



EU Police Mission and EU Mission for Security Sector Reform in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Successes, Shortcomings and Lessons Identified

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Introduction¹

The bloody Congolese civil wars that lasted from 1996-2003 have portrayed some of the most severe humanitarian tragedies the world has witnessed, with close to 5.4 million lives lost² and massive population displacement and food shortages.³ This has been the deadliest conflict in modern African history, involving two rounds of fighting drawing in armies from at least six other countries.⁴ In 2011 Channel Research highlighted three main components adding fuel to the violence and fragmentation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC): (1) ethnic grievances and clashing identities; (2) the effects of state collapse, including inter-elite power struggles; and (3) conflicts over resources.⁵ Until the 2016-2017 constitutional crisis, some progress was detected, but the current situation in the DRC is characterised by uncertainty and instability.

The European Union (EU) has been involved in DRC conflicts since 2002 and has been, and continues to be, one of the most vital international donors in the DRC through its humanitarian assistance, rehabilitation and capacity-building programmes.⁶ However, the DRC has been resistant to reform, and the EU has found it difficult to undertake its Security Sector Reform (SSR) initiatives successfully. Some of the informants interviewed as part of the project Improving the Effectiveness of Capabilities in EU Conflict Prevention (IECEU) went as far as to calling the EU project a failure, while other key informants contested that in some situations it is better to do something than doing nothing at all.⁷ Over the past three years the EU has reduced its engagement in the DRC and instead redirected its focus onto the northern parts of Africa, moving its main prioritisation to security risks associated with migration, conflict and radicalisation in areas in proximity to the EU's outer borders.⁸

This brief seeks to analyse and evaluate the effectiveness of the two 2005 CDSP EU missions to the DRC. It builds on the empirical data gathered and analysed by the IECEU, which includes in-country fieldwork and interviews. The structure of this brief is as follows: First, it provides a short review of the Congolese history, the foundations for the current conflict in the region and the EU's involvement herein. Second, it describes the objectives and obstacles of the European Union Police Mission (EUPOL) and the EU Mission to Provide Advice and Assistance for Security Sector Reform in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (EUSEC) in terms of the internal and external challenges encountered. Third, it analyses and discusses the missions' strategic and operational shortcomings and the lessons identified. The objective of this brief is to analyse the two missions' contribution to the overall security situation in the region. Based on these intentions, the following question is raised: **Why did the EUPOL and**

1) This brief is based on the research and findings of the IECEU project, deliverables: 3.1, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7. To see the full deliverables, go to: http://www.ieceu-project.com/?page_id=197

2) Labda, Amani, "Joint evaluation of peacebuilding and prevention in the DRC", synthesis report (2011). Channel Research, p. 24. <https://www.oecd.org/countries/congo/48859543.pdf>

3) IRIN, "Civil war cause of massive displacement, food shortage" (2005). Accessed on January 20, 2018. <http://www.irinnews.org/report/56838/congo-civil-war-cause-massive-displacement-food-shortage>

4) Burke, Jason, "Congo violence fuels fears of return to 90s bloodbath" (2017). The Guardian. Accessed on January 22, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jun/30/congo-violence-fuels-fears-of-return-to-90s-bloodbath>

5) Channel Research, "Joint evaluation of peacebuilding and prevention in the DRC" (2011). Annexes to Synthesis report, vol. 2, p. 396. https://diplomatie.belgium.be/sites/default/files/downloads/2011_06_Vol2_Synthesis_Report_Annexes.pdf

6) IECEU D3.1 (2017), p. 7.

7) IECEU D3.5 (2017), p. 3.

8) IECEU D3.1 (2017), p. 7.

EUSEC missions fall short of achieving their goals, and can anything be learned from their shortcomings? This study does not consider or include all factors and elements needed to answer this question, but highlights the IECEU project's most significant findings in this case.

Mapping the Conflict

The history of violence in the DRC is extremely complex and has many sides, which this short brief is unable to cover. Instead, a short outline of the dynamics fuelling the conflict will provide an idea of what has led to the two Congolese wars and the type of tension that remains in the country to this day. For an in-depth description of the historical context, see the IECEU project deliverable 3.1.⁹

When the DRC gained its independence in 1960, hope was green and the country looked to be heading for a prosperous future as a sovereign state. However, the DRC remained reliant on the technical capabilities of its former colonial master, Belgium, which had failed in educating the DRC elite on how to run a contemporary state.¹⁰ Furthermore, Belgian officers continued to serve in the DRC's military, and Belgian officials were also to be found in state institutions, just as the economy was for the most part owned and run by this former colonial master. These arrangements have come to define large parts of the conflict dynamics that have afflicted the DRC up until the present day.¹¹

