



Assessing EUFOR Chad/CAR¹

Number 42, December 2008

EUFOR is expected to end in March 2009. This article looks at the current situation in the region, assesses the mission which was undertaken in an extremely difficult environment and highlights potential challenges when handing over to MINURCAT. After handover, the EU should strongly support a multi-step approach by offering positive and negative incentives in coordination with the UN and the AU. An EU SSR mission in Chad complementing the UN efforts should be considered.

On 24 September 2008 the UN Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) for six months. This multidimensional UN presence, set on the rails in the context of the Darfur crisis and the failure of the international community to cope with it, was authorized in September 2007 in order to address the worsening security situation and the refugee crisis in those countries. The complex mission in these neighbour countries of Sudan consists of three components:

- a UN civilian element responsible for training a Chadian police contingent and improving human rights and the rule of law;
- a contingent of 850 Chadian police officers is to be trained to assume the responsibility of safeguarding more than 400,000 refugees and IDPs living in camps;
- a military component provided by the EU - EUFOR Chad/CAR.

EUFOR's overall task is to improve the security situation in eastern Chad and the north-east of the Central African Republic (CAR). More specifically, it has following objectives:

- to contribute to the protection civilians in danger, particularly refugees and displaced persons;
- to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid and the free movement of humanitarian personnel by helping to improve security in the area of operations; and
- to contribute to the protection of UN personnel, facilities, installations and equipment, and to ensure the security and freedom of movement of its staff as well as UN and associated personnel.

EUFOR is a bridging operation that is expected to end on 15 March 2009, i.e. one year after the achievement of its initial readiness for action. A UN military mission is supposed to take over from EUFOR. Operational planning for this UN successor mission is under way and the UNSC is expected to take the final decision on 15 December 2008. Considering the ongoing UN-EU endeavour, some questions must be raised. How is the performance of EUFOR to be judged? What are the expectations for a smooth hand-over from EUFOR to MINURCAT? What could be done with regard to conflict resolution? What should the EU do post EUFOR?

A mixed assessment

The delayed start of the operation was no reason for optimism: after all, it took six months to declare initial capacity to act. The overall personnel strength had to be reduced from 4000 mentioned in the crisis management concept to 3700, due to the fact that even after five force generation conferences, no more troops were put at EUFOR's disposal. By October 2008 there were only 3300 troops in the field. France provides for the biggest contingent with 1700 soldiers, followed by Ireland and Poland with 400 each. While Austria - which successfully campaigned for a two-year term in the UNSC - has sent a force of 160

¹ For background information on EUFOR Chad/CAR see Hans-Georg Ehrhart, EU-Krisenmanagement in Afrika: die Operation EUFOR Tschad/CAR, in: Integration 2/2008, S. 145-158. See also Bjorn Seibert 'EUFOR CHAD/CAR: A Cautionary Note' in European Security Review No. 37, March 2008, ISIS Europe. http://www.isis-europe.org/pdf/2008_artrel_148_esr37euforchad-mar08.pdf

troops, Germany has dispatched four soldiers to the Operational Headquarters. There are fifteen EU member states with troops in the field, while 25 are represented in the OHQ in Mont Valerien, France.

EUFOR has to operate in an extremely difficult environment, given the geographical extension of the area of operations, the totally underdeveloped infrastructure and the exhausting climate. These conditions pose high demands with regard to air mobility, logistics and water supply. For example, there remains a striking shortage of helicopters with specific abilities. As a consequence, in March 2008 the EU started negotiations with Russia on the terms of a possible Russian contribution in this field. These talks were successfully finalised only on 5 November 2008, which led to the assignment of four Russian helicopters and 120 personnel to EUFOR, another first in the history of ESDP operations.

To make things worse, the political situation in the crisis area has not improved as hoped. The deployment of the UN/AU hybrid force in Sudan, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNAMID), has not progressed as initially planned, due to the obstructive Sudanese policy. EUFOR Chad/CAR was envisaged to act as a stabilizing complement to UNAMID. The conflict waged by armed proxies between Chad and Sudan is always on the verge of escalation. Despite recent declarations of both governments to reinstate diplomatic relations, the EU-backed process of reconciliation in Chad is in limbo. Furthermore, Chadian President Déby is not in a hurry to select the 850 candidates to be trained for the special police service in the refugee camps.

Against the background of these problems, an interim assessment of EUFOR Chad/CAR and its cooperation with the multi-dimensional MINURCAT leads to a mixed result. The High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), Javier Solana, commended EUFOR's activities and its cooperation with the UN mission while conceding that the security situation is still volatile.² His appraisal has been shared, in principle, by the NGO Oxfam, who has a long experience in Chad.³ There are several points of critique: Firstly, the security situation for the refugees is still very precarious. Unfortunately, EUFOR's mandate does not allow for activities regarding the safety of people inside the camps. As Chad's police forces are not yet capable of fulfilling this task, security vacuums persist, which are exploited by violent groups such as bandits, criminals or militias. At the same time, the security situation outside the camps remains volatile. Secondly, aid workers are also increasingly threatened. In 2008, six were killed and there were more than a hundred attacks targeted towards aid workers. Consequently, the delivery of aid is highly constricted. Thirdly relative to the vast geography, it is near impossible for the relatively small EUFOR force of 3300 troops to provide security to all people in danger in the vast territory of more than 300,000 square kilometres. Finally, while some of the refugees and IDPs see EUFOR's engagement in a positive light, the majority of them have no understanding of EUFOR's mandate and how it differs from the French presence in Chad.

