and this is the biggest challenge for the future. A future that, whether we like it or not, will be shared.

### **Regional strategies for non-regional threats**

Today, six years after the coming into force of the Joint Strategy, there is still a long way to go regarding peace, security and development in the African continent. Undoubtedly, there have been very significant improvements. The main African institutions are progressively consolidating, and there are advances in the Millennium Development Goals, although they will hardly be accomplished by 2015.

Thanks to the aforesaid, cooperation between Africa and Europe keeps getting stronger. The most important goal of such cooperation is to increase Africa's capacity to prevent and solve crisis situations, and to maintain a stable, lasting peace throughout the continent. The Joint Strategy has produced noticeable results in many fields of action, but the situation in Africa, especially in the Sahel, poses continuous challenges that have to be met. In order for that to happen, cooperation between both continents is needed, at the political and strategic level as well as at the operational level.

In 2011, with the goal of keeping a regional approach in the resolution of these crisis, the EU promoted specific strategies for the two most troubled areas of the continent: the Sahel and

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<sup>6</sup> For more information about this political initiative, visit [http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/policy\\_es.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/policy_es.htm). Date of search: 06/09/13.

the Horn of Africa<sup>7</sup>. The situation in this region, characterized by unrest, lack of governance and the increase of the jihadist threat in many of its countries, shows that problems in the continent are far from over. On the contrary, the alarming worsening of security has forced the EU to focus on solving these conflicts, which are a threat to Africa but also to Europe and the rest of the world. From this perspective, it is obvious that, sooner rather than later, the EU must review and strengthen these strategies. The reason for this is that these strategies, as the crisis in Mali showed, have to be inextricably combined with policies regarding security in the neighboring countries of Northwest Africa, the ones that belong to the Maghreb region.

In this field, the European Neighborhood Policy becomes especially relevant. Today, in view of the alarming worsening of security in Western Sahel, we are witnessing how the Maghreb countries are directly affected, even though they have also had an influence in the escalation of the Sahel conflict. However, this European Neighborhood Policy has been mainly based, up until now, on bilateral relations between the European Union and the different countries of the southern Mediterranean coast. It would be very useful for this Policy to change into a strategy comprising the whole Maghreb region.

Furthermore, this European Neighborhood Policy needs to somehow expand towards the Sahel countries, or at least adopt measures that positively influence the combined regions of the Maghreb and the Sahel. Both of them have proved to be connected and interdependent, particularly concerning peace and security. If the risks and threats that endanger the security of their peoples are to be eradicated, then the problems of these regions have to be analyzed in a combined way. After all, such risks and threats also affect, inexorably, Europe.

## INCREASING MUTUAL COOPERATION

After having thoroughly reviewed the development of EU cooperation, and once we have introduced the main and still pending challenges, it is useful to consider now the foreseeable future of this cooperation. The ultimate goal is to promote the concept of European Security and Defense, which, to a great extent, must be the essential purpose of the Common Security and Defense Policy. That is the only way to reach a consensus between member countries when the circumstances require measures and actions (whether they are

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<sup>7</sup> EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel. **Foreign Affairs Council Meeting**. 23/03/2011. Available at [http://www.eeas.europa.eu/africa/docs/sahel\\_strategy\\_en.pdf](http://www.eeas.europa.eu/africa/docs/sahel_strategy_en.pdf) and A Strategic Framework for the Horn of Africa. **Foreign Affairs Council Meeting**. 14/11/11. Available at [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/126052.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/126052.pdf). Date of search: 07/11/13.

diplomatic, political or military actions) to guarantee peace and stability beyond the Union's external borders, especially in Africa.

Firstly, it must be repeated that, today, relationships between the European Union and Africa are clearly stronger, friendlier and more cooperative than at any other moment in history. From the creation of the African development funds to the current Joint Strategy, regional strategies and the European Neighborhood Policy, there have been many advances, which in turn have been equally positive for both continents.

Nevertheless, this has to be just the beginning of an ever closer-relationship between Africa and Europe. A reciprocity relationship that may only evolve if both parties are capable and willing to set up a stable, lasting scenario of peace and security in both continents. The main goals of this agreement must be the development of democracy, the promotion of human rights and the eradication of poverty, extremist violence and organized crime. Without a doubt, this is the strength of European cooperation, and it has to be promoted in order to differentiate itself from other powers which have a presence in Africa just because of economic interests, indifferent to the most basic needs: security, good governance or human development.