Disagreement between the president and prime minister broke out shortly after the DRC gained its independence, eventually leading to the assassination of the prime minister and the Congolese army mutinying in 1961. Only four years later the president and new prime minister were ousted in a coup. From 1965-1997 the DRC had the same president, Mobutu, who enforced policies that resulted in increased deterioration of the economy, causing uprisings amongst unpaid soldiers and continued fragmentation.¹² The Congolese wars that followed (1996-1997 and 1998-2003) involved different external military actors, added to a layer of domestic conflict.¹³ The fragmentation of the DRC has developed over many years. Since the first Congolese war in 1996, 'a number of actors involved have used the conflict as a means of securing influence for themselves and their group, often as a response to many years of marginalization. The war became an efficient means of obtaining this influence'.¹⁴

The EUSEC and EUPOL Missions

After the 2002 signing of the National Indicative Programme the EU increased its involvement in the region, and its first Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) deployment, Operation Artemis,¹⁵ was a military mission launched in 2003 to prevent an ethnic conflict from escalating. This mission was a success in the sense that it fulfilled its mandate and achieved its goals due to a narrow and realistic

9) IECEU D3.1 (2017). http://www.ieceu-project.com/?page_id=2993

10) Ibid., p. 10.

11) Ibid.

12) BBC NEWS, "Democratic Republic of Congo profile – Timeline" (2017). Accessed on January 24, 2018. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13286306>

13) IECEU D3.1 (2017), p. 17.

14) Ibid., p. 33.

15) Operation Artemis. http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/csdp/missions-and-operations/artemis-drc/index_en.htm

mandate and limited time span.¹⁶ Two years later the EU deployed two additional civilian missions to the DRC: EUPOL and EUSEC. EUPOL was aimed at training the Congolese police and military as part of the SSR and was terminated in 2014.¹⁷ EUPOL was SSR of the Congolese police and the mission was terminated in 2014. EUSEC was SSR of the Armed forces initiated after the signing of the two peace agreements. The mission was terminated in 2016.. Both missions contributed to the holding of the national elections in 2006 and 2011.¹⁸ The EUSEC and EUPOL missions were established as an attempt to assist in implementing a complex peace agreement and to aid DRC state-(re-)building efforts, and not as a consequence of a renewed outbreak of conflicts and violence. Additionally, the two capacity-building missions were also established as part of a broad international effort in which many actors were actively involved at once.¹⁹

The EUPOL mission initially consisted of an international staff of 29 tasked with monitoring the performance of the 10,000-man specialised Integrated Police Unit trained by the EU with a focus on controlling riots. EUPOL's objective changed over time, as there were virtually no police present in the DRC at beginning of the mission. The mission's first task was to ensure that the police force was capable of handling elections.²⁰ EUPOL played a key role in the formulation of the reform programme for the justice sector and had a general focus on training and issues related to gender awareness and human rights.²¹ One of EUPOL's biggest obstacles was that it took 15 months from the mission was established to it becoming operational, due to internal disagreements in Brussels over the size and duration of the mission.²² In general, the EUPOL mission has received criticism for being too risk-focussed, which in return reduced its overall effectiveness, because it was not customised sufficiently to the situation in the DRC, but instead followed a standardised, off-the-shelf mission design.²³

The EUSEC mission consisted of an international staff of 10 tasked with a dual objective, which was to assist the DRC government in rebuilding its army, so it would be able to secure the state's territory, institutions and citizens, and to help the army create a biometric payments and identity card system aimed at preventing corruption and misuse of funds.²⁴ Early on the EUSEC mission programme encountered a fundamental problem in having to implement an SSR programme in the midst of war, resulting in a number of compromises being made, which diverted the mission from what was considered best practice.²⁵ Another obstacle facing EUSEC was the low salaries received by the government soldiers. It was close to impossible to support a family on this salary, which meant that the soldiers had to generate income from other revenues.²⁶ It was difficult for the EUSEC mission to navigate

16) IECEU D3.7 (2017).

17) Security Sector Reform (SSR).

18) IECEU D3.1 (2017), p. 6.

19) IECEU D3.7 (2017).

20) IECEU D3.6 (2017).

21) IECEU D3.5 (2017), pp. 63-64.

22) *Ibid.*, p. 64.

23) *Ibid.*

24) *Ibid.*, p. 69.

25) *Ibid.*

26) *Ibid.*

in this environment, especially with a frequent rotation of staff being brought in with limited or no experience and network in the DRC.

