

IMPORTANT STAGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EU CAPACITY TO PERFORM AUTONOMOUS OPERATIONAL COMMITMENTS. CASE STUDY – OPERATION ARTEMIS

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In 2003, the EU decided to develop the operational tempo by launching its very first military operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Known as “Operation Artemis”, this represented an essential stage within the process of developing the EU autonomous profile in crisis management.

By using the case study of Artemis Operation as a research method, I intended to highlight the development of the main parameters of the future EU operational design. Within this approach, I also followed the process of setting-up the conceptual framework related to rapid reaction capabilities, especially Battle Groups. In this respect, Artemis had an essential role in adapting European cooperation to the challenges of planning and executing tasks in a demanding operational environment.

Keywords: European defence; EU-NATO; Petersberg tasks; Battle Groups; European Security and Defence Policy;

INTRODUCTORY CONSIDERATIONS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EU SECURITY AND DEFENCE DIMENSION

Since its initial stages, European defence cooperation was centred on the development of the operational capacity to be able to act across the full range of Petersberg tasks. In this respect, the legal framework adopted by the European Council in December 1999 indicated the options that the EU could employ in planning and deploying its operational commitments. The approach was two-fold, including the option of using NATO's capabilities and conducting autonomous operations, based on member states contributions. Stemming from the EU-NATO cooperation framework (underpinned by the "Berlin+" Agreements), the first option was used in the Western Balkans, where EU gradually assumed the main responsibilities for security evolutions in this region.

At the beginning of June 2003, European Union adopted the operational plan and the decision to launch its very first crisis management operation (Official Journal of European Union 2003, L147, 14.06.2003, p. 42), which would be deployed several days later, in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Latter known as "*Operation Artemis*", it represented a new feature in the overall international context of that period. At the same time, it was integrated within a complex security environment, having in mind both the development of the EU role in defence and security and particular evolutions in Africa. Thus, the decision to launch such an operational undertaking must be seen from several perspectives.

First, the decision was taken in an initial, but decisive, sequence of the European cooperation development process. The conceptual inception of this approach could be depicted easily in the framework of the Franco-British Declaration adopted at St. Malo, in December 1998. It was highlighted that the EU had to develop the required capacity to be able to autonomously launch and manage crisis management operations (Rutten, 2001, pp. 8-10). This objective was undertaken, one year later, in the decisions adopted by the Helsinki European Council (9-10 December 1999) regarding the development of the first Headline Goal, under the newly created European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). It aimed at the creation, by 2003, of a rapid reaction force, comprising 50-60,000 military personnel, deployable in 60 days and sustainable for 1 year (Rutten, pp. 82-92).

Within this framework, launching an autonomous commitment was meant to enhance the identity of the EU's role and contribution. At the same time, it must be analysed as a direct consequence of the political ambitions associated with this process, which emulated in the first half of 2003 on the development of European cooperation project in security and defence. This approach was reflected in two other decisions adopted in that period, namely, launching, on 1 January 2003, the civilian police mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina (EUPM BiH) and the first military EU operation, Concordia, deployed in Macedonia. The last one was designed as a follow-on operation after the NATO mission *"Allied Harmony"*, thus being a direct legal reflection of the agreement regarding operational cooperation between EU and NATO, signed in December 2002. Much better known as the *"Berlin+ Agreements"*, these were designed to establish the procedural framework through which the EU would be able to use NATO's planning and C2 capabilities for conducting its crisis management operations. At the same time, defining this cooperation framework supported the process of assuming a more prominent role by the EU in the management of security evolutions in Western Balkans.

As regards the overall parameters of the European project, the operational components were meant to develop based on two typologies, one related to the operations with recourse to NATO support and the other focused on autonomous operations, generated through member states contributions. This approach was agreed in the framework of EU-NATO negotiations being formalised in a cooperation framework (Rutten, pp. 172-173), adopted by both organisations through the European Council in Nice (12 December 2000) and, a few days later, by NATO Foreign Ministerial Meeting which took place in Brussels, on 14-15 December 2000.

Within this framework, Artemis was an initial formula for testing the autonomous capacity that the EU could undertake in developing an operational commitment. Obviously, this decision should be seen from the perspective of the European capabilities development process. As it was mentioned, the European cooperation reached a certain maturity, especially in terms of fulfilling the Helsinki Headline Goal. In this sense, Laeken European Council (14-15 December 2001) launched the European Capabilities Action Plan (ECAP), which was meant to improve the capability gaps identified in the HLG 2003 implementation process. The final report made by the experts involved proposed several solutions to mitigate the shortfall. From this perspective, the EU defence ministers adopted, during the Capabilities Commitment Conference (Brussels, 19 May 2003), a Declaration, stating, *"EU will be able to carry out the full range of Petersberg Tasks"* (Declaration of the Capabilities Commitment Conference, 2003).

