"But We Have To Do Something" : the drivers behind EU crisis management operations

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CHAPTER VII: EUFOR TCHAD/RCA

On 28 January 2008, the European Union initiated an ESDP military operation which would deploy more than 3000 troops to eastern Chad and the northeast of the Central African Republic (RCA). EUFOR Tchad/RCA was tasked to 'contribute to protecting civilians in danger', to 'facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid', and to 'contribute to protecting UN personnel, facilities, installations and equipment' (Council of the EU 2007b: art. 1; UNSC 2007b: art. 6).[38] Described by a global security think tank as the 'EU's most taxing mission yet', the operation was framed as part of a wider 'regional approach' to the crisis in neighbouring Darfur and served to complement the UN – African Union operation UNAMID in Darfur as well as the UN's 'multi-dimensional presence' in Chad and RCA (IISS 2008a: 1; Council of the EU 2007b: para. 3; UNSC 2007b: art. 1). In examining the drivers behind EUFOR Tchad/RCA, this chapter once again takes as its analytical starting point the four propositions developed in chapter II. It will thus investigate to what extent motives related to relative external power, the EU's own role conception, the goal of European integration and domestic expectations impacted the Union's decision-making with respect to EUFOR. What provoked the EU to mount its biggest 'autonomous' military operation yet in this peripheral region?

A. BACKGROUND

The European Union consciously framed EUFOR Tchad/RCA as a contribution to helping alleviate the crisis in Darfur. The preamble of the Joint Action authorizing the operation thus starts out by pointing to the international community's efforts in Darfur and continues by causally linking the situation in Chad to the crisis in adjacent Sudan, stating that '[t]he Council further emphasized the regional dimension of the Darfur crisis and the urgent need to address the destabilizing impact of the crisis on the humanitarian and security situation in neighbouring countries' (Council of the EU 2007b: para. 3). The 'factsheet' on EUFOR Tchad/RCA on the Council's website similarly presented the operation as a consequence of the EU's efforts to address the situation in Darfur, claiming the EU thereby 'stepped up its longstanding action to tackle the crisis in Darfur, as part of its regional approach

[38] In conformity with official documents and most analysts, I use the French acronym for both the operation and the Central African Republic. Moreover, the shorthand EUFOR in this chapter refers to this particular operation.

to the crisis' (CGS 2009b). Darfur is hence presented as the cause of a regional crisis and the ultimate rationale behind the EU's intervention.

Darfur has been the site of one of the deadliest conflicts of the first decade of the 21st century (cf. UNSG 2006b: para. 3). Long-standing local grievances and violence in Darfur erupted into full-scale civil war after February 2003 when attacks by rebel groups were answered by a brutal counter-insurgency campaign (cf. UNSG 2006b: para. 3; de Waal 2007a: 1039-40). At the same time, Darfur is only one of several violent conflicts convulsing Sudan. A combination of the 'hyperdominance' of Sudan's capital region vis-à-vis exploited peripheries, elites' lack of internal cohesion, and their manipulation and militarization of tribal identities has driven various local conflicts and insurgencies (de Waal 2007b: 4-5). Evisceration of state structures and constant realignments among competing factions in both centre and periphery have led to a deeply dysfunctional state constantly engaged in crisis management, but with 'literally nobody' in control (de Waal 2007b: 23).

What distinguished Darfur from other crises in Sudan or Africa however was the attention the conflict received in the West: '[t]he war, destruction, massacre, and mass displacement in Darfur over recent years is *unprecedented only in the international attention it has gained*. Sudan's peripheries have experienced similar disasters over recent decades, some of them just as horrific, many of them more protracted' (de Waal 2007b: 35, emphasis added). Yet there has been a remarkable advocacy movement around Darfur's predicament that has raised the political stakes for Western governments as they perceived themselves under pressure to prove that they were working hard to 'save Darfur' (cf. Hamilton and Hazlett 2007; Gabrielsen 2009).

In 2004, the African Union fielded a peacekeeping mission (AMIS) to monitor a rushed and sketchy ceasefire agreement in Darfur, but under difficult circumstances mostly outside the mission's control, that task proved beyond its capacity (cf. de Waal 2007a: 1040-41). To demonstrate their commitment, Western governments started pushing for a UN takeover of AMIS from 2005 onwards, an initiative that was vehemently rejected and obstructed by the Sudanese government (cf. de Waal 2007a: 1042; ICG 2006c: 1). Sudan was eventually pushed into tolerating a 'hybrid' UN-African Union operation (UNAMID). Before the latter got off the ground, however, more than 200.000 refugees from Darfur had crossed into eastern Chad, and further geographic expansion of the conflict seemed a worrying possibility (cf. UNSG 2006b: para. 39; 122-123; 2006a: para. 27). It was against the background of this situation as well as Western governments' frustration over their inability to achieve demonstrable effect in addressing the conflict in Darfur proper that the plan for an intervention in Chad emerged. To fully understand the plan's potential

motives and implications, however, it is necessary to also take a look at Chad, the intended beneficiary of an EU intervention.

