
‘Building peace from the outside’:

The role of the EU in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*

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Abstract

The European Union (EU) is increasingly aspiring to be a global peace and security actor. Using the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) as a test-case for analysing the EU’s security and peace-building engagements and interventions, this paper reveals that the EU’s coherence and effectiveness as an actor in peace-building and security sector reform is severely compromised by the Union’s bureaucratic and organizational complexity. The EU’s institutional set-up provokes institutional divisions as well as overlapping competencies. In addition, personality-driven policies as well as mistrust and enviousness lead to “institution-wrangling” which impedes a successful implementation of European policies. As a result the EU continues to lack a coherent strategy for peace-building and security sector reform in the DRC, despite the large budget expended. The poorly defined strategy is closely related to the ‘external nature’ of the intervention and the EU’s failure to develop the links and relationship to those intervened upon. The analysis concludes that the EU is more concerned with establishing symbolic presence and political representation rather than real achievements and genuine peace-building on the ground.

*The research leading to this article has been conducted in collaboration with Ian Taylor and within the EU-GRASP project (www.eu grasp.eu). EU-GRASP studies the role of the EU as a global regional actor in security and peace in a context of challenged and changing multilateralism. It has received funding from the EU’s 7th Framework Programme (FP7/2007-2013) under grant agreement number 225722.
Introduction

The European Union (EU) is increasingly aspiring to be a global security actor and peace-builder. Following the implementation of the European Security Strategy (ESS) in 2003, and in addition to the EU’s accredited role as an influential actor in development cooperation and humanitarian assistance, the EU has continuously expanded its pledged commitments in terms of peace and security policies. Behind these commitments lies the stated ambition that “Europe should be ready to share in the responsibility for global security and in building a better world” (European Union 2003:1).

One area where the EU has sought to ostensibly play a role in ‘building a better world’ is in the African Great Lakes Region (GLR) and especially in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The conflict in the GLR has had the highest death toll since World War II (Autesserre 2010). It has been referred to as “Africa’s world war” (Prunier 2009) in which more than 5 million people have lost their lives since 1998, untold numbers became refugees and millions were injured, raped, and orphaned (Turner 2007). Due to the atrocities committed by the armed groups against the civilian population, the Congo became “a symbol of horror” even in comparison to places such as Darfur and the former Yugoslavia and still remains the largest humanitarian crisis in the world (Autesserre 2010).

Against this background, the GLR and especially the on-going conflict in the eastern provinces of the DRC is of specific interest for the EU. The Union has not only developed a strong relationship with the DRC in terms of development cooperation and humanitarian assistance, but has also been operating five civil and military missions in the country from 2003 on. Hence, the general aim of the paper is to address the question how the EU seeks to exert influence beyond its own territory and in the international arena, focusing on the case of the African GLR. Differently expressed, the paper analyses whether and in which ways the European Union’s commitment in the GLR and particularly in the DRC shapes its capability as a global actor in security and peace.

The article starts out with an overview on the EU’s policies and efforts in the DR Congo. We then move on to define a basic framework for assessing the impact of peacebuilding interventions from the outside. After that, there are three analytical sections. As a start, we illustrate the complexity of the Union’s institutional set-up which creates disorder both in
Brussels and on the ground in eastern DRC. Following this, we study whether the EU renders multilateralism effective as well as point out the short-sightedness of the peace-building strategies carried out by the EU as well as other donors/powers involved in the Congo. Against this background, we then focus in more detail on the persistent gap between the interveners and the intervened upon. Finally, we draw some general conclusions regarding the EU and its role as a peace and security actor in the Congo.

**The EU in the Congo: An Overview**

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is the eleventh largest country in the world covering 2.3 million km² (CIA 2010). Despite its abundant resources, the DRC is among the world’s poorest countries and was ranked 168 out of 169 countries in the 2010 Human Development Index (UNDP 2009). Out of a population of about 70 million, divided between more than 200 ethnic groups, 1.9 million people are internally displaced and another 458 000 Congolese refugees live in the neighbouring countries (European Commission 2010c). Not least this huge number of displaced people mirrors the long-lasting and complex conflict dynamics in the DRC and the wider Great Lakes Region.

In this situation of a complex humanitarian emergency, the EU has become active in various ways. Besides the more traditional field of development cooperation and humanitarian assistance headed by the European Commission, the Council of the European Union has in addition deployed five civil and military missions in the DRC since 2003 (see Table 1, below). Furthermore, and to accommodate the regional nature of the conflict in the Congo, the post of a Special Representative for the African Great Lakes Region was established as early as 1996.

Regarding the commitment of the European Commission, the overall objective is to further stabilize the DRC and to support the reconstruction of the country. In other words, the Commission’s aim is to foster peace- and state-building. To achieve these aims, the Commission currently provides roughly € 584 million under the 10th European Development Fund (EDF) covering the period from 2008 until 2013 (European Commission 2010a). Consistent with the objectives outlined in the Country Strategy Paper for the DRC, 50% of the money provided is targeted at infrastructure issues, 25% on governance aspects including initiatives to reform the Congolese security sector and 10% go directly to the health sector (Government of the DRC and
European Commission 2008). Furthermore, the Humanitarian Aid department provides the DRC with humanitarian assistance which in 2009 totalled € 45 million (European Commission 2010b:21).

Hence, the main actors on the Commission side in Brussels are the Directorate General for Development (DG DEV), the Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (DG ECHO) and the Directorate General dealing with External Relations (DG RELEX). In the GRL on the ground, the Commission is represented by its various Commission Delegations in the capitals of Kinshasa (DRC), Kampala (Uganda), Kigali (Rwanda) and Bujumbura (Burundi). Furthermore, ECHO operates two field offices in eastern Congo, namely in Bukavu (South Kivu) and Goma (North Kivu).