Assuming there is an agreement with sovereign states, regional organizations and the African Union, European cooperation in Africa should be strengthened in two ways. First, with development aid aimed at accomplishing the Millennium Goals. Second, by supporting governance in its widest sense so that governments are based on the legitimacy of state authorities and on the strength of their institutions. Both goals, development and governance, must be present, combined and integrally, in all European initiatives regarding cooperation with Africa.

The European Union is already carrying out, to a large extent, this integral strategy. This strategy has to focus on initiatives aimed at solving crisis and conflicts from a wide regional perspective, without forgetting the necessary involvement of states. As has been seen in the Sahel, and specifically in Mali, the cross-border nature of risks and threats tends to project itself in and out of the conflict area. Moreover, the solution for this is to bind more efficiently national efforts to regional approaches.

With this general orientation, and focusing on the fields of security and defense, cooperation between the European Union and Africa should pay close attention to the following urgent matters. Although many of them are already included in the different joint and regional strategies, now it is time to reconsider and reinforce them:

- Helping in the development of governance, in order to eliminate the risk of state collapse. This is as indispensable requisite to guarantee national development, as that risk not only affects the state internally, but can also spill over out of its borders. In this regard, European aid must deal with reform in the field of security, so that police and national military forces can establish a stable, peaceful environment in which the use of force is an exclusive monopoly of the state.
- Concurrently, there is a need to create or reinforce African democratic institutions so that they contribute to consolidate security, political dialogue, electoral processes, the rule of law and equal distribution of wealth as the basis for generating a national identity among all communities, ethnicities and races living together within national borders.
- Thirdly, collaborating with other external actors, particularly the United Nations and the United States, to accomplish these goals. With regard to our American ally, President Obama's recent visit to the continent constitutes a backing of African development, and also an opportunity for the European Union to synchronize its action with the world's greatest power.
- Lastly, promoting the instauration of national and regional security mechanisms that can face cross-border threats and that promote trust between countries. Undoubtedly, it is only through efficient cooperation and a regional approach that terrorism and organized crime can be defeated. Today, these are the main risks for national, regional and continental stability, and there is a clear possibility for them to impact the rest of the world.

For the European Union, if it is to confront the aforesaid challenges, it is of paramount importance to strengthen internal cohesion and political willingness in order to face with determination Africa's problems, knowing that, even though they are born in Africa, they will eventually affect Europe. To a great extent, the European continent is the final destination of irregular migratory movements starting in Africa, and also of illegal human, tobacco and drugs traffic. It is also the main target of Islamist groups that, in addition, undermine the stability of many African countries, especially those belonging to the Sahel region.

Therefore, within the European Union as well as within its member states, it is necessary to increase the sense of responsibility and solidarity with African countries, especially with those of the Maghreb and the Sahel regions, and promote a larger commitment to eradicating the threats that, to a greater or lesser extent, affect the whole of Europe, regardless of the distance to the focus of the conflict in Africa.

From this perspective, the European Union must strengthen its Common Security and Defense Policy so that the ambitions and goals agreed on the Treaty of Lisbon of December, 2007 come true. With regard to security and defense, the Treaty states that all agreements require unanimity of all member countries of the European Council. Therefore, in order to make any decision relative to European foreign action, its political strategy and its civilian and military missions in Africa, there exists a precondition that there is a strong and widespread awareness of the fact that threats plaguing the Sahel and the Maghreb are also risks for our own peace and security.

Thus, the current crisis in this vast African region should be reason enough to realize that, today, European security borders reach areas like the Maghreb, the Sahel and even the Gulf of Guinea. Our peace and stability are affected by illegal drug and human traffic, by terrorism and by the weakness of the state in countries like Mali, Niger or Mauritania. These adversities also destabilize this large and interconnected region of Africa. Because of this, there is no doubt that the European Union must be united in its will and commitments in order to become a single, decisive actor in Africa. It also needs to be able to advance towards an integral strategy, and to use it to face, together with African governments, the multiple challenges that currently prevent the peaceful and sustainable development of their peoples. Consequently, the creation of a space of shared security is the only way to make peace and stability prevail in both sides of the Mediterranean.



**The European Union and West Africa must move forward to a space of shared security**

In addition, it is also necessary to reinforce the idea that it is always more efficient, and it also prevents more human suffering, to deal with crisis in their initial stage rather than to take part in them when they have worsened or even led to an open conflict of unforeseeable consequences. From this point of view, the European Union also has to reinforce its civilian and military capabilities to provide preemptive assistance, sooner and in a more efficient way, whenever African governments request European help.

