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EUPOL 'Kinshasa': testing EU co-ordination, coherence and commitment to Africa

EUPOL "Kinshasa", the newly launched police mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)¹, reflects the expanding reach of EU civilian crisis management capabilities under ESDP and is meant to further demonstrate the EU's commitment to "effective multilateralism".² This article identifies some of the practical and organisational challenges that the EU faces in implementing this limited mission and questions how such ESDP actions should contribute to broader security sector reform efforts crucial to supporting enduring stability in the country.

Security Sector Reform in DRC: an Urgent Priority

Resuming cooperation with DRC after a 10-year suspension, the international community faces a daunting task in determining how best to target assistance to this vast war-torn country given the limited resources at the disposal of each individual donor. While there is universal agreement about the urgent need for security sector reform (SSR), almost two years into the post-conflict transition process this remains a key challenge towards ensuring lasting stability both in the country itself and in the Great Lakes region. Among the priorities identified is the establishment of an integrated Congolese national police force. This objective is explicitly set out in the Global and All-inclusive Accord ('Pretoria Agreement') signed on 16 December 2002, which stipulates the terms of the transition from civil war to peace in DRC. Some headway has already been made on police reform, despite numerous obstacles such as continued violence in the East and the refusal of some armed groups to participate in the peace process.

Supporting Police Integration

Civilian policing activities in DRC all fall under the broader umbrella provided by the civilian police component (CIVPOL) of the United Nations mission to DRC, MONUC, which is responsible for coordinating police reform initiatives undertaken by different donor countries and agencies. The EU is contributing in various ways to these efforts. For instance, France, Portugal, and Sweden together contribute 22 of MONUC's current 175 civilian police officers. Belgium, France, the Netherlands, United Kingdom, and the European Commission are all members of the Joint Commission on SSR's sub-committee on policing, established by MONUC. Committee members provide technical assistance and expertise to the Transition Government. Moreover, France has its own police training programme and has already trained 1000 officers for the Kinshasa-based Rapid Intervention Force (PIR) specialised in riot control. Together with Belgium, France trained an integrated police brigade in Kisangani.

The IPU: An Inter-Pillar Operation

The contribution of the EU institutions to civilian police reform in DRC has taken the form of an inter-pillar operation to establish an Integrated Police Unit (IPU) in Kinshasa, as provided for under the Pretoria Agreement. The IPU's mission is to protect members of the Transition Government and its institutions until the planned national elections are held. Meanwhile, a

¹ EUPOL is the third EU police mission launched to date, and the first to Africa. It follows on the heels of the EUPM and EUPOL missions to Bosnia and Macedonia, respectively.

² See the Joint Declaration on UN-EU Co-operation in Crisis Management (24/9/2003).

MONUC 'neutral force' is currently fulfilling this role. A CFSP Joint Action³ adopted in May 2004 set out the three components of the EU operation; namely, to refurbish a training centre and provide equipment for the IPU, to train the officers, and to monitor, mentor and advise the Unit. The Commission is responsible for implementing the first two components, with a financial commitment of 585,000 euros provided through the European Development Fund (EDF) in the form of a grant, as well as in-kind contributions from EU member states. In this component, 18 European trainers were recruited and sent to Kinshasa in mid-August 2004 to train approximately 1000 Congolese officers, who are expected to be ready for deployment in May 2005.⁴

The implementation of the final component—the monitoring, mentoring and advising of the IPU—was not defined in the initial Joint Action. This only indicated that it *might* take the form of an ESDP mission at a later, unspecified date. In December 2004 the Council adopted a separate Joint Action launching the ESDP civilian police mission, codenamed EUPOL 'Kinshasa'.⁵ This mission, involving the deployment of 30 European civilian police officers for a duration of 12 months, with a financial commitment of 4.3 million euros, is financed through the CFSP budget managed by the Commission. The officers will deploy along the IPU chain of command to ensure that the Unit "acts following the training received in the Academy Centre and according to international best practices in this field".

In contrast to the EU-led Interim Emergency Multinational Force 'Operation Artemis', which was launched in June 2003 just 8 days after the adoption of a Joint Action authorising such a mission⁶, it took over a year and a half for the Council's Political and Security Committee (PSC) to agree to launch EUPOL Kinshasa. The delay in implementing the final component of the project reflects internal disagreement within the EU about the form that it should take. Launching an ESDP mission is always controversial, and not all Member States are as keen to finance a mission to Africa as they are to the European 'neighbourhood'. Indeed, EUPOL Kinshasa is the first EU foray of its kind into Africa, and its commitments in terms of size, scope and resources are dwarfed by those of the other EU civilian police missions to Bosnia (EUPM) and Macedonia (EUPOL).⁷

However, whereas the Bosnia mission took over from the UN when its policing mandate expired, EUPOL operates within the framework of UN-EU co-operation in crisis management envisaged in the Joint Declaration of September 2003⁸, and reiterated at the Civilian Capabilities Conference held in Brussels in November 2004. It is a 'test operation' of sorts to demonstrate that the EU can contribute effectively to UN operations in complex environments. Whether this will translate into a broader strategic policy vision for EU civilian crisis management in DRC remains to be seen.