Alongside the European Commission’s activities, the Council of the European Union launched a first military mission in 2003, code-named ARTEMIS, which aimed at contributing to the stabilisation of the security conditions and the improvement of the humanitarian situation in Bunia, eastern DRC (Council of the European Union 2003). From 2005 until 2007, a civil police mission called EUPOL Kinshasa was established to help the Congolese National Police to keep order particularly during the electoral period in 2006 (EU Council Secretariat 2005). In addition and to support the United Nations Organisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) during the first democratic electoral process in the DRC since gaining independence, a third mission, code-named EUFOR RD Congo, was launched (Delestre 2006). One year later, in July 2007 EUPOL Kinshasa was replaced by EUPOL RD Congo and the scope of the mission was expanded from Kinshasa to other areas all over the country and especially to the eastern provinces of North and South Kivu. Since then, the purpose of the EUPOL RD Congo mission is to support the reform of the security sector in the field of the police and its interaction with the justice system (EU Council Secretariat 2010b). Since June 2005, the EU has carried out a second mission to provide advice and assistance for the reform of the security sector in the DRC, code-named EUSEC RD Congo which aims at supporting the Congolese authorities in the rebuilding of the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC) (EU Council Secretariat 2010a).
Table 1: Overview of EU Civil and Military Missions in the DRC since 2003 (as in 2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mission</th>
<th>Period of Deployment</th>
<th>Mission Character</th>
<th>Mission Mandate</th>
<th>Size/Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artemis</td>
<td>June 2003 – September 2003</td>
<td>Military Mission</td>
<td>To contribute to the stabilization of the security conditions and the improvement of the humanitarian situation in Bunia</td>
<td>About 1800 personnel 7 Million Euro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EUPOL Kinshasa</td>
<td>February 2005 – June 2007</td>
<td>Civil Mission</td>
<td>To support the Congolese National Police's Integrated Police Unit (IPU) in Kinshasa</td>
<td>30 personnel 4.3 Million Euro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EUFOR RD Congo</td>
<td>June 2006 – November 2006</td>
<td>Military Mission</td>
<td>To support MONUC during the election process</td>
<td>16.7 Million Euro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EUSEC RD Congo</td>
<td>May 2005 – on-going (the current mandate ends September 2012)</td>
<td>Civil Mission</td>
<td>To support the Congolese authorities in rebuilding an army that will guarantee security throughout the country and create the conditions for making social and economic development possible again</td>
<td>About 50 military and civilian personnel 12.6 Million Euro (2010-2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EUPOL RD Congo</td>
<td>July 2007 – on-going (the current mandate ends September 2012)</td>
<td>Civil Mission</td>
<td>To contribute to the restructuring of the Congolese police by supporting the establishment of a police force that is viable, professional and multi-ethnic/integrated</td>
<td>About 38 international and 19 local staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A specific role is further held by the EU Special Representative (EUSR) of the GLR. In 1996, the first EUSR for the GLR was appointed to acknowledge the regional nature of the conflict in the Great Lakes. While his task at the beginning was rather broad - to assist the countries in solving the regional conflict - his mandate has gradually become more specific in line with the deeper engagement of the European Union in the region. Hence, besides the EUSR’s task to provide political guidance to the Heads of Mission, the EUSR has to ensure the coordination between these missions, as well as between the missions and the other EU actors on the ground. Furthermore, the aim of the EUSR is to cut across the institutional divide between instruments applied under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) managed by the Council versus Commission approaches (Council of the European Union 2010).

Focusing on the ambitious formulation of EU policies, the large budget expended and the mere number of missions deployed, it could be concluded that the EU indeed has become a significant actor in the GLR and more specifically in the Congo which has been referred to as “the largest laboratory for EU crisis management, together with the Balkans” (Grevi 2007:114). This engagement thereby clearly follows the general European understanding that the African continent plays an increasingly important role not least regarding economic and security aspects. Hence, during the last decade, EU rhetoric and policy formulation has increasingly centred peacebuilding, conflict prevention and resolution policies as well as approaches to mitigate state fragility besides the more traditional focus on poverty reduction (Cotonou Partnership Agreement 2010).

**Assessing the impact of peacebuilding ‘from the outside’: a framework**

There are heated debates around impact evaluation/assessment of peacebuilding and other types of interventions from the outside. The basic definition of impact initially tied to the field of development programs was formulated by the ‘Network on Development Evaluation’ at the OECD defining *impact* as the “positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended” (SIDA 2007:19). Following this definition, *impact evaluation* constitutes the “evaluation of impact in the wide sense of the term (covering outcomes as well as impacts in the sense of long-term effects)” (ibid.).
In our framework, impact is defined as “the effect on outcomes that the intervention directly causes” (Gertler, Martinez et al. 2011:4), or in other words, impact is understood as the causal effect of the intervention. Hence, the identification of the causal relationship between the peacebuilding intervention and the changes in the conflict situation in the DR Congo is the central challenge. It is crucial to distinguish between effects that are directly connected to the interventions and effects that cannot be traced back to the interventions but may be based on other and independently occurring processes. An improvement in the security situation in one province might for example be indeed achieved through the peacebuilding intervention. However, it could also simply be the result of the shifting of a militia group to another province. At the same time, one has to have in mind that it is also possible that a peacebuilding intervention is successfully implemented but has no positive impact due to exogenous factors which are uncontrollable. Renewed conflict might for example break out not because of insufficient peacebuilding efforts but because of the intervention of a powerful neighbouring country.

Somewhat surprisingly there exists no agreement on how to assess the impact of peacebuilding from the outside in a broad sense, as discussed above. It is therefore necessary to develop a framework for these purposes. Our framework is built upon a so-called results chain as illustrated in Figure 1 (see below) which “sets out a logical, plausible outline of how a sequence of inputs, activities and outputs for which a project is directly responsible interacts with behaviour to establish pathways through which impacts are achieved” (OECD-DAC 2008:24).

