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The implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda by the European Union.
The case studies of military training missions in Africa.

titled Ph.D. dissertation

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1   The Research Problem and its relevance

The European Union (EU or Union) has increasingly positioned itself as an international security provider in the last two decades. Since 2003, it launched 44 missions and operations responding to conflict and crisis in Europe, Africa and the Middle East. These EU interventions are often characterized and framed by the Union's liberal-normative self-image, which leaves these missions—including those of military nature—with the task of transferring the norms deriving from this approach. One of these norms is gender equality, also enshrined in the constitutional treaties of the EU. The Union has promoted the norm of gender equality in its security and defence policy, including military interventions, primarily informed by the Women, Peace and Security (WPS or WPS agenda) normative framework. In many ways, the WPS agenda—celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2025 remembering the adoption of UNSCR 1325 in 2000—changed the way of thinking about war, peace, and conflict, as well as warfare and conflict prevention or resolution. One of the most important elements and practical implications of this normative framework integrated into *ius in bello*[1] was recognizing rape as a weapon and tactic of war with the adoption of another WPS resolution in 2008, UNSCR 1820 (United Nations Security Council, 2008).

By the time the EU began its continuous engagement in security force assistance (SFA) in the 2010s, the promotion of gender equality as a norm, including the WPS agenda, had become an institutionalized strategic priority within the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). EU civilian and military missions, including SFA missions, are expected to conduct gender mainstreaming efforts while training and advising partner troops, as well as lead by example including demonstrating leadership and military potential of women (Council of the European Union, 2018a; European Commission, 2020a). These policy expectations resulted in several resource and capacity allocation questions in EU SFA missions which, in many cases, were already burdened by the deficiency of overall EU military structures, such as being understaffed, and facing the general challenges stability operations often encounter (see e.g. Reykers and Adriaensen, 2023; Van Der Lijn et al., 2022; Williams and Ali, 2020). Gender advisor (GENAD) positions created by the EU in these missions are often left vacant suggesting that EU member states' lack either capacity and political will, or both, for the promotion of gender equality through gender mainstreaming (European Commission, 2023; Lackenbauer and Jonsson, 2014; Williams and Ali, 2020).

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[1]International Humanitarian Law (IHL) or the law of warfare. See more in: https://www.icrc.org/en/law-and-policy/jus-ad-bellum-and-jus-bello

Advancing what is considered 'normal' in gender relations and equality in Europe became an integral part of the work carried out by CSDP missions in places, such as Somalia and Mozambique, where local norms often significantly differ from European concepts of gender equality. Such promotion of gender equality in military CSDP is based not only on normative reasoning but also on functionalist arguments, asserting that gender mainstreaming contributes to operational effectiveness. This reasoning is often invoked even though the assessment of gender equality norm promotion and the effectiveness of CSDP missions remains largely underdeveloped from conceptual, empirical, qualitative, and quantitative perspectives.

2 Research questions, hypotheses and the structure of the dissertation

2.1 Research questions and hypotheses

Reflecting on this highly policy-relevant issue in CSDP, this dissertation explored what lies behind the EU's discourse on gender mainstreaming and how it influences one of the most common types of EU military interventions, EU-led SFA missions, in theatres where the norm(al) in gender relations is often dominantly different. In doing so, the study intended to answer the following two research questions:

- Why does the EU conduct gender mainstreaming in CSDP SFA missions in Africa?
- To what extent does EU gender mainstreaming impact these security force assistance missions?

Five tentative hypotheses were identified to guide the inquiry in order to answer these research questions. Hypothesis 1. argued that the EU conducts gender mainstreaming because of its normative self-conceptualization coinciding with the Normative Power Europe concept by Ian Manners. Hypothesis 2. asserted that the Union considers gender equality as a quintessential, constitutional value enshrined in the Treaties. Additionally, Hypothesis 3. focused on the roots of EU gender mainstreaming practices and arguments. This tentative hypothesis suggested that the EU narrative building on both the right-based—as *the right thing to do*"—and the functionalist argumentation—"*the smart thing to do*" (Egnell and Alam, 2019, p. 53)—for gender mainstreaming derives from two main factors:

a) the "WPS effect" understood as both norm diffusion through external influence from the UN, and internal push from individual member states committed to WPS implementation. This hypothesis argued that the EU's gender mainstreaming practices are fundamentally shaped by the WPS framework and the process of the acceptance and institutionalization of this normative agenda in CSFP and CSDP; and

b) EU member states experiences and lessons learned in Iraq[2] and Afghanistan[3] integrating a gender perspective in counterinsurgency (COIN) operations and SFA efforts. This hypothesis suggested that the norm transfer through the WPS effect is further reinforced by the operational experiences from these two contemporary military interventions where all-female teams, and mixed teams were tested in combat environment and counterinsurgency operations for the first time (Baldwin, 2021; Fleming et al., 2023; McInnis, 2024; Olsson et al., 2014; Prudhoe et al., 2024).

Answering the second research question on the impact of gender mainstreaming efforts on EU-led SFA missions in the framework of CSDP in Africa, two additional tentative hypotheses were laid down. Hypothesis 4. challenged the EU discourse on gender mainstreaming contribution to operational effectiveness and suggested that contemporary EU efforts serve as a double-edged sword vis-à-vis effectiveness. It asserted that while integrating a gender perspective into SFA missions can enhance operational effectiveness, EU GM as a norm transfer can also often result in tensions between the EU and the partner country becoming a source of role conflict. This hypothesis built on the argument that in case of attempting to transfer a norm, this process never happens in a "*normative vacuum, but instead in a highly contested normative space where they must compete with other norms*" (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, p. 897). Lastly, Hypothesis 5. addressed a novel approach in EU practices, namely directly integrating the WPS agenda into the mandate of EUTM/EUMAM Mozambique. Hypothesis 5. suggested that such direct WPS mandate can enhance implementation and the contribution to operational effectiveness.

2.2   Structure

After the introductory part of the dissertation, Chapter 2. provided a comprehensive review of the literature, including important scholarship guiding the theoretical and conceptual framework and relevant policy documents. In Chapter 3. the author introduced the most important theoretical and conceptual elements of the research: Role Theory, the Normative Power Europe concept, gender mainstreaming and security force assistance contextualizing them in the larger framework of constructivism. Subsequently, Chapter 4. outlined the

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[2] when referring to Iraq, the author refers to the Iraq intervention also called the Second Gulf War between 2003 and 2013 starting with the invasion of Iraq by a US-led coalition.

[3] when referring to Afghanistan, the author refers to the Afghanistan intervention between 2011 and 2021 starting with Operation Enduring Freedom in 2001 as a response to the terrorist attack on the United States on September 11th in 2001. As a part of the Global War on Terror, this intervention included two security force assistance interventions, International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and Resolute Support Mission (RSM) after Operation Enduring Freedom by the US and allies, subsequently also commanded by NATO.

methodology explaining the applied methods and their operationalization in the dissertation. Additionally, this chapter also facilitated the understanding of the limitations which the applied methodology inherently imposed on this research.

Subsequently, Chapter 5. addressed the topic of EU as an international security provider and analysed the development of the Union's self-conceptualization from 2003 when the first EU missions and operations were deployed. Subsequently, Chapter 6. took a step closer to the specific empirical of EU security force assistance in context of CSDP missions and operations. This chapter introduced a conceptual bridge between contemporary, largely US-based SFA literature and the highly EU-specific CSDP jargon by conceptualizing the EU model of SFA. Chapter 7. focusing on EU gender mainstreaming explored the specific EU approach to the integration of a gender perspective into security and defence policy, including CSDP missions. This chapter also studied the institutional and policy framework of gender mainstreaming as norm institutionalization by mapping strategic and operational documents and engaged in discourse analysis to understand how these documents connect gender mainstreaming to operational effectiveness in CSDP.

In Chapter 8., the theoretical and conceptual framework and EU-specific findings were triangulated with data collected from the two empirical case study missions, EUTM Somalia and EUTM/EUMAM Mozambique. Accordingly, Chapter 8. provided space for a comparative analysis of the two EU SFA missions in Africa to understand how EU gender mainstreaming as norm transfer impacts these missions. Finally, Chapter 9. summarized the research findings reflecting on the five tentative hypotheses. Additionally, this chapter outlined policy recommendations based on the research outcomes and detailed their contribution to existing literature while also pointing out possible lines of development for future scholarship.