LOCAL CONDITIONS OF AN UNSTABLE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

In addition to the aspects related to the ESDP development and EU-NATO cooperation, the decision to launch Artemis Operation was also related to the security evolutions in RD Congo. The main aspect was the overall spreading of the conflict in this area generated by a continuous interlinkage between ethnic clashes and competition for natural resources in Ithuri province. Within this framework, the massive degradation of the security situation involved most of the countries in the region as well as the growing number of the armed groups and militias. The conflict developed with different level of intensity on different regions in RD Congo but since 1998, it concentrated in the province of Ithuri. Between 1999-2003, the number of victims of the civilian population increased significantly, reaching, according to Human Rights Watch, 50,000 people (Human Rights Watch, 2003).

International efforts regarding the normalisation of local security generate the conditions for signing of an Agreement of ceasefire (Lusaka, 10 July 1999) between all countries from the area (Angola, RD Congo, Namibia, Uganda, Rwanda and Zimbabwe). The main provisions stipulated the termination of fighting and violence on all Congolese territory. Moreover, it called for a peacekeeping mission, which will monitor the implementation process, while overseeing the disarmament actions related to militias and rebel groups. Based on this request, the UN Mission (*Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies en République Démocratique du Congo – MONUC*) will be deployed at the end of the year, based on Security Council Resolution 1279/30 November 1999. The initial mandate included tasks related to monitoring the ceasefire implementation and the withdrawal of the regular forces of neighbour countries from the Congolese territory. Afterwards, by adopting Resolution 1291/24 February 2000, the Security Council authorised the increase of MONUC strength to 5,537 personnel, including 500 monitors.

Under these favourable auspices, in 2002, there were several other initiatives related to the withdrawal of foreign armed forces. Supported by the mediation of South Africa and Angola, bilateral agreements were signed between RD Congo and Rwanda (30 July 2002), followed by a similar one with Uganda (6 September 2002). Unfortunately, the window of opportunity closed very fast because of the armed groups resumed the attacks against the civilian population. In the wake of the decision of withdrawing foreign forces from RD Congo, the rebel groups engage in forceful actions to get more control. The capital of Ithuri province, Bunia, became the centre of extreme violence (Stale&Gurlag, 2004, p. 511), which forced the local population to find shelters in the small areas protected by MONUC presence,

which did not manage to increase (Taylor&Williams, 2004, p. 208) significantly its presence. In this context, even the UN offices in Bunia are targeted by the armed group's attacks, while more than 50.000 people are trying to find their salvation in neighbouring countries.

On 15 May 2003, UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, made an appeal for international involvement in Bunia as a temporary measure until new MONUC contingents would be ready for deployment. Following its undertaking, several countries, like France, Canada, UK, South Africa and Pakistan express firm commitments. Simultaneously, Kofi Anan sent to EU an official request to explore the possibilities to contribute under ESDP. The High Representative, Javier Solana, presented the request to the EU defence ministers during a ministerial meeting in Brussels, on 19 May 2003. The option of a concrete contribution in support of the stabilization process in Ithuri/Bunia gathered the member states support. Therefore, the defence ministers adopted the decision (Kirk&Beatty, 2003) to initiate an analysis to review the options at hand.

It must be underlined the fact the discussions in the EU were enabled by the firm option made by France to assume an operational role within this framework. In the wake of the Anglo-French summit of Le Touquet, on 4 February 2003, it was expressed the commitment of those countries towards a more robust profile of EU in the crisis management field. From this perspective, the option of developing concrete contributions in support of the security situation in Africa, including through an autonomous ESDP operation (Missiroli, 2003, pp. 36-40) was advanced as the main option for the next period. Based on that, on 28 May 2003, France announced its availability to assume a framework-nation role for a future EU operational commitment in Bunia.