In this regard, implementation comprises work which is directly delivered by the peacebuilding intervention, including inputs, activities and outputs. Hence, the performance of the peacebuilding intervention (its implementation) is under the control of the implementing actors and can therefore be measured from their perspective. In the case of the research project at hand, it thus includes all activities that are implemented in the course of the peacebuilding interventions carried out by the EU and the UN in the DR Congo. The effects, in contrast, consist of the outcomes and the impact which are not directly controllable by the intervening actors.
Hence, what is particularly important, and perhaps our own major theoretical contribution is to emphasize that any effects of externally designed peacebuilding interventions depend on the interactions between the supply side (the interveners) and the demand side (the intervened upon). We seek to challenge the fact that peacebuilding interventions from the outside are too often designed as well as analysed from the standpoint of the interveners, and in particular with an exaggeration on outputs instead of what is here defined as outcomes and impact in a broader and more comprehensive sense.

In this regard and focusing on the output and outcome side of peacebuilding interventions, *Michael W. Doyle* and *Nicholas Sambanis* (2006) examine how the international community and the UN in particular can assist the reconstruction of peace in civil war-torn lands and to what

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**Figure 1: The Results Chain**

- **Inputs**
  - Finances, personnel
  - Budgets for SSR; police trainings

- **Activities**
  - Actions taken to convert inputs into specific outputs
  - Training of Police Officers

- **Outputs**
  - Results from converting inputs into tangible outputs
  - A specific number of Police officers is trained

- **Outcomes**
  - Use of outputs by targeted population
  - 1) Police officers respect HR
  - 2) People benefit from better trained police

- **Impact**
  - Final objective of the program
  - Overall goal
  - 1) State authority regarding the Congolese National Police is restored
  - 2) Security situation for the people is improved

**Implementation (Supply Side)**

**Effects (Demand + Supply)**

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Source: Author’s further elaboration on OECD-DAC 2008, p. 25.
extent satisfying results have been achieved so far. Their focus is thus on aspects such as the lack of political will, the under-financing of missions, insufficient force and troop size, poor logistics and issues of coordination between actors which in turn lead to legitimacy and authority problems as well as undesirable outcomes. Hence, it is assumed that good outcomes follow from getting the technical and operational side of the interventions right. In this regard, and focusing specifically on the DR Congo, numerous studies focus furthermore on the effectiveness and role of the United Nations mission MONUC (see for example de Coning 2007; Mobekk 2009; Morsut 2009; Tull 2009) and MONUSCO (Clark 2011; Neethling 2011) as well as on the various European Union missions in the DRC as well as European development and security policies (Ulriksen, Gourlay et al. 2004; Gegout 2005; Martinelli 2006; Asseburg and Kempin 2009; Piccolino 2010; Lurweg 2011). The relationship between the European Union and the United Nations has also been analysed (Ortega 2005; Gourlay 2009; Morsut 2009). Keohane (2011) furthermore focuses on potential lessons learnt from EU peace operations while Richmond (2004) concentrates on UN interventions and the dilemmas of the peacebuilding consensus.

However, what is missing is the bottom-up perspective, the perspective of the ‘intervened upon’, on externally induced peacebuilding interventions. Comparably less prominence has also been devoted to the relationship between the international community and the society in which interventions take place. In other words, while a vast amount of intervention research focuses on the legitimization and implementation of peacebuilding interventions from a top-down perspective (through the eyes of the interveners), the perspective of the intervened upon and hence a bottom-up approach is left out.

Broadly speaking and as illustrated in Figure 2, there are two levels of analysis, namely the international community, or the interveners, and the recipients of the intervention, the so-called ‘intervened upon’. However, what is important in such an analysis is to problematize and ‘unpack’ both groups. Speaking of the international community, the focus is on both the EU and UN but also on individual and influential member-states, such as France, Belgium, the UK, the US and China. Furthermore, the underlying motives and goals of the external interveners have to be analysed which do not necessarily have to be the same but might differ extensively. The same applies for the group of the intervened-upon which are neither a homogenous group, nor objects deprived of agency. In addition, as the case of the GLR and the DR Congo exemplifies, there is a
huge variety of actors at various levels: the conflict is considered to be regional and within the GLR, several countries play a decisive role, such as the DRC, but also Rwanda and Uganda. Focusing then on the DRC, a distinction has to be made between the governmental level and Kabila as the Head of State, and the provincial and local levels. Furthermore, there are various groups of actors involved, such as state actors versus non-state actors, decision-makers versus civil society and the military versus rebel groups.

*Figure 2: The Relationship between the Interveners and the Intervened Upon*

CSOs: Civil Society Organisations
FARDC: Armed Forces of the DR Congo
FDLR: Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda (former Genocidaires)
The local population is also of particular interest, since it is understood as one key feature of the conflict environment (in addition to specific conflict characteristics and issues of local governance) which in turn is considered to be closely related to any potential success (or failure) of the peacebuilding intervention (Diehl and Druckman 2010:134). This means that the local population is on the one hand the recipient and the main priority of peacebuilding activities (the main goal of MONUSCO is the protection of civilians) while on the other hand, the local population simultaneously constitutes the external context in which the operation takes place. Ethnically divided societies, for example, provide the greatest challenge for peacebuilding operations. Furthermore, the missions do not only have to deal with cleavages between indigenous groups but they also have to deal with cleavages between themselves and the local population.

**Institutional Disorder**

While on paper, the EU’s approach appears comprehensive and rich in content, any deeper analysis instantly weakens the Union’s self-portrayed image of an influential global actor. What is immediately striking regarding the Union’s activities in the GLR and especially in eastern Congo is the high level of intra-EU tension leading to bureaucratic ineffectiveness at most levels of the organizational structure (Lurweg 2011).

One aspect of this is the inter-departmental rivalry between Commission and Council entities and actors. This rivalry is caused or at least exacerbated by a continuous expansion of the civilian side of the CSDP regarding civilian crisis management and security sector reform, two approaches applied in the conflict context of the GLR. In other words, there is no longer a clear detachment of the intergovernmental and the community method with the result that almost all approaches could be undertaken either under the CSDP or as part of development assistance programmes, except for military crisis management. Consequently, activities under the frame of civilian crisis management are no longer exclusively carried out by Commission actors. Hence, the Council has become increasingly influential in terms of the Union’s approach in the GLR and eastern DRC. Another difficulty in terms of coordination is rooted in the long-term/short-term dichotomy between development cooperation and CSDP missions. Long-term development instruments are frequently difficult to adapt to CSDP perspectives and vice versa. Problematic is
further the financial situation. While development assistance is financed through the general budget of the European Development Fund (EDF) for Commission activities, there are only limited resources for civilian CSDP activities included in the general budget (Aggestam and Anesi 2008).