3 Theoretical and conceptual framework and methodology

3.1 *Theoretical and conceptual framework*

In search of answers to the research questions, the dissertation applied Role Theory (RT) first introduced to foreign policy analysis (FPA) by Kalevi Holsti (Holsti, 1970; Harnisch, 2012; Harnisch et al., 2011). More specifically, the author built the theoretical framework of this research to the primarily EU-focused constructivist Role Theory application—also called the 'second wave' in RT research'—emerging from the 1990's throughout the early years of the millennium. The research engaged in a mesoscopic level of analysis through RT application of a special role context theorizing the EU as the actor, while partner countries of the EU in Africa

receiving EU security force assistance, Somalia and Mozambique, as the "*generalized others*" (Harnisch et al., 2011).
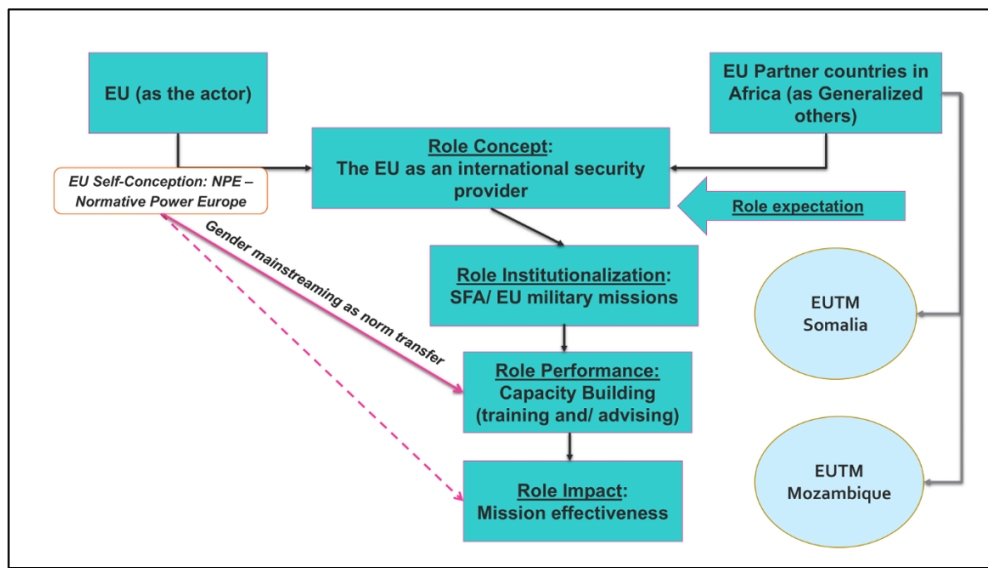
The Conceptual Map of the Dissertation, 2024

On the conceptual level, the dissertation cross-fertilized the rich conceptual vocabulary of Role Theory with the idiosyncratic EU jargon specific to CSFP and CSDP. The EU was conceptualized as a single actor, an international security provider whose self-conceptualization is primarily a normative one. The dissertation understood the institutionalization of such role of the EU in the form of a security force assistance through the deployment of a non-executive military mission. This role was further performed by mandate related activities, primarily training and advising, as two main pillars of security force assistance missions, while its impact was understood as mission effectiveness. The dissertation conceptualized gender mainstreaming as a norm transfer deriving from the EU's normative self-conceptualization and, accordingly, impacting the role performance and impact in these SFA missions in Africa.

3.2   Methodology

The research was built around primarily qualitative methodology with methods often used in constructivist research as well as in Role Theory application. The data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews as well as participatory observation. Additional primary sources were collected from specific and relevant EU documents, including the three major EU security strategies as well as policy and strategic documents of EU gender mainstreaming and WPS implementation. Other secondary sources, including relevant literature in Hungarian, English and Spanish complemented the aforementioned primary sources to enrich data collected for the research.