MAKING THE EU POLITICAL DECISION IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO OPERATIONAL

Following the political consensus achieved in EU, in 30 May 2003, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1484 regarding the mandate of an Interim Multinational Emergency Force (IEMF), which was planned to intervene in Bunia. The main objective was to develop the legal framework for a multinational deployment in the hot spots of Bunia as a transitory measure, until 1 September 2003, on the assumption that the MONUC presence will be increased significantly by the middle of August. From this perspective, IEMF actions would be carefully coordinated with MONUC as well as with its forwarded elements in Bunia. It was envisaged as a major priority ensuring the full control on the local airport, to allow the free movement of transportation for MONUC and to implement effective protection measures for the

refugees who sheltered in this area. Moreover, the IEMF mandate included tasks related to the protection of refugee camps, international personnel, the safety of the civilian population and NGOs. As can be seen, IEMF mandate corresponded to a conflict zone with a high degree of unpredictability and requiring high-intensity operations. From this perspective, the mandate given to the international force was a robust one, being drafted on the base of Article VII of the UN Charter.

The EU answer to these evolutions has materialised in the adoption of Joint Action 423/5 June 2003, which structured the main parameters of the EU mission in DR Congo. Having in mind the total novelty for EU of this kind of commitment, the generation process was centred on capitalising France commitment to provide the main line of effort. In this sense, the planning process was conducted under the Framework Nation Concept for EU autonomous operation, adopted on 24 July 2002 (EU Framework Nation Concept, 2002).

As regards C2 arrangements, the main responsibilities were fulfilled by France, which made available the Operational Headquarters, through *Centre de planification et de conduit des Operations* in Paris under the command of major general Bruno Neveaux. Other member states contributed with staff personnel to this structure for the entire duration of the operation. At the same time, based on the Framework Nation Concept, France filled the force commander position, also, through brigadier general Jean-Paul Thonier. Within this framework, the EU Council, approved, on 8 June 2003, OPLAN and Rules of Engagement paving the way for the adoption of the decision to launch the operation (10 June 2003).

The political coordination and strategic guidance were provided through the Political and Security Committee (PSC). The main responsibilities for deciding of the objectives and engagement period rest with EU Council, assisted by the High Representative who was also responsible for ensuring the main interface with the UN for the entire duration of the operation. From the military perspective, the Military Committee performed the main duties in monitoring the implementation process and reporting periodically on the evolutions.

In the field, the Artemis presence benefited extensively from French presence. Within the overall context of diplomatic dialogue between Kofi Annan and French president, Jacques Chirac, on 20 May 2003, French army deployed a reconnaissance team. The results of this mission were used in the planning process and to the preparation of the deployment of the initial elements on 6 June 2003. The deployment process was conducted, extensively, by using the infrastructure elements maintained with French support on the airfields in Chad (N'Djamena) and Uganda (Entebbe). The main problem that had to be managed by the European planners was to ensure enough strategic transport capabilities for the entire deployment requirements. The complexity of this aspect was increased by a few

factors including distance between embarkation point and operational area (almost 6.500 km); technical incompatibility between local airports infrastructure and transportation capabilities and hostile conditions in the local security environment. All of these challenges were overcome with significant efforts made by the French and British engineering units in maintaining the landing strips operational. This was the most complex issue because of a major incompatibility (Firenze, 2003, p. 42) between landing strips quality and planes used for deployments (C-130 Hercules, C-160 Transall, DC-8, Airbus 310). At the same time, the national contributions in the field of air transportation increased significantly through capabilities made available by Germany, Belgium, the United Kingdom and some of the third countries. The role made by these countries was essential which is the case for Canadian and Brazilian airplanes operating from Entebbe since the operational conditions did not allow to operate (Smith, 2017, p. 117) direct flights from Europe towards Bunia. Therefore, a significant number of tactical flights were organised between Entebbe and Bunia, on a smaller distance (300 Km). Ensuring the required flight hours determined, also, to rent additional flights of Ukrainian Antonov AN-124 (approximately 40 hours).

IMPLEMENTING THE MANDATE OF EU MISSION ARTEMIS

Force HQ was established in Entebbe, together with the logistic hub for the entire operation (Joint Support Base) while the opening of a forward element in Bunia. The fighting nucleus of the EU commitment (Multinational Combined Arms Tactical Group) was structured along with the profile of an enhanced infantry battalion with high mobility and autonomous logistic capability. The main line of effort was provided by France (almost 90% from the entire force) out of a maximum 2,100 military strength. French contribution was augmented with participation in the field of the Swedish Special Forces. In addition to that, there were various contributions made available by several member states, especially with staff personnel in the HQ in Paris (Austria, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Portugal). For sustaining the operation on the ground, UK, Belgium and Germany deployed logistic and medical units in Bunia and Uganda.