However, this does not mean that coordination problems exclusively emerge between Commission and Council entities. On the Commission side, the interplay of short-term humanitarian and long-term development cooperation remains difficult. Although both DGs are managed within the Commission, they have been institutionally separated since February 2010. Instead of being represented by a joint commissioner, both Directorates are now headed by their own commissioners. According to one EU diplomat, this has led to a situation of limited cooperation since the two DGs no longer speak with the same voice especially at Brussels level.1 Furthermore, and in terms of policy implementation in eastern DRC, the differing time frames of development and humanitarian programmes remain the biggest obstacles. While development cooperation is defined in so-called Country Strategy Papers covering a five year period, humanitarian programs are designed for 12 to 18 months. Thus, the differing time frames render joint strategic planning difficult which in turn leads either to an overlap or a lack of activities in certain areas. Although, according to several interviewees, the attempt is made to interlink and build a bridge between the two policy areas through developing and participating in common strategies, no satisfying solutions have been found yet.

Tensions also occur within the Council Secretariat. Regarding the two on-going EU missions in the DRC, EUPOL and EUSEC RD Congo, it is striking that although they are very closely related with regard to content, the two have been separated from the beginning. Hence, they respond to different lines of command and report back to different institutions. As a consequence, both missions possess their Head Quarters in the capital of Kinshasa and run their own field offices in the eastern provinces of the DRC.

However, even more striking than these intra-departmental obstacles on Brussels level is the remarkable amount of personal rivalry, mutual envy and open disrespect expressed by both Commission and Council actors against each other. It further exacerbates the already existing difficulties following the aforementioned complex and demanding institutional set-up of the

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1 Interview with a representative of the European Commission, 25 February 2010.
2 Interview with a representative of the European Commission in Brussels, Belgium, 4 March 2010.
Union and the unclear distribution of roles and responsibilities. While one Commission employee asserts that ‘we [the Commission] are not there [in the DRC] for the show but there to address the problem’, an employee of the Council Secretariat accuses the Commission of being ‘traditionally (...) jealous of civilian ESDP. Military they can accept because it’s military and they’re not in charge. But civilian, they say: We can do it as well.’ Hence, the relationship between the two entities is describes as ‘a very, very, very bad example of coordination and cooperation. Almost not existent.’

Inter-departmental rivalry is not only found at Brussels level but it is then also transferred to the ground in the DRC as outlined by one informant of the Council Secretariat: ‘People don’t like each other. People don’t understand each other and they don’t want to understand each other. Personal agendas, personal opinions sometimes override the political guidance, the strategic directions they [EU actors in the DRC] get from here, from Brussels. If we don’t really cooperate [in Brussels], how can they do a better job [in the DRC]?’

The interviews conducted highlighted furthermore that there are also tensions between people working in Brussels and on the ground: ‘There is a total misunderstanding. It is very serious and we [representatives working on the ground] always have to justify what we’re doing.’ The relationship was described as hierarchical and byzantine due to the multitude of actors, an overlapping of bilateral policies and those pursued under the EU umbrella and a top-down approach from Brussels that often negated or side-lined policy advice emanating from the field in favour of prescriptions from Brussels-based bureaucrats who, although remote from what is actually happening in the DRC, believed their analysis was superior and—crucially—were strategically closer to decision-makers at EU headquarters.

When it comes to cooperation and coordination between EU institutions on the ground, the picture is also disillusioning. A representative of the Commission working both in Kinshasa and in Goma in the eastern DRC, described the EU Delegations as ‘quite jealous’ vis-à-vis their institutional turf, noting that there were various ‘races between people’, i.e. inter-personal

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2 Interview with a representative of the European Commission in Brussels, Belgium, 4 March 2010.
3 Interview with a representative of the Council Secretariat in Brussels, Belgium, 4 March 2010.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Interview with an EU member state representative in Kigali, Rwanda, 13 October 2010.
7 Ibid.
rivalry, which resulted in ‘games played with Brussels.’

Institutional wrangling rather than coherence in the EU’s external activities in the eastern DRC was detected throughout the research and it was clear that this directly led to ineffective and inefficient approaches. This was itself acknowledged by some EU actors on the ground, who lamented that ‘we realize that everyone does the same thing, without any dialogue…what bothers me is that we can detect that there is a loss of energy and loss of money by acting so. Here, we do not know how to coordinate ourselves.’

On top of that, one informant even believes that her presence in North Kivu as a delegate of the EU Delegation in Kinshasa has an exclusively political character. Although information about the situation specifically in the eastern provinces is gathered and shared with Kinshasa, the interviewee states that ‘I don’t know what they do with my information.’

Regarding the European actors in general, the informant further admits that: ‘We share information but we don’t listen to each other.’

Weak staff competences and difficulties regarding contract periods further impinge on the EU’s actor capability. The weakness of the voice of in-field actors was compounded by the nature of recruitment for EU positions. In fact, due to the unattractive living conditions in the eastern DRC, it was rare for experienced or senior staff to volunteer for positions or to remain in post long. Indeed, it was noticeable that many EU staffers based in the Congo were obviously young and inexperienced and often in their first post abroad. One EU employee confirmed that ‘in the EU Delegation in Kinshasa, there are many young and inexperienced people working because of the working and living environment’. A shortage of staff due to such factors then led to a constant switching of roles within the EU offices: ‘people in charge of infrastructure just change to governance’ overnight.

Where expert knowledge was needed most, due to the difficult working environment of the DRC, the reality was that the EU has to predominantly rely on inexperienced junior employees whose knowledge of the situation in the DRC was, at best, scant and often disturbingly naïve.