Potential challenges

The IPU functions in part as a confidence building measure between members of the transition government. While it is a very limited project, it is not necessarily straightforward and it faces a number of challenges.

First, as an integrated unit, its officers are recruited from among the ranks of the different political factions that currently form part of the transition government. Overcoming long-standing rivalries and power struggles is a daunting undertaking, but necessary to ensure that

³ Council Joint Action 2004/494/CFSP of 17 May 2004 on European Union support to the establishment of the Integrated Police Unit in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

⁴ Deployment was initially planned for end March but was revised following delays.

⁵ Council Joint Action 2004/847/CFSP of 9 December 2004 on the European Union Police Mission in Kinshasa (DRC) regarding the Integrated Police Unit (EUPOL 'Kinshasa').

⁶ Operation Artemis, the first autonomous EU military operation, was mandated to stabilise security conditions and protect civilians in Bunia, north-east DRC until a more robust UN mission was ready for deployment.

⁷ For example, EUPM features 500 officers, a vast mandate, and an annual budget of 38 million euro.

⁸ Joint Declaration on UN-EU Co-operation in Crisis Management (24/9/2003).

the IPU remains loyal to the peace process and does not further destabilise the precarious security environment.

Second, the IPU project requires that the EU equip the officers, providing them with arms and ammunition, among other law enforcement paraphernalia. Sending arms into a volatile security region such as DRC is always controversial, regardless of the purpose for which they are intended, and could potentially aggravate rather than reinforce the security situation in the capital. Whereas Annex II of the original Joint Action establishing the IPU project calls for a system for ensuring full accountability and terms of use for all equipment provided, even the most robust supervision cannot guarantee future diversions for other purposes. Furthermore, the use of development assistance to purchase arms and ammunition runs counter to efforts to ensure that development assistance does not fuel conflict.

Third, the IPU serves the explicit purpose of protecting transition government officials—essentially the elite of the former military factions—until the elections. As such, it is a far cry from the vision of civilian crisis management as a tool to protect ordinary civilians.

Coordinating EUPOL

Effective coordination with the UN will naturally be seen as a key factor in evaluating the mission's success, and a number of measures have been taken both in the field and in Brussels. A MONUC permanent liaison officer will be stationed in the IPU training centre for the duration of the mission, and one Council staff member is dedicated full-time to coordinating between Brussels and the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), which oversees MONUC. Indeed, the EU has much to learn from the UN's vast experience in crisis management operations and should apply some of the UN's 'best practice' to its own operation.

Whether intra-EU institutional coordination has been as smooth as the EU-UN experience appears to have been to date remains unclear. EUPOL is the final phase of the EU's IPU project in Kinshasa. The transition from the EDF component to the ESDP police mission, financed through the CFSP budget managed by DG Relex, involves the gradual reduction of the European trainers and Commission staff. Some will stay on for the duration of the ESDP mission to ensure a degree of continuity. An ESDP advance team is currently in DRC to ensure this transition goes smoothly.

DRC: EU in-fighting no help in stopping the real fighting

Few would discount the potential contribution the EU can bring in terms of civilian crisis management in DRC. The formation of an effective, non-partisan police force is of paramount importance in ensuring security for the Transition Government and during the run-up to and actual elections, planned for June 2005. Whether an ESDP mission is the right choice is another matter. Indeed, EUPOL Kinshasa should not come at the expense of other initiatives that are perhaps more crucial to supporting enduring stability in the country. Furthermore, even if the political will is there, one may ask whether it is accompanied by a coherent policy vision: is EUPOL Kinshasa intended to form part of a longer term EU security strategy for countries beyond the 'European Neighbourhood', or merely a one-shot project?

The sending of an exploratory mission in mid-February to assess how the EU can further contribute to security sector reform in the country is a positive sign that the EU is willing to engage further in SSR in DRC. The fact that this is yet another Council-led initiative raises questions as to whether we are witnessing a general trend towards transferring responsibility for SSR initiatives from first to second pillar. While there are strengths and weaknesses to both types of missions, it seems that the decision is based less on functionality and improving the coherence of EU action, and has in fact more to do with the politics of EU integration.

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