The deployment finished by 6 July 2003. The main component of forces moved in Bunia consisted of French and Swedish units, around 1,300 troops, including logistic support. The MEDEVAC capabilities were provided by Germany on the Entebbe airport and by South Africa with transport helicopters. The force protection component was ensured also by France including armoured and anti-tank vehicle, ERC 90 – Sagaie. Without immediate applicability, there were provided with some air support and reconnaissance capabilities through French fighters (Mirage 2000D and F1CT/CR) operating from the airports in Chad and Uganda.

The entry of forces in the operational area was made since 6 June 2003, the main actions performed by French contingent focusing, initially, on securing the airport and immediate neighbourhood. Gradually, pending on the deployment pace (on 13 June the strength of EU contingent reached 400), the control was expanded on the main junctions road in Bunia.

In executing these tasks, there were some attacks from rebel groups which were rejected successfully by EU contingents. Simultaneously, the offensive capacity of armed groups was diminished significantly by blocking the supply routes used by them. One week later, the firm pressure made by Artemis paid off. Almost 2.500 rebels left, by the end of 25th of June, the city of Bunia. Based on that, the EU mission took control over the entire city allowing the distribution of humanitarian assistance and the return of more than 50,000 refugees in the province capital.

Furthermore, the actions undertaken by Artemis Operation continued in July 2003, contributing to the full demilitarization of Bunia and eradication of the armed group's presence within the adjacent perimeter of Ithuri capital. From this perspective, on 8 July 2003, Bunia was declared demilitarised zone, paving the way for adopting, on 28 July 2003, of the Resolution 1493, which increased the MONUC presence at 10,800 troops.

According to the initial planning, in the middle of August 2003, was initiated the transition period (15 August – 1 September) in which the transfer process was conducted towards MONUC, both in Bunia and immediate neighbourhood. This process involved the first UN contingent arrived in Ithuri, including a brigade of Bangladesh troops (almost 4.800 troops). The last stages of the handing over process were conducted between 1 and 7 of September 2003, the last Artemis elements being gradually withdrawal until 25 September 2003 when Entebbe and Bunia bases were closed (United Nations Peacekeeping Best Practice Unit Report, 2004).

CONCLUSIONS

There is no doubt that Artemis Operation is one of the essential moments in developing EU capacity to undertake autonomous operations both in terms of generation process as well as effectiveness in implementing mandate objectives. The analyses of the period indicate the success of EU operation being a model on how a demanding operational commitment could be generated in a complex and volatile security environment. In this regard, the actions performed by Artemis had a positive impact on stabilising local security situation. This can be depicted in the return of refugees contributing to the overall consolidation of the negotiation framework for improving the security situation in DR Congo.

At the same time, the importance of this operation should be seen from the perspective of European cooperation in security and defence. Planning, generation and the practical action in the field tested the EU institutional capacity to manage such a commitment towards a new Level of Ambition in ESDP and CSDP developments. On a similar extent, through Artemis, the EU becomes an international reliable partner in the field of crisis management. From this perspective, it represented the starting point in developing EU-UN Partnership being, also, the first practical interaction between those two organisations in the operational environment.

On similar coordinates, the EU commitment initiated a more enduring commitment in DR Congo, which will be developed substantially in the coming period through successive operational commitments in various domains associated with the security sector reform.

From a more practical perspective, Artemis represented the essential component for completing the conceptual inventory of EU in the field of crisis management. It paved the way for the Battle Groups concept, which represented the backbone of Headline Goal 2010, adopted by the European Council in June 2004. The structural features used in generating the contingents deployed in DR Congo, were integrated, from now, on for establishing different formats of EU Battle Groups. Thus, criteria such as the speed of decision-making process, pace of deployment, internal force structure, the model of ensuring the logistic support were all incorporated as such in the parameters of EUBG.

We should take into account, also, the particular context of European cooperation evolutions in which Artemis was launched. The undertaking of this commitment overlapped with an important validation stage of the signs of progress achieved in implementing EU objectives in security and defence, adopted by the European Council in Helsinki. From this perspective, Artemis could be seen as generating additional opportunities for testing the European solidarity in assuming a more robust profile of the EU in crisis management.

Although there were persisting capabilities shortfalls in the implementation of Helsinki Headline Goal, especially on C2 and airlift, these were overcome by using international cooperation formulas which augmented the French contribution. From this perspective, Artemis experience could be used as a model, both for planning and generation process as well as on the opportunities to involve third countries in CSDP context.

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