This problem of competency was then compounded by the structural difficulties caused by EU employment practice, which further exacerbated problems in attaining any long-term coherent

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8 Interview with a representative of the European Commission Delegation to the DRC in Goma, DRC, 19 October 2010.
9 Interview with a representative of EUPOL RD Congo in Bukavu, DRC, 8 April 2010.
10 Interview with a representative of the European Commission Delegation to the DRC in Goma, DRC, 19 October 2010.
11 Ibid.
European approach. Differing contract periods meant that there was a continuous change in staffing. Institutional incapacity was the result. As one respondent noted, ‘The problem is that everyone arrives at a different time during the year which means that there is always a renewal in staff which is quite complicated. If you are looking for a medium-term goal, it requires almost every time to rebuild contacts. It is quite difficult.’ In other words, the nature of the bureaucratic machine of the European Union served to increase the significance of personalities (which has been seen to be problematic) and decrease institutional and vertical coherence in that experienced staff are outnumbered by junior colleagues who themselves are in a constant state of rotation and replacement.

However and as much as personalities exacerbate existing difficulties due to the institutional complexity, personalities also find ways to work in this environment and to overcome these obstacles. Consistently highlighted both in Brussels and in the DRC is the EU Special Representative for the GLR who is described as somebody facilitating a ‘super exchange of sensitive information.’ Another positive example is the so-called Rejusco programme (Programme de Restauration de la Justice à l’Est de la République Démocratique du Congo) which had the aim to fight against impunity as well as ordinary crime through capacity building activities in the justice sector. The programme was conducted by the European Commission in collaboration with several individual EU member states and established close cooperation with the Council-led EUPOL and EUSEC RD Congo missions in eastern DRC. According to the former general coordinator of Rejusco, this collaboration demonstrated that the given separation between Council and Commission activities from a Brussels perspective can be overridden when it comes to policy implementation in the field because ‘here on the ground, I do not see why, I mean we are (…) three European programmes. If we do the same activities, what should prevent us to do them together? We know each other and we organize together. It’s always the European house that is visible.’

These examples illustrate that the European Union’s efforts in the DRC can be effective and efficient whenever people defy institutional boundaries. In many cases however, severe tensions

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12 Interview with a representative of EUPOL RD Congo in Bukavu, DRC, 8 April 2010.
13 Interview with a political advisor of the EU Special Representative for the GLR in Goma, DRC, 13 April 2010.
14 Interview with a representative of Rejusco, in Gisenyi, Rwanda, 15 April 2010.
remain between the different European entities which strongly limits the Union’s potential as a peace and security actor in the GLR.

(In)effective Multilateralism: A Fragmented International Community

In EU’s rhetoric, both ‘effective multilateralism’ and global security governance is clearly emphasized, for example in the ESS that calls for “an international order based on effective multilateralism”. It is then further stated in the ESS that “in a world of global threats (...) our security and prosperity increasingly depend on an effective multilateral system” (European Union 2003:9). But what does this mean in the context of the European Union’s engagement in the conflict in the GLR and especially in eastern DRC?

Applied to the situation in the Congo and especially in the eastern provinces, the EU has indeed been understood as an actor which has the greatest possibility to render multilateralism effective. In relation to the on-going MONUSCO peacebuilding intervention, one UN employee acknowledges on the one hand that: ‘We [the international community] do not have a focus and we don’t have a direction’. On the other hand, the informant is nevertheless convinced that ‘the mission can do something for the DRC’. However, what puzzles the interviewee most concerns the question of taking the leadership and defining a joint strategy: ‘what I fail to understand is why it is so difficult to define what we’re doing. Why is it not possible to raise these issues under the EU umbrella at the UN level? The people here on the ground see pretty clear what the major problems are but why do the donors not get the UN to listen to them?’

In such sentiments, the EU is considered to be an actor that could make a difference regarding rendering multilateralism effective, but the current situation where there is a palpable lack of EU coherence vis-à-vis policy delivery, means that there is a concomitant lack in any strategy by the EU in the eastern DRC that may lead to such an outcome.

Another aspect adding to the EU’s inability to take the driver’s seat in a multilateral approach in the Congo lies in its internal fragmentation not only in terms of rivalry between the Commission and the Council, but also when it comes to cooperation and coordination between the Union and its member states. Of specific importance regarding policies targeted at the DRC are a few EU

15 Interview with a representative of MONUSCO in Goma, DRC, 18 October 2010.
member states which are strongly pursuing their own national interests – besides and/or within the joint European approach. These are in particular Belgium (the former colonial power), France, the UK and the Netherlands but to a lesser degree also Sweden and Germany, the latter in particular regarding their extensive development cooperation efforts. In such an environment, it is indeed acknowledged that clear political guidelines and defined roles regarding the member states are needed, as highlighted by one interviewee: ‘To be a dynamic power means to work together with the member states and under a clear chain of command.’\textsuperscript{16} However, instead of implementing a comprehensive and joint approach, as outlined in EU rhetoric, the Union’s real conflict management policy towards Africa is rather dominated and shaped by some influential member states, setting the agenda and exploiting the EU to be still perceived as an ethical actor (Gegout 2009). In line with this, one EU member state diplomat based in Kigali highlights that ‘France uses the EU instead of speaking for itself. EU multilateralism is therefore very convenient for France.’\textsuperscript{17} One reason for this is that “the EU provides even the larger states (especially those with colonial histories), a means to re-engage in areas of former colonial influence in Africa.” Thus, “by acting as an agent of European foreign policy, Britain, France, Belgium, Portugal, and the Netherlands could claim more credit for their dual national/European roles in troubled areas in the African Great Lakes Region” (Wong 2005:147). In addition, the cooperation with other EU member states in Africa is considered to allow for more influence on the continent compared to potential unilateral interventions (Chafer 2002).