The data was subsequently analysed by three main methods: strategic document analysis, discourse analysis and comparative case study analysis. The document analysis and discourse analysis were applied in order to understand not only the Union's self-conceptualization as a security provider, but its focus on militarized discourses on security and defence. The research utilized the same methods to study the different arguments of the EU on gender mainstreaming, including how it frames the contribution of gender mainstreaming to operational effectiveness in its strategic and institutional documents. Finally, the comparative case study analysis method contributed to the deepening of the empirical nature of the research by looking at two EU-led security force assistance missions, EUTM Somalia and EUTM/EUMAM Mozambique.

4   Conclusion and findings

Hypothesis 1. suggested that the Union's role conception in the theorized research problem coincides with the NPE concept by Ian Manners in its original form from the early 2000's. This hypothesis was confirmed by the dissertation which found that despite its changing security perceptions and its own increasingly militarized discourses the EU upholds its normative self-conceptualization. This normative power image of the EU created and sustained by strategic discourses, as this research concluded, is not built solely on its constitutional values upheld by the Treaties, but also on the *sui generis* nature of the Union. The discourse analysis of interviews, notes from participatory observation and EU strategic documents reinforced that the Union's self-conceptualization is instituted on the idiosyncrasy of the EU and the "European way" of doing politics, which, as found by this research, intrinsically means a normative approach.

Additionally, evidence showed that the Union heavily constitutes this sustained normative self-conceptualization on gender mainstreaming and the norm of gender equality enshrined in the constitutional Treaties (Hypothesis 2.). However, the research also pointed out that the contemporary Normative Power Europe(an Union) does not only establish this normative self-image on what it is—as the NPE originally suggests—, but also on what it does; integrating gender equality and women's empowerment even into military issues. This research proved that this normative nature of EU actorness shaped by its self-conceptualization, also encompasses inaction. In other words, being normative and acting normatively for the EU implies that through gender mainstreaming the Union seeks to avoid engaging in certain activities—such as sexual exploitation or gender-based violence—both internally and externally in the context of CSDP, these being inconsistent with its normative self-image.

With regards to factor a) of Hypothesis 3., the dissertation confirmed that the WPS ecosystem or normative framework was an active enabler for EU action on gender mainstreaming in CSFP and CSDP through top-down UN influence and internal, bottom-up push from individual member states. This internal facilitation from 'gender champion' member states proved that they serve as a "*network of norm entrepreneurs*" of the WPS agenda inside the EU/EEAS system (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, p. 902). In parallel, the research also pointed out the gradual 'Europeanization' of the WPS framework through CSFP and CSDP in the last twenty years building on the historic EU commitment and norm transfer of gender equality in employment and the labour market. Through the analysis of these processes, the research proved that through the norm institutionalization and gradual Europeanization of WPS and GM principles, the EU itself, become a norm entrepreneur, which is primarily reflected in external gender mainstreaming efforts including in EU-led SFA missions. With regards to factor b) of Hypothesis 3., the impact of EU member states' experiences from Afghanistan and Iraq was not validated. These two cases—both from an SFA perspective and from a gender perspective—were often present in primary sources, including interviews. However, the discourses connecting these two theatres to the functionalist argumentation—often present in EU strategic communication and other materials specific to WPS action—were only sporadic. Hence, the dissertation did not provide satisfactory evidence to confirm this element (b) of Hypothesis 3.

Hypothesis 4. was confirmed by the research shedding light on the more nuanced and varied impact of EU gender mainstreaming in the Union's SFA missions in Africa. On the one hand, the dissertation found multiple contributions of gender mainstreaming to mission effectiveness in its contemporary form in SFA through analysing the two case study missions. First, gender mainstreaming in EU SFA, when properly integrated into a mission's work, can significantly enhance intelligence and situational awareness, which are fundamental components of any mission in relation to force protection, legitimacy, and maintaining up-to-date information on both belligerent and friendly forces, as well as other actors. As demonstrated by both case studies, the role of women as informants and recruiters for Mozambican and Somali al-Shabaab, as well as their involvement in enabling or countering violent extremism, is a critical factor that missions must consider as part of their efforts to support the COIN efforts in the respective nations.

