



A Holistic Security Provider? Assessing the Implementation of the European Union's Integrated Approach to External Crises in the Sahel

Paul DESPREZ (FR) – Prof. TARDY

Abstract

This thesis addresses the question of the nature of the European Union (EU) as a global security provider. Ten years after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, which defines the main foreign-policy mechanisms mobilised by the EU in its crisis management, it is now common to present the EU as a security provider on the international scene. The challenge today is to identify its precise nature in relation to other traditional security actors such as the United Nations (UN). The practice of crisis management by the EU has made it possible to theorise it as a security provider according to criteria such as the promotion of European values (Normative Power) or its influence on the structures of the areas in which it operates (Structural Power). The 2016 EU Global Strategy introduces a new concept guiding European crisis management practice: the integrated approach. Aiming to respond to conflicts and crises in their entirety, the integrated approach is based on a multidimensional, multi-phased, multilevel and multilateral European foreign policy. The ambition behind this concept is a 'whole-of-the-EU' approach to crises. Going beyond normative or structural power, this ambition seems to be best captured by the concept of 'holistic security provider'.

Against this background, this thesis analyses the extent to which the ambition of the EU to be a holistic security provider via an integrated approach to conflicts and crises is reflected in the practice of the EU's crisis management. In order to answer this question, this thesis is based on the study of the evolution of the EU's engagement in the Sahel since the publication of its first regional strategy for the Sahel in 2011. Often described as a 'laboratory' for European foreign policy, the EU's engagement in the Sahel offers an ideal case study to illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of the formulation of the EU's holistic ambition and its concrete implementation within the framework of the integrated approach. Based on this case study, it is argued that the emphasis on an integrated approach model reflects the EU's desire to position itself as a key player in crisis management among global security providers. While not transforming European crisis management practice in a sustainable way, the emphasis on a 'whole-of-the-EU' approach contributes to strengthening the relevance and coherence of European foreign policy.