Another interesting aspect deals with the accentuation of visibility from the donors’ perspective. There is clearly a lack of coordination between the administrative EU centres in both Brussels and Kinshasa and the ground level in the eastern DRC and this has led to both a detachment of the two levels and also hindered coordination of the actors involved. As per one EU informant’s comments in Goma, ‘there is an overlap with other European countries. The training of police officers, for example, is done by EUPOL and other countries. We share information but we don’t listen to each other. Our problem as donors is that we want to have an immediate result.’\textsuperscript{18} Even more outspoken was another interviewee, who stated that with regard to the wider international

\textsuperscript{16} Interview with a representative of the European Commission in Brussels, Belgium, 4 March 2010.
\textsuperscript{17} Interview with an EU member state representative in Kigali, Rwanda, 13 October 2010.
\textsuperscript{18} Interview with a representative of the European Commission Delegation to the DRC in Goma, DRC, 19 October 2010.
community, ‘I believe that there is a massive communication problem. Kinshasa sucks in all information, but nothing comes out of Kinshasa.’

Clearly, all donors focus on their specific projects and want to see immediate results as a means to justify the expenditure of resources to domestic constituencies. This is because in a complex humanitarian emergency such as the DRC, long-term goals and achievements are incredibly complicated and unlikely to deliver results any time soon. Yet it is in such an environment where a comprehensive and long-term vision is the most needed. In this regard, and contrasting EU’s rhetoric, the Union lacks a clear strategy regarding what to do. Instead, it seems obvious from research in the field that there is in fact no clearly defined strategy on how to build peace, security and development in the eastern DRC.

Hence, instead of pursuing a coordinated and long-term peacebuilding strategy, the European Union, like many other actors, focuses on the implementation of its own specific projects. In addition, and instead of enriching ‘effective multilateralism’ with content, it largely remains a buzzword in EU rhetoric.

The Gap between the Intervener and the Intervened Upon

Tying in with the aforementioned aspects of the ineffective institutional set-up of the Union and its failure to successfully promote multilateralism, this section deals with the EU’s inability to design policies which are adjusted to the local conflict dynamics and the failure to develop fruitful links to those intervened upon, that is the internal forces of peacebuilding. Research in the field of peace research clearly shows that many of the ‘problems’ of externally driven peace-building, state-building and conflict transformation cannot be divorced from the external origins of such strategies. A significant portion of empirical research in the field shows that external ‘interventions’ have all too often been based on an insufficient understanding of the surrounding context, and on an external definition of the problem/crisis they set out to solve. As many have noted, interventions are often not primarily designed for those described as the ‘beneficiaries’ and those intervened upon (Rubinstein 2005). As outlined in our framework, there are very persuasive reasons that assessments of externally designed peace-building strategies are partial

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19 Interview with a representative of MONUSCO in Goma, DRC, 18 October 2010.
unless they take seriously the role of local/national dynamics and cultural meaning systems that inform social action as well as the power relations between intervener and ‘intervened upon’.

There is a vast amount of intervention research that analyses the way in which external interventions (especially externally driven peace operations and humanitarian interventions) are executed and implemented from a top-down perspective (or from the perspective of the ‘intervener’). This literature tends to focus on constraints on the strategy or the implementation of the externally defined peace-building and state-building strategy, such as the lack of political will, the under-financing of missions, insufficient force, poor logistics, issues of coordination between actors, and interaction dilemmas between civil and military forces, which in turn lead to legitimacy and authority problems, and undesirable outcomes (Thakur 2005; Doyle and Sambanis 2006). Good outcomes, it is assumed, follow from getting the technical or operational side of things right (usually starting on day one of the intervention and ending on the day of staff evacuation). Somewhat simplified, our two previous sections above (‘Institutional Disorder’ and ‘(In)effective Multilateralism: A Fragmented International Community’) have analyzed the EU in the Congo from such a top-down perspective (i.e. from the perspective of the ‘intervener’). In what follows below, we will analyze to what extent the EU’s peace and security policies are adjusted to the local conflict dynamics and to what extent there is a functioning relationship with ‘those intervened upon’. This entails a broadening of the conventional parameters of intervention impact where we combine the top-down approach with a bottom-up perspective. It implies a call for more empirically grounded research to show how perceptions of impacts of intervention differ dramatically when local conditions and people on the ground are included in the analysis.

It is important in such analysis to problematize and ‘unpack’ both the intervener (and the underlying motives and goals of external interveners) and ‘those intervened upon’ (see figure 1). The ‘targets’ of intervention are neither a homogenous group, nor objects deprived of agency. They do not speak for all of society, nor do they represent moral rightfulness any more than the interveners. Having argued that the exclusion of the targets of intervention has led to poor peace and security governance, we cannot simplistically assume that their inclusion will ensure the best outcome in all cases. There is a considerable lack of research on this aspect, and further theoretical development depends on more empirical research on the patterns and degree of inclusion/exclusion (Schulz and Söderbaum 2010). In what follows below we will limit ourselves to two specific aspects of the relationship between intervener and those intervened
upon. First, we will analyze the difficulties the EU faces in dealing with the Congolese Government as counterpart and as a representative of those intervened upon. Second, there is consensus among both academics and policy makers about the fact that the conflict in the GLR must be understood in a regional perspective. In fact, few observers would dispute that the conflict is in itself a regional conflict. The second question is therefore to what extent the EU’s strategies take such regional conditions into account.

The Congolese Government as Counterpart and Representative of Those Intervened Upon

Generally speaking, peacebuilding interventions are predominantly designed as well as analysed from the standpoint of the interveners. This implies that an insufficient attention is given to the national context in which the intervention takes place and the targets of the intervention, the so-called intervened upon (Schulz and Söderbaum 2010). Relating to the conflicts in the Congo, this becomes visible in the fact that the international community has focused on and succeeded, at least to some extent, in imposing peace settlements at the national and regional levels. However, they failed to establish peace at the subnational level with the consequence, that throughout the eastern provinces of the DRC, violence was sustained through continuing bottom-up rivalries (Autesserre 2010).