Moreover, in general, the Foreign Affairs Council of the European Union, responsible for developing external action following the strategic lines defined by the Council of the European Union, must ensure that the development funds given to Africa are consistent with the European principle of promoting peace, democracy and human rights as the essential foundations of sustainable and durable development.

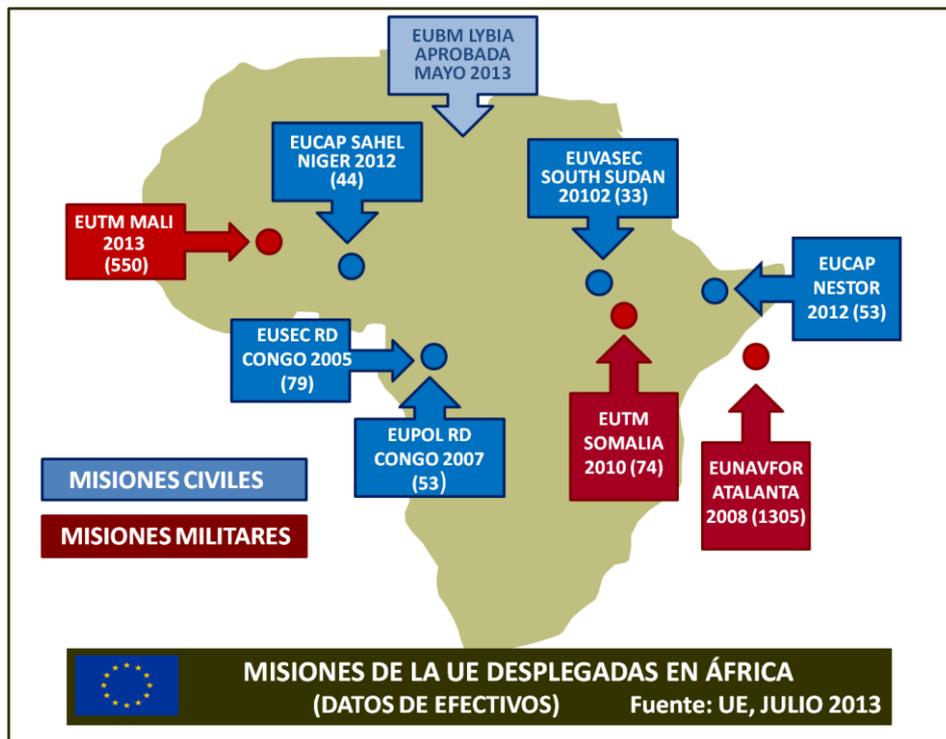
Given all these parameters, it seems only reasonable to think that European policies regarding North Africa, and also the Sahel, have to change to promote a privileged relationship with troubled countries, such as Mali, Mauritania or Niger. Nevertheless, it also has to foster relationships with coastal neighboring countries, like Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia or Libya, which make up the Maghreb region and are suffering the consequences of their southern neighbors' conflicts. Only from an integral approach that includes the Maghreb and the Sahel will we begin to see positive results in the eradication of extremist terrorism and organized crime.

It is because of all this that the efforts of the EU in these countries, which must be substantial and lasting, cannot be seen by any means as an expense, especially during these times of economic crisis. On the contrary, they must be regarded as an investment in terms of security for Africa and for Europe.

### **EU CIVILIAN AND MILITARY OPERATIONS IN AFRICA**

The civilian and military missions deployed by the European Union in Africa are, without a doubt, the most evident example of the European commitment with peace and stability in the African continent. Since 2003, the Council has approved up to 15 civilian and military missions in 8 African nations, compared to 6 in Europe and 7 in Asia. In 2003, the European Union started its first mission, Operation Artemis, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, to guarantee security during the decisive election for the future of the country. Currently, the missions deployed in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Niger, Mali and South Sudan are adapting to or are already included in the different European strategies towards Africa, such as the Joint Strategy of 2007 or the specific strategies for the Horn of Africa and the Sahel of 2011.

Today, all these missions confront, from an integral approach, the reform of the security sector, with the goal of reinforcing national governments in order to achieve stability in the given country and the development of its population. However, what is most determining is the moment in which the decision is made and the mission begins. The results show that it is always better to cooperate in the first stages of a crisis than to wait until the high levels of violence and humanitarian emergency make its solution even harder and more dangerous.