Successes and Shortcomings

The EU's CSDP engagements in the DRC have been successful in some areas and fallen short in others. The DRC deployments can be seen as benchmarks for the EU's comprehensive approach, in the sense that this was the first time the CSDP was tested, which provided the EU with an opportunity to test its ambition of becoming a comprehensive global player.²⁷ As the first of its kind, there were some challenges, which in hindsight might have been avoided, including general discrepancy between events in the EU headquarters in Brussels and events on the ground in the DRC.²⁸ More precisely, 'there has been inconsistency between mission planning and overall strategic ambitions, on the one hand, and available budgets and operational realities, on the other'.²⁹ This resulted in both missions suffering from unrealistic operational objectives, which they were unable to reach as a consequence hereof. On the ground, CSDP engagements were driven by EU personnel with inadequate knowledge about the DRC historical context and the dynamics of the conflict.³⁰ Furthermore, 'prolonged response times on part of both the EU and its reluctant Congolese partners led to delayed and suspended projects, hampering implementation on the ground'.³¹

In terms of fulfilling their mandates, the two military missions, Operation Artemis and EUFOR RDC (the latter deployed 2006 as part of securing the first elections),³² achieved their goals, while the two civilian missions, EUPOL and EUSEC, were less successful, which the current intensified situation in the DRC testifies to.³³ The two military operations had narrow, realistic mandates and short deployment periods,³⁴ but did not manage to have a significant strategic impact on the overall security situation in the DRC. EUPOL and EUSEC were given unrealistic objectives, which they as a consequence partly failed to achieve.³⁵ However, the two civilian missions had a positive impact on the security sector's ability to handle security during the 2006 and 2011 elections.³⁶

Lessons Identified

The EUPOL and EUSEC missions both successfully managed to implement a number of initiatives on the ground, but failed to reach important strategic and operational goals. The two missions can be described as overambitious and unrealistic, in addition to being driven by rotating seconded staff, who

27) IECEU D3.7 (2017).

28) Ibid.

29) Christensen, G., Kammel, A., Norvanto, E., Ruohomäki, J., Mandrup, T. and Peen Rodt, A., "Successes and Shortfalls of European Union Common Security and Defence Policy Missions in Africa: Libya, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic" (2018). The Royal Danish Defence College, p. 10. <http://www.fak.dk/publikationer/Documents/Successes%20and%20Shortfalls%2004.pdf>

30) IECEU D3.7 (2017).

31) Christensen, G. et al. (2018), p. 10.

32) EUFOR RCD. http://www.eeas.europa.eu/archives/csdp/missions-and-operations/eufor-rd-congo/index_en.htm

33) Loffmann, Robert, "The year the DRC would like to forget" (2017). News24. Accessed on January 25, 2018. <https://www.news24.com/Africa/News/2017-the-year-the-drc-would-like-to-forget-20171204>

34) IECEU D3.5 (2017).

35) IECEU D3.7 (2017).

36) IECEU D3.1 (2017), p. 17.

were not properly prepared prior to arriving at the missions. It is difficult to pinpoint one overshadowing reason why the two missions fell short of achieving their goals, but this paper points towards four main shortcomings based on the IECEU project's findings: (1) poor communication, (2) timing, (3) lack of knowledge and (4) unrealistic expectations. The first point is based on a lacking correspondence between the decision-makers in the EU headquarters and the international staff implementing the missions in the DRC. Overall, there was a disconnect between the mission objectives and reality on the ground. The second point refers to the prolonged period of time it took for the mission to become operational due to internal disagreements in Brussels. The third point refers to the conclusion that the EU did not incorporate enough local knowledge into the planning and execution process, but instead designed the mission without in-depth understanding of the complexity of the conflict.³⁷ The last point refers to a discrepancy between events in Brussels and events on the ground in the DRC. There was inconsistency between mission planning and overall strategic ambitions as well as between available budgets and operational realities.

Common to both the EUPOL and EUSEC missions was that they were designed with an unrealistic balance between ambition and available resources. They were planned and executed from the top down, without obtaining sufficient local knowledge in regard to the situation on the ground.³⁸ Instead, both missions followed a standard project design framework, which did not align with the needs in the DRC. The EU may not be able to prevent, end or transform conflicts on its own in the DRC, but it does choose where, when and how to engage. By making these decisions wisely based on careful consideration of the above-mentioned points, the EU will be able to increase mission effectiveness, which in turn will benefit both Brussels and people on the ground.³⁹

37) Ibid.

38) IECEU D3.7 (2017).

39) IECEU D3.7 (2017); Christensen, G. et al. (2018), p. 11.