This shortcoming in relation to the European Union’s efforts in the GLR and the DRC is revealed in the fact that the Union heavily focuses on the top leaders in the conflict, namely the Congolese Government. Hence, in the DRC, the EU follows a statist approach with the aim to build up the formal structures of the Congolese state, not least through its efforts regarding SSR. However, this state building approach becomes highly problematic in a context where the ruling regime is both part of the problem and cause of the humanitarian emergency. This reality is indeed acknowledged by some EU observers. One informant remarks for example that ‘the DRC is not a state but an entity. It is not controlling its territory, not its army and not the East. There is anarchy in the DRC and in the GLR which makes the situation very complex.’ However, and despite this situational awareness on the ground, the EU feels compelled to pretend that a Congolese state exists and therefore continues to exclusively deal with the Congolese government as if the state apparatus in the DRC was functioning although it is not. Hence, the

20 Interview with an EU member state representative in Kigali, Rwanda, 13 October 2010.
problem, as phrased by one UN representative, is that ‘The DRC is a sovereign country, but it is run by a criminal elite network.’

This poses a serious challenge for the EU in a situation where ‘the EU does not have real policies’ because there is no real state, as highlighted by another EU informant working in eastern Congo. The same person arrives at the conclusion that this has led to a situation the EU is unable to handle and has therefore become ‘an actor for financing but not an actor for policies.’ In addition and although any financial support is theoretically linked to conditionalities, these requirements are not effectively enforced. In contrast, the EU is rather fooled as highlighted by the same respondent: ‘There is a lot of conditionality. But then, the money for the elections for example, is just taken from another side. The Congolese Government knows how to play the game. They know that in the end, we’ll pay.’

One UN informant further notes that ‘the problem is that the Congolese Government is pretty good in dividing the donors – Belgium, France, the US – in terms of the SSR following its own interests.’ And this happens although the ongoing EU and UN missions, EUSEC and EUPOL RD Congo as well as MONUSCO, share their focus on the reform of the Congolese security sector as one aspect of the wider aim to sustainably stabilize the country. According to the interviewee, this is a missed opportunity of the EU to bring all donors together: ‘an agreed agenda would be very helpful. And if the EU as the political umbrella manages to bring the member states together, that would be of great help.’

A Country Perspective on a Regional Conflict

Further impinging on the EU’s effectiveness in the GLR and the DRC is the gap between EU’s understanding of the conflict as regional and its reaction to exclusively target the DR Congo. Indeed, the war in the DRC is a primary example for a regionalised war in Africa while most contemporary conflicts around the world are still specified as ‘domestic’ or ‘civil wars. However, the conflict in eastern Congo cannot be isolated from the regional neighbourhood since strong cross-border dimensions defy borders and neat categorisations. As Gegout notes, an understanding of African regional politics is a prerequisite to effective engagement on the continent (Gegout 2009). In this context, in analysing the EU’s efforts in the GLR and eastern

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21 Interview with a representative of MONUSCO in Goma, DRC, 18 October 2010.
22 Interview with a representative of the European Commission Delegation to the DRC in Goma, DRC, 19 October 2010.
23 Ibid.
24 Interview with a representative of MONUSCO in Goma, DRC, 18 October 2010.
DRC, it is therefore necessary not only to assess to what the extent the EU actually conceives the conflict as regionalised but also how the Union’s perception shapes its activities.

Indeed, the EU clearly acknowledges the significance of dealing with regional conflicts which are identified as ‘key threats’ in the ESS. The GLR is given as one example and it is stated that these conflicts “impact on European interests directly and indirectly”. Furthermore, they “threaten regional stability” and they “destroy human lives and social and physical infrastructures; they threaten minorities, fundamental freedoms and human rights” (European Union 2003:4). As one response to that, the EU has appointed an EU Special Representative for the GLR as early as in 1996.

Nevertheless and in contrast to its official rhetoric, EU policy and planning frameworks remain state-centric and limited to specific countries. Hence, the EU finds itself acting ambiguously. On the hand, the significance of a regional perspective and a regional approach is generally officially acknowledged which was also supported by a member state diplomat working in the GLR stating that: ‘You have to have a regional approach. (...) If you don’t have a regional approach, you do not solve national problems.’

Or in the words of an UN official: ‘It is a total mess until you tackle it [regionally].’ On the other hand, the role of the DRC as main actor in the conflict sticks out since ‘everything [in the GLR] has a Congo-link.’ This leads to a situation in which the EU mainly focuses on the DRC in its actual policy implementation in line with other multilateral bodies which are described as being ‘frankly crap when dealing with cross-border issues’, related to the Congo.

The reason behind that is that in practice, the EU is mainly organised to deal with nation-states (however dysfunctional these may be) and not with regions. And, above all the EU deals with governments. In spite of the regional nature of the conflict, the Union has found it very difficult to successfully engage in the context of a regional conflict where there is an absence of a credible regional counterpart (any visit to the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL) headquarters in Gisenyi, Rwanda will confirm this analysis of the moribund state of that organization). Despite the real state of the CEPGL, the natural attraction of one

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25 Interview with an EU member state representative in Kigali, Rwanda, 13 October 2010.
26 Interview with a representative of MONUSCO in Goma, DRC, 18 October 2010.
27 Interview with a political advisor of the EU Special Representative for the GLR in Goma, DRC, 13 April 2010.
28 Interview with a representative of MONUSCO in Goma, DRC, 18 October 2010.
regional organization (the EU) to another (the CEPGL) has meant that Brussels has exerted some effort in establishing links with the latter body, in spite of negligible success. One EU member state diplomat asserted that ‘the EU focuses on regional economic integration and puts weight on regional organizations’. Thus, ‘the CEPGL can be seen as an umbrella for contacts’. However, recognising the somewhat derelict state of the Great Lakes organisation, the diplomat added that ‘from a Brussels perspective, there is more weight on the CEPGL than it deserves.’

An EU diplomat based in Goma was more forthright, stating that the CEPGL was in fact ‘a project of the donor countries in the Great Lakes Region, but we don’t know exactly what we’re planning. I don’t know where we will end. The CEPGL was dead but now there is a kind of rebirth. However, there are only directors sitting on the top floor and they have no staff to implement projects.’ This confirms the comments of another EU member state diplomat who acknowledged that an approach taking the regional aspects into account and working with bodies such as the CEPGL was ‘certainly a challenge.’