The main criticism regarding the overall international engagement deals with the short-term perspective, being too focused on resettling refugees and IDPs, while ignoring the root causes of the violence. Hence, the result is opposite to one of the main objectives of the whole endeavour: the return home of refugees and IDPs can not be effectuated. One reason for this lies in the still volatile security situation, which is expected to deteriorate even further after the end of the rainy season. Another reason is the neglect of the political process in Chad and other parts of the region in crisis. However, this is not a task for EUFOR, but primarily for the government of Chad, the AU, regional actors and the international community.

Difficult hand-over to MINURCAT

The UN is already dealing with the challenge of planning a successor mission to follow EUFOR. The main features of the operational concept ask for an infantry brigade of 6,000 soldiers for an area of operation in Chad slightly bigger than currently covered by EUFOR. The force is supposed to have nearly twice the strength of EUFOR, with 18 helicopters at its disposal. This is not easy to implement bearing in mind that it took six months to assign 16 helicopters to EUFOR. In addition, an 'over the horizon force' of one battalion is planned to bring the overall strength of the blue helmets to 7,000-7,500.

² Address by EU High Representative Javier SOLANA to UN Security Council on Operation EUFOR Tchad/RCA, 24 September 2008 http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3_fo/showPage.asp?id=1373&lang=en

³ See Oxfam: 'Mission incomplete: why civilians remain at risk in eastern Chad', Oxfam Briefing Paper 119, 10 September 2008.

One problem will be to meet the target number of personnel, as professionally trained soldiers are in short supply due to the lack of political will of UN member states. The same is true for the high-value equipment for air mobility and reconnaissance. Both are indispensable due to the extent of the area of operation and the inhospitable environment. Already the need for huge water supplies makes it impossible to deploy a bigger force. Another problem is the timely handover from EUFOR to MINURCAT, so that the blue helmets are ready for action immediately after the deployment. Living quarters already existing have to be improved in time and new ones built in regions where EUFOR has no permanent presence. Consequently, support forces - *inter alia* air support, logistic and engineering - have to be deployed before the handover. These scarce resources have to be provided by UN member states in a relatively short time frame. From the point of view of the UN, re-hatting specialists from EUFOR for a certain time would be the most efficient solution. Finally, the question has to be answered as to whether the blue helmets are allowed to take over EUFOR's infrastructure. Not an easy question given its political and financial implications.

There are reasons to doubt whether the international community is really willing to support the UN's concept with the necessary contributions. Two facts indicate that the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon himself has some doubts on this regard. Firstly, he has proposed to keep the text of the UNSC resolution as a draft until there is enough commitment by the UN member states. Secondly, he has invited the EU to consider an extension of EUFOR in the case that the military component of MINURCAT cannot be deployed in time.

Steps towards conflict resolution

Ki-moon rightly emphasised that EUFOR's and MINURCAT's mandates are merely dealing with the consequences but not the root causes of the conflict.⁴ However, it can be expected that the debate will focus once again on issues such as financial and personnel commitments and will thus neglect to address the three main root causes: state failure, the domestic power struggle in Chad and the Chad-Sudanese proxy war. Chad is basically a weak state at the verge of failure. The recently opened access to oil rents did not improve the situation. Oil rents merely serve President Déby's purpose to strengthen his grip on power by a mix of repression and nepotism. Thus improving the development of the entire country – not just the capital - is left to the international community.

There are doubts whether the UN is able to effectively deal with the issue of state-building in Chad. On the one hand, the number of UN-trained Chadian police officers is to be doubled. On the other hand, real institutional reforms enabling a professional and democratically controlled conduct of security forces are still lacking. Hence, there is an urgent need for security sector reform (SSR). Another problem is President Déby's limited will to cooperate. The international community should therefore politicise its approach to Chad by addressing vital fields of action, such as those proposed by ICG:⁵

1. Aim to revive and intensify the political dialogue between the government and the non-armed opposition. This dialogue should aim to conclude a national pact dealing with controversial questions such as the reform of the political system, SSR, justice reform, decentralisation and the distribution of oil revenues.
2. Take on the difficult task of enabling the dialogue between the government and the armed opposition. Such dialogue should strive for a stable ceasefire, a joint monitoring system and a process of disarmament, demobilisation, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement (DDRRR).
3. Tackle the regional aspect of the conflict. Here an UN backed regional approach is of paramount importance in order to design and implement a conflict resolution process which embraces all relevant actors.

⁴ Cf. UNSC, Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad, S/2008/444 of 8 July 2008, available at: <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N08/404/59/PDF/N0840459.pdf?OpenElement>

⁵ See International Crisis Group, Chad: A New Conflict Resolution Framework, Africa Report No 144, 24. September 2008.

The role of the EU

The EU should strongly support this three-step approach by offering positive and negative incentives in coordination with the UN and the AU. Brussels should improve its diplomatic, economic and developmental engagement. In particular, the EU should enhance its developmental approach in the field of political reforms and the support for civil society. The delivery of arms by EU member states should be abandoned and all international activities to stop the flow of arms to rebel groups have to be supported. EUFOR should do more for the protection of refugees and IDPs. EU member states should facilitate the take-over of the EUFOR mission, and consider either the re-hatting of certain contingents or the expansion of the mandate for a short period. In the medium and long run, the EU should support the new UN mission politically, financially and materially. A SSR mission in Chad complementing the UN efforts should be considered. A coherent and coordinated international approach to the crisis in Chad could open the opportunity to reduce the explosiveness of the crisis triangle Chad-Sudan-CAR, and would confirm the strategic partnership between the EU and the AU in a concrete case. Such an engagement would not only be in the EU's interest, but also comply with its normative role in world politics.

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