On the other hand, however, this research concluded that EU gender mainstreaming and WPS norm promotion can also lead to push back from partners negatively impacting not only

the mission itself but overall CSFP and CSFP efforts in the respective country. As this dissertation found, such backlash from partners—often deriving from role contestation due to norm contestation, as it was highlighted earlier—can undermine mission effectiveness both internally and externally. EUTM troops, particularly in Somalia, including personnel holding the GENAD position, questioned not only the contribution of the gender advisors work, but its overall operational utility for the mission including the possible harmful effects on the mission in case of external norm transfer. Anecdotal evidence demonstrated several occasions where promoting gender equality, including the push for more women in the partner forces or more gender training to trainees, met with adverse reactions especially from SNA personnel and leadership. In these cases, SNA's role expectation on training soldiers for combat clashed with the Union's normative self-conceptualization both in terms of its own role as well as the role performance (what and how to do) and what is the expected (role) impact. These findings of the research are particularly important in the light of the increasing use of SFA as tool for great power competition. In the political economy of security force assistance, such push for norm promotion can make EU SFA beneficiaries look for alternative options; to find another provider who does not prioritize normative considerations in their role performance. In the context of Africa, this can potentially lead to more Chinese and Russian influence, or the rise of other traditionally atypical providers, such as Turkey, in order to find partnerships where conditionality of SFA relies less on norm acceptance.

Lastly, regarding Hypothesis 5. the research found that direct WPS integration to the mandate generated tasks in the chain-of-command, for the mission commander in MPCC, the force commander on the ground as well as the different elements of the mission, such as force protection, civil affairs or special advisors for the commander, including the GENAD. Moreover, the research concluded that mandate integration further provided transparency in the case of SFA on the expected role performance and mandate implementation, not solely for the mission itself but for the partners as well, potentially reducing the risks of diverging role expectations and role contestation identified in Hypothesis 4. Accordingly, the integration of WPS into the mandate in EUTM/EUMAM Mozambique did not only give more legitimacy for the GENAD's work but impacted overall mission performance and effectiveness by dedicating resources to specific mandate-related activities. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that in order to better understand the generalizability of the findings of Hypothesis 5. in contrast with other alternative explanations, more cases need to be examined in the future where the EU directly integrated WPS into the mandate.

5 New scientific results and the contribution to existing literature

In the light of the aforementioned findings and conceptual observations, the following section summarizes and restates the dissertation's findings with special focus on the new scientific results and the contribution to the existing scholarship.

1. Beyond verifying the usage of both functionalist and normative arguments for gender mainstreaming, the research found a new reasoning specific to military CSDP structures, the chain-of-command argument. The dissertation provided evidence for the usage of this argumentation between military personnel as a part of the tasks deriving from an order coming from the chain-of-command. The research also found that this argumentation is primarily the result of most recent EU action on WPS and gender mainstreaming, such as the adoption of the EU Military Concept on Gender in 2024. As a practical, policy implication of these arguments and practices, the dissertation also proved that EU gender mainstreaming functions as norm transfer in EU SFA in Africa which can both contribute to effective mandate implementation and lead to push back from partners with ideals different from what the Union considers norm(al) in gender relations and security and defence (Hypothesis 4.).

2. The dissertation proved that the Union uses an increasingly militarized language in its discourses. Through the strategic document analysis of all three EU security strategies in Chapter 5., this research found that defence and military related words in the 2022 EU Strategic Compass are present four times more statistically than in the first EU strategy, the ESS (see Table 2. and Figure 10.). Moreover, the discourse analysis—providing further context for the utilization of these defence-related key words in its security strategies—proved that the EU also more likely to use these phrases to address its own capacities, own defence and readiness than in a generalized context or regarding other actors, such as NATO. Similarly, the discourse analysis provided evidence that despite such militarized language, the Union upholds its normative self-conceptualization built on its the normative identity and normative action, such as gender mainstreaming (Hypotheses 1-2.)

