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## DEBATING STABILITY IN NORTH AFRICA, THE SAHEL AND HORN OF AFRICA: HOW TRANSNATIONAL DYNAMICS AND GEOPOLITICS IMPACT ON GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT AGENDAS

22 SEPTEMBER 2020, 9AM – 1.30PM,

@PISA (ITALY), SANT'ANNA SCHOOL OF ADVANCED STUDIES

### Promoters

The initiative is jointly organised by:

- European University Institute (EUI), Middle East Directions Programme – Luigi Narbone;
- Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies (SSSA), ERIS Research Group – Francesco Strazzari;
- European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), Sub-saharan Africa desk – Giovanni Faleg.

### Objective

The workshop “*Debating stability in North Africa, the Sahel and Horn of Africa: How transnational dynamics and geopolitics impact governance and development*” will constitute the first step in an broader attempt to reconnect geopolitical spaces “north and south of the Sahara”, and bridge analytical and operational silos affecting policy responses. Building on integrated policy and academic expertise, we encourage a critical review of mainstream approaches to analyse and appraise governance, development and security issues in Africa. Fostering greater coordination and systematisation has the potential to provide meaningful indications for future research agendas, and contribute more effectively to the policy debate on stability in Africa.

### Concept

Africa's global prominence is growing, as is its centrality in the strategic thinking of a variety of international actors. Couched in the language of development and stability promotion, a new scramble for Africa has started, impacting on international cooperation policies in the economic, political and military fields. At the same time, transnational trends such as migration, global warming, radicalisation and terrorism are increasingly affecting North Africa, the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, with major repercussions on the affected countries' governance and development as well as on the stability and security of these regions and beyond.

Yet, our understanding of these complex, interconnected dynamics is often very limited. Research on socio-political and socio-economic transformations and related policy responses in Africa remains all too often compartmentalized, confined to national or regional boundaries and focused on short-term impact assessments. Both the complexity of the challenges faced by countries in North African, the Sahel and the Horn of Africa and the need to find adequate international responses require a deeper analysis of longer-term strategic trends and dynamics. Drawing on an expanding body of scholarship, the adoption of transborder, transnational and transregional lenses can provide a welcome contribution to analyse these phenomena and help us overcome the boundaries of discipline orthodoxy, methodological nationalism and area specialisation. Building accurate and up-to-date evidence-based knowledge on African politics, in fact,

is exposed to unique challenges, and calls for a fruitful cooperation among political scientists, ethnographers, 'Africanists' and 'Arabists', developmental economists, security experts and IR specialists, to name but a few.

The aim of this workshop is hence to stimulate a debate between scholars, policy analysts and policy-makers, through a multi-scalar and multi-disciplinary approach focusing on reconnecting the spaces between North Africa, the Sahel and the Horn of Africa. The cross-fertilisation of different perspectives and areas of expertise can greatly contribute to overcoming knowledge silos and better apprehending the crucial dynamics affecting the southern European (enlarged) neighbourhood. The encounter of different but complementary perspectives on African politics can contribute to addressing the gap between ambitions, capabilities and results in the field of international politics in and on Africa.

## **Methodology**

The format of the workshop provides a valuable opportunity to leverage the diversity of backgrounds, perspectives, and areas of expertise. The workshop invites the participation of a selection of officials, practitioners, scholars and researchers so as to encourage dialogue, brainstorming and knowledge-harvesting between policy-makers and policy-analysts working on Africa, with a view to creating a conducive environment for a lively, open exchange. The Chatham House Rule will apply. Participants will be given an opportunity to attend the workshop either remotely or in person.

Discussions will be clustered around two thematic brainstorming sessions, focusing on key issues that are likely to shape strategizing in and on Africa. Each brainstorming session will be introduced by two short notes (5 minutes each) by 2 experts with different backgrounds, with a view to framing and stimulating the debate based on state-of-the-art knowledge. All participants will be invited to contribute to the ensuing discussions.

The final round-table, chaired by the organisers, will aim at drawing conclusions and setting the foundations for a new approach to policy research on African governance and stability.

## **Agenda**

9.00 **Opening remarks:** Francesco Strazzari (SSSA), Luigi Narbone (EUI), Giovanni Faleg (EUISS)

9.15-

10.45 **Brainstorming session 1: A 'New Scramble for Africa'? Geostrategic competition, transnational dynamics and a new agenda for shared development**

- Chair: Stefano Manservisi
- Food for thought: Giovanni Faleg (EUISS) and Mouhamadou Moustapha Ly (Policy Center for the New South)

Africa's centrality in the strategic thinking of a variety of international actors is on the rise. As a result, Europe's ambitions to build a solid partnership with Africa must be cast in an increasingly competitive environment, which redistributes costs and opportunities of inter-regional cooperation. The shrinking influence of the former colonial-powers and the hesitations of the United States challenge the assumptions that framed African international relations in the past. Meanwhile, the rise of new actors fostering aggressive agendas and new modes of cooperation – China, of course, but also Russia, Turkey, the Gulf States and others – invite to update the intellectual toolkit through which we look at Africa's relations with the rest of the world, including Europe. This roundtable ambitions to update the terms of the debate by providing fresh perspectives based on state-of-the-art knowledge about the so-called "new scramble for Africa".

10.45-

11.00 Coffee break

11.00-

- 12.30 **Brainstorming session 2: ‘Re-assembling’ Africa: transborder mobility, cross-regional governance, and connectivity**
- Chair: Luca Raineri (SSSA)
  - Food for thought: Mehari Maru (EUI) and Georg Klute (University of Bayreuth)

Africa has been traditionally appraised along the distinction between North-Africa and a sub-Saharan Africa. While the former, frequently grouped with the Middle-East, is considered part of the EU neighbourhood, the latter has been the traditional object of intellectual “othering”. This mirrors a division of labour in the scholarly world. Methodological, professional and cultural divides have increased the gap between these two worlds, hampering the conceptualisation of theories, policies and strategies dealing with Africa as a whole. Recent cross-border dynamics, however, question this partition. With trans-regional migratory flows, tensions around the governance of natural resources, including minerals, water, and land, the spill-over of radical ideas and weapons, the Sahara has shifted from being a buffer into an area of strong interaction, contributing to the reassembling of Africa. African internal and external borders are therefore becoming areas of political and economic intensity, requiring new approaches to meet new challenges.

12.30-

- 13.30 **Concluding round-table**  
**‘Connecting dots’: towards a new approach to policy research on African governance and stability**  
Chairs: Giovanni Faleg (EUISS), Luigi Narbone (EUIS) and Francesco Strazzari (SSSA)