



MISS 2020-2021 Opening Conference

AFRICAN CROSSROADS: SECURITY CHALLENGES AND PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES



MINUSMA soldier in Timbuktu, Mali, 13 November 2019 © Nicolas Réméné

22 SEPTEMBER 2020, 14.30 – 19.00

(Rome time, GMT +2h)

Aula Magna, Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies

Piazza Martiri della Libertà 33, Pisa

Remote access link: <https://bit.ly/3knipsk> (PW: AC2020)

PROGRAMME

14.30 - 14.45 Opening remarks

Andrea de Guttery (Director Dirpolis Institute, SSSA)

Andrea Fracasso (Director SIS, University of Trento)

14.45 - 15.30 Keynote addresses

**“THE EU AND AFRICA: COOPERATION AMIDST GROWING INTERNATIONAL
COMPETITION”**

Chair: Giovanni Faleg (Senior Analyst, European Union Institute for Security Studies)

Koen Vervaeke (European External Action Service, Managing Director for Africa)

Mehari Maru (European University Institute, IGAD Lead Migration Expert)

15.30-17.00
PANEL 1: BORDER ECONOMIES, BORDER POLITICS

Chair: Francesco Strazzari (SSSA)

Mirjam de Bruijn (University of Leiden)
Georg Klute (University of Bayreuth)
Mamadou Tidjani Alou (University of Niamey)

17.00 *Coffee break*

17.30-19.00
PANEL 2: NATURAL RESOURCES: CURSE OR BLESSING? APPRAISING THE DEBATE

Chair: Sara Lorenzini (SIS)

Clionadh Raleigh (University of Sussex)
Corrado Tornimbeni (University of Bologna)
Jacob Arsano (University of Addis Ababa)

19.00 Concluding remarks: Francesco Strazzari (SSSA) and Sara Lorenzini (SIS)

Conference outline

Africa's prominence in global politics is growing. Transnational phenomena of security relevance, such as migration, environmental degradation, radicalisation and terrorism are affecting Africa, with major repercussions on security worldwide. The relevance of cross-border flows calls once again into question the ambiguous function of the post-colonial borders of Africa. At the same time, Africa is becoming key in the strategic thinking of a variety international actors. Usually couched in the language of stability promotion, or projection, state powers, including non-traditional ones, seem to see a huge potential for cooperation with Africa in the economic, political and military fields.

The ongoing discussions about the upcoming EU Strategy with Africa testify to this. Presented by the new EU Commission as one of its priorities, it is expected to be adopted during the upcoming AU-EU Summit. On the one hand, the Strategy raises a variety of cross-cutting issues and contributes to articulating the nexuses of security with development, migration, humanitarian assistance and climate change in a coherent and comprehensive framework. On the other hand, the negotiation of the Strategy invites a reflection on the dialectical relationship that links together the identities of Africa and of Europe.

Does our understanding of these complex dynamics keep pace with mounting ambitions to address them? Research on politics and security in Africa remains all too often compartmentalised and poorly coordinated, while the views of African scholars and the vernacular understandings of security tend to be marginalised. The adoption of transborder, transnational and transregional lenses can help overcome the boundaries of discipline orthodoxy, methodological nationalism and area specialisation, and promote instead a multi-scalar approach to the study of African politics. Building accurate and evidence-based knowledge on African politics and security, 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.

The opening ceremony of the **Master in International Security Studies** offered jointly by the Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies (SSSA) and the School of International Studies (SIS) of the University of Trento provides an opportunity to build on existing expertise while encouraging a critical review of mainstream approaches to the study of African security. Scholars and practitioners with an expertise on politics and security in Africa are invited to engage in a discussion on cross-cutting issues of great relevance for both academic and policy purposes.