3. The author created a comprehensive database on all EU civilian and military missions and operations launched since 2003 (Appendix 1.). Through analysing this dataset, the dissertation verified that the EU is more likely to deploy military CSDP instruments than in the early years of EU external action resulting in a more balanced civilian-military ratio in contemporary CSDP action (see also in Table 6.). Additionally, the

research also found that the Union has a more sustained global military presence with long-running SFA missions and maritime operations in contrast with dominantly short-term land-based operations deployed before the Lisbon Treaty (see Appendix 1.). Furthermore, the research provided evidence that these CSDP military missions and operations, as one of the most visible elements of EU CSDP, significantly shape the EU's self-conceptualization. The Union relies on the existing military CSDP presence as well as its ability to deploy such missions in legitimizing its identity as a militarily capable normative power.

4. With regard to CSDP effectiveness, the dissertation proved that both the EU conceptualization and mechanisms for monitoring and measuring effectiveness of CSDP are underdeveloped. The political-strategic level dominates the current system with strategic reviews and considers military SFA missions as one pillar of the so-called Integrated Approach by the EU often overlooking military realties. The research found that this issue primarily derives from the highly politicized nature of CSDP, which as previously highlighted, often the most important, and most visible embodiment of the EU's military power. By providing a comprehensive assessment of current literature and practices on CSDP and overall SFA effectiveness, the research proved that measuring the effectiveness of SFA require a largely different approach than existing EU practices in order to address the various mandate elements with a dominantly intangible nature. This problem is addressed in the policy recommendations of this dissertation.

5. The research provided evidence for the gradual Europeanization of the Women, Peace and Security agenda and norm transfer through the global WPS ecosystem conceptualized as the WPS effect in Hypothesis 3. Additionally, the research proved that throughout the last, close to 25 years, the EU itself has turned into a WPS norm entrepreneur, which is clearly reflected in both the Union's overall gender regime in the EEAS and the external gender mainstreaming efforts in CSDP including SFA missions in Africa (see Appendix 5. and Figure 12.). In order to both track and visualize such norm institutionalization, the author created a Gantt diagram containing and systematizing EU WPS action between 2000 and 2024 (Appendix 5.). Regarding internal gender mainstreaming efforts in military CSDP, the dissertation provided evidence that most important aspects of such norm transfer is the characterization of the Union normative identity through female representation in the military as well as

passive normative action, such as refraining from sexual exploitation and abuse while being deployed.

6. An important result of this dissertation is the conceptualization of the Contemporary CSDP Triad (see Table 6.) and the EU model of security force assistance. The dissertation found that while all three types of interventions in the framework of the CSDP Triad were part of EU action since 2010, the research proved the consolidation of the current typology through the analysis of EU discourses in strategic documents on security and defence. Additionally, by further deconstructing the CSDP Triad and focusing on EU-led military training missions in Africa, the dissertation offered a unique conceptual contribution by being the first describing the characteristics of the EU model for SFA and contrasting it with the contemporary literature predominantly guided by the NATO/US approach.

In additional to the listed new scientific results, this research contributes to the existing literature in an interdisciplinary manner through three major topics: EU actorness and its normative constraints; WPS research as well as specific EU gender equality policy and gender mainstreaming as a norm promotion in EU external action; and CSDP literature, specifically on Contemporary CSDP Triad and military missions as EU SFA missions. As the first comprehensive scholarship on EU gender mainstreaming understood as norm transfer the dissertation contributes to the more nuanced understanding of norm promotion in military CSDP settings. Moreover, the empirical contribution is significant not only because it looks at case studies which are highly relevant in global great power competition in 2024, but which likely stay prioritized by primarily atypical SFA providers, such as China, in the future. Furthermore, while EUTM Somalia as a case study has been under some scholarly scrutiny since its launch in 2010, the dissertation facilitates further research with being a first empirical case study on EUTM/EUMAM Mozambique conceptualized as a second-generation EU SFA mission.

Finally, as highlighted in the introduction, 2025 marks the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the first WPS resolution, UNSCR 1325. Accordingly, this year serves as an opportunity for the integration of new scientific results, including those marked in this dissertation, into policy and practice as well as to reconsider and reshape the different interpretations of WPS and GM in the current security and defence realm. Recent trends include the reformulation of WPS into contemporary, regular warfare and issues such as national defence or civilian/societal resilience. The dissertation demonstrates such norm diffusion of the WPS agenda into EU CSFP and CSDP

and the gradual Europeanization of the issue leading to the emergence of the contemporary EU gender mainstreaming practices and institutions in the EEAS and in EU missions and operations. Lastly, although most of the elements of norm institutionalization were successful in the EU, the research found that one of the most important pillars of the WPS normative framework, namely increasing the participation of women in military service, specifically in peacekeeping and crisis management, is still a challenge to be solved for norm entrepreneurs.

