

## Flash brief

# EU security operations and global justice

The EU aims to play a significant part in global security governance and has developed capacity to deploy civilian and military missions outside the Union's territory. What strengths and weaknesses does the EU bring to international security operations and how might policy be developed?

## The EUFOR Tchad/RCA example

The EU's 2008-2009 military operation in Chad, was undertaken as a result of the crisis in the Darfur region of western Sudan. Darfur had been a longstanding flash-point of tribal conflict, sporadic and contested government intervention, weapons proliferation, Arab-African tension, porous borders, regional power struggles and shifting loyalties, creating **a multi-dimensional regional conflict**. The crisis was also interwoven within a geopolitical contest engaging France, Chad, Sudan and Libya. By 2004/2005 the conflict had emerged as a major humanitarian crisis with hundreds of thousands fleeing Darfur for neighbouring countries and up to one million reliant on food aid for survival in a context of deteriorating interstate security. This put the Darfur conflict close to the top of the international agenda.

## Political backdrop

With no prospect of addressing the Darfur conflict directly – due to Sudanese objections – the only possibility was a **humanitarian effort addressing its destabilising consequences in neighbouring Chad**. The crisis also became a central topic in the French presidential election of 2006. After the election, the new French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, moved swiftly on his election pledge to prioritise a response to the Darfur crisis, launching a vigorous multilateral diplomatic effort to engage the UN and EU. Ultimately, the French secured UN authorisation for an EU effort to 'bridge' the immediate crisis with a forthcoming UN operation.

While the UK and Germany were ultimately willing support such an operation, they were not willing to contribute substantially. It took an unprecedented five force-generation conferences to get the operation to a modestly-defined operational capacity of approx. 3,700, and even then it was launched under-strength.

## The operation and its consequences

The Operation was launched in late January 2008. Of the 26 contributing countries (included 3 non-EU states), France provided more than half of the 3,700 troops with 13 countries offering fewer than 10 individuals each.

From the outset, the EU mission struggled against perceptions that it was essentially a French effort. The French force commander, Jean-Philippe Ganascia, was also subject to domestic criticism that the operation did not dovetail more effectively with the parallel French military establishment of nearly 1,200 troops already operating in Chad.

EU commanders, however, insisted – with difficulty – upon a strict distinction between French and EU forces. In addition, the integrated military command structure, which accorded operational command to a non-French general, visibly **tempered the pursuit of French strategic interests**. To some extent, therefore, the operation reinforced EU declarations of impartiality and neutrality with practical effect.



*The EUFOR Tchad/RCA operation was the first autonomous military operation of the EU. It was also the first of a so-called 'bridging' operation, designed to be handed over to a UN force. (Photo: Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces of the Czech Republic)*

Over the course of the 12-month operation, EUFOR focused on providing wide area security through extensive local intelligence gathering, consultations with local and tribal leaders and extensive security patrolling as well as rapid response to specific threats. All in all, the operation delivered significant – if limited in scope and duration – **security benefits to local populations and to international humanitarians**. To some extent, it also brought issues of gender justice into the operational frame.

## Reconciling conflicting understandings of justice

In the the EUFOR Tchad/RCA operation, the EU was seeking to bring its own set of values to bear to protect vulnerable communities (local populations, refugees, displaced persons) and those assisting them (NGOs and UN agencies) while at the same time seeking to respect the formal parameters of inter-state interests and – most significantly – the strategic interests of the lead EU partner and sponsor of the operation.

In a sense, this case illustrates the intersection of conflicting perceptions of justice and offers lessons in how these can (and cannot) be effectively reconciled in the field with associated consequences for policy making.

## Strengths

- 🌐 Multiplicity and adaptability of EU policy tools
- 🌐 Adherence to international law and UN authorisation
- 🌐 Coordination capacity with other multilaterals (UN, NATO, AU etc.)
- 🌐 Scale of available resources
- 🌐 Quality of military assets (personnel and hardware)
- 🌐 Strong sense of normative values and purpose, especially on human rights and gender
- 🌐 Active engagement with NGOs in the field

Reconsidering European Contributions to Global Justice (GLOBUS) is a research project that critically examines the EU's contribution to global justice.

GLOBUS studies the contents and conduct of the EU's External policies with a focus on climate justice, migration, trade and development, peace and conflict resolution, gender and human rights.

Coordinator: ARENA Centre for European Studies, University of Oslo



Funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme Grant Agreement no. 693609

## Challenges

- 🌐 Triangulating between collective EU position(s) and the interests of member states
- 🌐 Speed and scope of policy decision making not always suited to managing situations 'on-the-ground'
- 🌐 Gaps in security capacity which adversely impact on operations (cf tactical and strategic airlift, command and control technologies and reconnaissance)
- 🌐 Disconnect between specific operations and wider peace-making strategies
- 🌐 Predominance given to state actors in conflict situations
- 🌐 Respect for NGO's 'humanitarian space'

## Recommendations

- 🌐 Stronger role for operational HQs within wider and more flexible mandates
- 🌐 Better integration of operations within wider diplomatic strategies and holistic peace-building approaches
- 🌐 Clear dedication to fill strategic gaps in military capacity through PESCO projects and EDF funding
- 🌐 Improved training for, and integration of, gender advisors in operations
- 🌐 Central funding of military operations
- 🌐 Improved structural cooperation between EU and NGOs at policy planning stage (both for situational awareness and codes of conduct on the ground)

### Author

Ben Tonra is Professor at University College Dublin.

### Further readings

Tonra, B. (2018) 'The (In)Justices of Peacekeeping: EUFOR Tchad/RCA', *GLOBUS Research Paper 3/2018*.

Tomić, N. and Tonra, B. (2018) 'The Pursuit of Justice Through EU Security Strategies', *GLOBUS Research Paper 2/2018*.

Sjursen, H. (2017) 'Global Justice and Foreign Policy: The Case of the European Union', *GLOBUS Research Paper 2/2017*.

## Follow GLOBUS



@globus\_h2020



@globus.h2020



globus.uio.no/blog

[info@globus.uio.no](mailto:info@globus.uio.no)

[www.globus.uio.no](http://www.globus.uio.no)