According to this reasoning, it is much safer and easier (and it requires a much smaller economic and human effort) to deploy missions like EUVASEC, in South Sudan, to implement air traffic security, EUBAM, in Libya, which will provide training with regard to national borders control, or EUCAP, in Niger, intended to regenerate Niger's security sector, than to face a training mission, such as EUTM in Somalia or EUTM in Mali, after the country has collapsed. Besides, in these cases, due to the low security standards, European countries appear to be more reluctant to give up their personnel to the civilian and military contingents.

In addition, regarding the Common Security and Defense Policy, it would be useful to reconsider the member countries' willingness to deploy military forces or "Battlegroups" when humanitarian emergency or extreme violence demand it. These "Battlegroups" were created through an initiative approved in 2007. However, instead of becoming the European

Union's fast reaction tool in the most urgent situations, they have never been used, despite the fact that their formation, training and operative certification have been active since their creation.

### SPAIN: A KEY ACTOR IN REINFORCING COOPERATION

Spain's geostrategic location, as a member of the European Union sharing land and sea borders with Africa, makes it key in promoting and reinforcing cooperation with the Maghreb and the Sahel. Moreover, Spain constitutes the most evident bridge between Africa and the European Union. It is a bridge in a positive sense, given that it is the country charged with carrying out the effects of the common policies promoting relations between both continents. But it is also a bridge in a negative sense, because it makes Spain a mandatory transit zone for illegal immigration, drug and human trafficking and even jihadist violence. These global issues negatively affect the whole of the EU, and Spain must promote greater consensus and determination within the organization to adopt common policies that confront those issues.

Borders separate countries, but they must also be reinforced as meeting points that favor security and development in both sides of the Mediterranean. Currently Spain enjoys excellent relations with the Maghreb countries, especially with Morocco and Algeria, and these relationships have to be a strong foundation for the reinforcement of links between the European Union and Africa. For instance, the words of the deputy minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco, Youssef Amrani, are very telling. In an interview with the *Atalayar* magazine, he said that "Spain and Morocco have a frequent and fluid political dialogue, with no borders (...) The relationship with Europe works well, and the plan is to move forward. We appreciate the support that Spain always gives us in this regard.<sup>8</sup>"

From the Spanish side, minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation José Manuel García-Margallo emphasized to the same magazine that our country is determined to reinforce these cordial relations with the southern Mediterranean countries: "Both Algeria and Morocco are strategic countries. We intend to build a privileged relationship of neighborhood, cooperation and friendship with them. With both of them we share interests

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<sup>8</sup> Fernández Arribas, J. "Somos aliados, socios y amigos". *Entrevista al ministro delegado para Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación del Reino de Marruecos, Youssef Amrani*. Magazine: *Atalayar Entre dos Orillas*. Issue 3, May 2013.

and challenges, some different and some common, like the creation of a prosperity and stability zone in the western Mediterranean.<sup>9</sup>

There is no doubt that, thanks to these privileged relationships, Spain, as well as other Mediterranean countries like France and Italy, must become a key actor within the European Union to make it confront the challenges, both new and old, that West Africa faces. Therefore, it is crucial that these European countries lead the way to a larger convergence within the Union, and thus increase cooperation and coordination with Africa, and also lead the way to the consolidation of a common security space from which both continents, and their inhabitants, may benefit.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

After having presented and analyzed the policies, strategies and missions that currently determine the cooperative relationship between the European Union and Africa, in addition to the challenges that both continents still face to guarantee peace and security, it is necessary to advance in this direction, towards convergence. This demands political will and determination from European and African countries at both sides of the Mediterranean.

As it is said in the final statement of the 2007 Joint Strategy, both parties will remember this agreement as a “moment of recognition of maturity and transformation in our continent to continent dialogue, opening new paths and opportunities for collective action for our common future.” New paths and opportunities that, to be real, demand a bigger commitment from the European Union, as well as the consolidation of a truly Common Security and Defense Policy and, above all, the support of European society, which must know that peace and security in Europe start in Africa, now more than ever, and that the desire of both is shared by this continent, both neighbor and ally.

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<sup>9</sup> Fernández Arribas, J. “Existe una voluntad compartida de construir una asociación estratégica”. *Entrevista al ministro de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación de España, José Manuel García-Margallo*. Magazine: Atalayar Entre dos Orillas. Issue 4, June 2013.