6   Policy recommendations

a)   *The gender advisor system:*

A question that often arises vis-à-vis the GENAD system and overall gender mainstreaming efforts in military context is whether the current norm promotion will exponentially increase the legitimacy of a gender perspective and will eventually make the GENAD system unnecessary. This would mean that gender mainstreaming has become an inherent part of all different joint functions, including the responsibilities of key leaders, commanders of the missions. While the current system is aiming at achieving this 'ideal' situation, in other words full norm institutionalization and norm acceptance, as this research highlighted it often creates internal and external grievances about resource allocation, staffing and utility in terms of limited external engagement. Moreover, a more concerning issues is that the EU striving for filling these positions in missions, the quality of seconded and deployed experts are highly varied which not only determines how they can perform in the position, but also directly contribute to the aforementioned internal grievances against the position and the system itself. In order to 'fix' the current flaws, the EU might benefit from focusing more on the quality of GENADs, as well as the practicality of their work, such as ability to leave the compound and the ability to continuously engage with trainees. The EEAS could also elaborate a specific induction training programme for new contingents and staff where central concepts and practical information would be combined with the local cultural context. The creation of such training would require coordination between the Gender and Diversity Team at EEAS, the geographical desk (officer) responsible for the region/country, EUMS and the mission itself, in order for the material to be militarily applicable, conceptually coherent with the EU gender mainstreaming strategic framework, but also culturally context specific.

b)   *More listening*

While this recommendation might seem self-explanatory, it is still a largely overlooked aspect both in EU SFA and beyond. More listening should not only involve more attention to local perspectives, but between different parts of the EU chain of command especially focusing

on reinforcing MPCC given that its director is the commander of all SFA missions. If the EU wants to put more focus on the impact of its SFA deployments and security cooperation, the political-strategic level has to listen to the military-strategic and operational levels; this includes more listening at force commanders, troops on the ground and the mission command at MPCC. This would include more funding and personnel for MPCC as well and would likely lead to more realistic and specific mandates instead of overgeneralized, largely SSR-focused ones. Additionally, more listening to the military-strategic level would most likely also contribute to the establishment of a better monitoring and measuring system for CSDP effectiveness, including that of specific, SFA-focused missions. The first step should be the acknowledgement of the unique nature of SFA efforts regarding monitoring and evaluation of effectiveness in contrast with executive military operations. As an example, monitoring and measuring effectiveness cannot be the same in EUMAM Mozambique where capacity building through advising is in the focus, and EUNAVFOR Operation Aspides where shooting down incoming missiles and drones is the mandate. While in the latter, effects and effectiveness can be rather easily quantified, an SFA mandate requires a lot more conceptual clarity on seemingly unmeasurable elements in order to have at least some sort of idea on both effects, performance and effectiveness.

c) *A niche and specific profile for the EU as a new, atypical SFA provider*

If the EU wants to sustain its efforts in the African continent and strengthen its profile as an international security provider, it should consider finding a rather niche portfolio which matches its capabilities instead of sporadically engaging and providing EPF funding for different partners. A small footprint advisory mission specialized on military strategic and operational advice to MoDs and general staff—similarly to the new mandate in Mozambique— with using the EU's new 'carrot', EPF would be a better fit to the Union's existing military capabilities. Maintaining a training capability or training pillar which due to its footprint and rather strict force protection measures is almost completely limited vis-à-vis monitoring and follow-up of trainees is neither sustainable nor strategic. It is an impossible task that mostly delegitimizes EU actorness in the long-term. Additionally, these scattered efforts burn EU money; while not taking away from the EU common budget, these resources could be invested in the Union's own military capabilities, interoperability and defence. Lastly, the EU must acknowledge that identifying a niche area of expertise or a portfolio aligned with its specific capacities and capabilities could, in the medium and long term, facilitate partnerships with like-minded allies and SFA providers on the ground, such as the UK, the US and Ukraine.