Nevertheless, it has to be acknowledged that the EU maintains diplomatic missions, the EU Commission Delegations, in the capitals of Kigali (Rwanda), Kampala (Uganda), Bujumbura (Burundi) and Kinshasa (DR Congo) to open up opportunities for implementing its policies on the ground following a more regional focus, at least theoretically. However, and against EU’s lip service to internalize the regional perspective, there is no comprehensive exchange between the various Delegation offices set in place yet. Officially, coordination simply implies the sharing of information but all further initiatives depend on the personal ambitions especially of the Head of Delegations, their interests and affiliation with the region as highlighted by one informant from the EU Delegation in Kigali. The same interviewee admits that Michel Arrion, the present Head of the EU-Delegation in Rwanda ‘sees the regional dimension’ which is according to the informant ‘a question of personality.’ Nevertheless, there are no common projects for the provinces of North and South Kivu although important issues imply questions regarding the repatriation of refugees and the general movement of people – aspects which are of explicit cross-border interest. This inward-looking approach even entails the curiosity that a staff

29 Interview with an EU Member State representative in Kigali, Rwanda, 13 October 2010.
30 Interview with an EU Member State representative in Goma, DRC, 18 October 2010.
31 Interview with an EU Member State representative in Kigali, Rwanda, 13 October 2010.
member of the EU Delegation in Kinshasa who is stationed temporarily in Goma, North Kivu, directly bordering Rwanda, reports back to Kinshasa but is not supposed to directly share any information with the EU-Delegation in Kigali.

However, in contrast to this rather negative assessment of EU’s engagement in the GLR and the DRC, the EUSR has again to be highlighted since he is complemented throughout the interviews as being ‘a fantastic example of somebody taking the coordinating role.’ One of his political advisors highlights furthermore, that in contrast to Brussels, where the relations between the various actors are characterized by mistrust and hierarchy, the work done on the ground is more action oriented and that it is ‘more apparent that we work towards a common goal since institution wrangling is less apparent.’ Thus, the EUSR is not only supposed to take over the role and responsibility to harmonize EU’s security governance in the Great Lakes Region but also seems to manage to actually interlink the various actors at least partially. However, it remains questionable to what extent one policy unit is eventually able to straighten out the various deficiencies in the EU’s approach both from an institutional perspective and with regards to content.

Conclusion

In examining the role of the EU as a peace and security actor in the Great Lakes Region and in eastern DR Congo, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the EU’s key role is not necessarily to have an extensive influence on the situation but to be simply present to build up the image of the EU as an influential global actor in peace and security. In other words, the motivation for any European presence in the region could be explained by relating it ‘purely to political will’ as it was honestly put by one informant on the ground.

In line with that, it is not without reason, that the African Great Lakes Region and more specifically the DR Congo has been described as a laboratory for EU’s crisis management. During the last decade, the EU has applied a wide array of instruments in a region, where EU member states carry a burden of colonial and post-colonial history as well as responsibility for the situation of regional insecurity. Nevertheless, EU’s performance remains uncertain.

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33 Interview with a representative of the Council Secretariat in Brussels, Belgium, 4 March 2010.
34 Interview with a political advisor of the EU Special Representative for the GLR in Goma, DRC, 13 April 2010.
From a Brussels perspective, the institutional set-up of the European Union provokes institutional divisions as well as overlapping competencies. This shortcoming is further exacerbated through personality-driven policies as well as mistrust, personal rivalry, mutual envy and open disrespect expressed by various Commission and Council actors against each other. Hence, it is not surprising that such a situation of institution wrangling on Brussels level impinges on any implementation of European policies on the ground in the Congo. Furthermore, this top-down approach that is applied by EU bureaucrats negates or side-lines policy advice emanating from the field which in turn increases tensions between the two levels. Further aspects having a negative impact on EU’s actor capability in the DRC include the high fluctuation of staff and weak staff competence in general as well as an insufficient sharing of information between actors. Consequently and although the EU tries to follow a multifaceted approach both in its rhetoric and through the provision of a huge amount of development as well as humanitarian assistance and the deployment of various civil and military missions in the DRC, these efforts are predominantly criticized for being inefficient and ineffective.

A further aspect the EU emphasizes in its rhetoric is the Union’s goal to promote and strengthen effective multilateralism to tackle global threats, such as regional conflicts. Hence, regarding the conflict situation in the Congo, the EU is indeed considered to be an actor which theoretically has the possibility to render multilateralism effective. However, the Union fails to practically take the leadership, not least due to the fact that the EU itself lacks a coherent strategy in the DRC. Thus, instead of providing an umbrella for a joint multilateral strategy, the EU is rather exploited as an umbrella by its own member states. In other words, some member states pursue their own national interests but cover them with an EU banner.

Another shortcoming in the EU’s approach towards the DRC is that the Union exclusively focuses on the Congolese Government as its counterpart but fails to develop links to those intervened upon in a broader sense. As a consequence, the EU focuses all its efforts not only a statist state building approach in a situation where the ruling regime is both part and cause of the problem, but also deals with the Government as if it was functioning although it is not. Hence, the conflict context is not sufficiently taken into consideration with the result that the EU becomes rather an actor for financing than for policies. In addition, while the regional dimension of the conflict is highlighted in EU rhetoric and the post of the EUSR for the GLR has been established for this reason, the Union continues to deal exclusively with the Congolese state no
matter how dysfunctional it is. This demonstrates the EU’s inability to deal with a regional conflict where no credible regional counterpart is present.

Finally, and based on these empirical findings, it can be concluded that although the EU plays a role in the GLR and even more so in eastern Congo, this role entails rather a form of political representation and showing presence than achieving short as well as long-term goals. Consequently, the influence exerted by the EU both on the ground and on the international level in terms of peace and security policies is considered to be rather marginal since the Union remains far from fully exploiting its potential as a peace and security actor in the African Great Lakes Region.
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