d) *A need for an EU SFA strategy, including an 'EU Leahy Law' for SFA*

For the EU to find its way for enhanced security cooperation and SFA it should consider adopting a specific security cooperation and security force assistance strategy. While the EU Strategic Compass addresses this topic under 'tailored bilateral partnerships', considering the Union's enhanced engagement as an SFA provider in the last, close to 15 years, that is not enough. This EU SFA strategy could include the conceptualization of the aforementioned EU SFA expertise on strategic advising and mentoring MoD and general staff which would fit the Union's normative self-conceptualization better as well as would be better suited to the Union's conceptualization of SFA as a pillar of SSR. However, this approach would likely make the EU as an SFA provider a less attractive partner for fragile states with fragmented security sector and with heavy resource scarcity. The main reason of this is that these nations are looking for a partner subsidizing their security sector—and often indirectly their political elites—and they are expecting material resources from a provider, like weapons, vehicles, soldiers' salaries, barracks, etc. This means that while the EU would offer primarily a non-material version of capability development, the partner would expect a more tangible approach. Since 2021 the EU has the opportunity to overcome this interest asymmetry—as conceptualized by Biddle et. al. (2018)—with the EPF. The EU could offer to subsidies barracks, critical infrastructure, acquisition of weaponry etc. and by being heavily involved in strategic and operational advising on the MoD and general staff levels would be able to better monitor how this money is spent. These acquisitions would also have the opportunity to bolster the EU and European defence industry which has been forcefully (re)vitalized in the last 10 years.

Nevertheless, all the aforementioned action and policies would require strategic guidance on the 'why', 'how' and 'when' the EU engages in SFA, including when the EU should say no. In answering the latter, the strategic framework of EU SFA should include provisions similar to the Leahy Law in the US, which, while being fiercely debated vis-à-vis its applicability, would provide the conceptualization of when the EU refuses to provide military assistance. With a more strategic approach, the EU would be able to create an assistance system which better matches to its normative consideration on the basis of stricter conditionality, while having a niche and sustainable expertise and profile for SFA coupled with EPF as its 'sweetest carrot'.

7   Related publications of the author

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8   The author's professional biography

Veronika Hornyák Gracza was born in Budapest, Hungary and graduated from Piarist Order High School in Vác, Hungary. She completed her bachelor's degree majoring in International Public Administration at the National University of Public Service in Budapest, Hungary in 2016 and subsequently graduated from the English-language International Public Service Relations master's degree program at the same institution in 2018. At the same year, she graduated as a Sports Diplomacy expert from the postgraduate degree program of the Széchenyi University of Győr.

During her bachelor's and master's degrees Veronika completed several internships including at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the Consulate General of Hungary in Barcelona with Erasmus+ scholarship and the Permanent Mission of Hungary to the United Nations in New York with Campus Mundi scholarship. Veronika's experience in diplomatic missions, as well as in the United Nations was decisive in her career turning her professional attention to different dimensions of international security and leading her to pursue another master's degree in International Security and Defence Policy at the University of Public Service.

Veronika started her PhD program in 2020 at the Doctoral School of Military Sciences of the University of Public Service, Ludovika, while working in the private sector in project management and internationalization. From 2021 she was accepted to the Doctoral School on CSDP of the European Security and Defence College of the European Union as a doctoral researcher. During her PhD studies, Veronika hold several guest lectures, including at the University of Nicosia, in Cyprus, at American University in Washington D.C. and in the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis. She was awarded with OSCE-UNODA scholarship to pursue a training program on arms Control and disarmament and was selected as a James S. Denton Transatlantic Fellow at the Center for European Policy Analysis in Washington D.C.

In 2022, Veronika was the first student awarded with a Fulbright scholarship in her university which opportunity allowed her to spend the 2023/2024 academic year in Washington D.C. hosted by American University. During her Fulbright tenure, Veronika pursued a graduate certificate program in Women and Gender Studies at the College of Arts and Sciences and conducted research at the Transatlantic Policy Center; both directly connected to the dissertation work. In 2024, Veronika was nominated by the Embassy of the United States in Hungary to the 2025 NATO Policy Influencer program.