CRISIS IN CHAD AND RCA

A former French colony, Chad's history since independence in 1960 has been one of recurrent and often violent conflict – and one without a single constitutional transfer of power as yet (UNSG 2006a: para. 7; Ayangafac 2009: 1; see also Handy 2007: 2-5; Prunier 2007; ICG 2006b: 2; 2008a: 7). As elsewhere in Africa, colonial borders hardly reflected historical ties, and the new-born state lacked the material and ideational means to fully impose its authority. Numerous cleavages at the local level combined with corruption, authoritarianism, militarization and oppression of political opposition at the national level to result in quasi-intractable political crisis (cf. Ayangafac 2009: 1; ICG 2006b: 2; Tubiana 2008: 57; Handy 2008: 5; 2007: 3-7; ICG 2008a: 2-8; de Waal 2008). Since control of political power also implied exclusive access to the most important sources of wealth, no ruler risked a fair political process, but instead sought to destroy or buy off opposition that became too threatening (cf. ICG 2008a: 3-5). The foreclosure of constitutional means to challenge the ruler in power however made armed rebellion the most plausible way to address grievances. The latest round of military confrontations within Chad was triggered by the decision of president Déby, in 2004, to change the constitution in order to allow himself a third presidential term (cf. Handy 2008: 4). Against the backdrop of rising government resources as Chad became an oil exporter in the early 2000s, this alienated important constituencies, including from within his own camp (cf. Handy 2008: 4).

Waning legitimacy, militarized factional rivalry and state fragility combined to result in a serious challenge to the rule of president Déby (cf. Handy 2007). Chad is not only one of the world's poorest countries, but also tails the UNDP's Human Development Index and features consistently among the frontrunners on Transparency International's corruption index. The situation is not much different in the Central African Republic (RCA), the second host nation of EUFOR Tchad/RCA and an even weaker 'shadow state' than Chad (cf. ICG 2007b: 1; Berg 2009: 63; Marchal 2009: (1); Prunier 2007). Yet the RCA played only a secondary role in the operation with just 200 soldiers stationed there, and their contribution to fulfilling the operation's mandate was limited (Interview with MS official). That the country had been added to EUFOR's area of operations was related more to the situation in Chad than in RCA itself: with RCA's north-eastern part protruding in between Chad and Sudan, that region has been crossed by various rebel movements on their way (cf. Berg 2009: 63).

LINKING CHAD TO DARFUR

The EU was not alone in claiming that the situation in Chad was a consequence of the conflict in Darfur. The view that the latter was 'spilling over' the border was shared by many media and humanitarian organizations and promoted by Chad's president Déby in an effort to deflect attention from Chad's domestic political crisis (cf. Handy 2007: 1; Prunier 2007; see also UNSG 2006a: para. 81; ICG 2006c: 2; 2006b: 25). The conflict in Darfur has indeed not only led to more than 200.000 refugees, but also to cross-border incursions by the *Janjaweed,* militia armed by the Sudanese government whose attacks had contributed to almost 200.000 Chadian internally displaced persons (IDPs) in addition to the refugees from Darfur by the end of 2007 (UNSG 2007c: para. 11). Yet Chad's instability was not simply a consequence of the violence in Darfur. Instead, the region is host to a number of conflicts which partially stem from Chad's own governance crisis, but which have become closely intertwined (cf. de Waal 2008). The International Crisis Group thus opined that the 'political and security crisis Chad faces is internal, and has been exacerbated rather than caused by the meddling of its Sudanese neighbours' (ICG 2008a: 1).

To keep himself in power, Chad's president Déby relies mainly on his own ethnic group, the Beri (cf. Tubiana 2008: 14). The group's settlements straddle the border region of Chad and Sudan, and, as non-Arabs, the Beri have been in open conflict with the Sudanese government in Khartoum since 2003 (cf. Tubiana 2008: 26). In order not to lose his clan's crucial support, Déby eventually had to offer some assistance to Darfurian rebels by tolerating rear bases on Chadian soil, earning him the wrath of the Sudanese government (cf. Tubiana 2008: 26-27; Lacey 2006). In response, Khartoum has supported Chadian rebels with the objective of toppling president Déby (Tubiana 2008: 27-46; Prunier 2008). Both governments thus slid into a proxy war that fed on domestic political grievances they sought to exploit, but which they failed to fully control (cf. Tubiana 2008). The fact that the crisis was rooted in this proxy war and Chad's own political situation rather than simply the conflict in Darfur raised questions as to whether the EU was honest in its self-ascribed objectives of alleviating human suffering by deploying a temporary protection force while steering clear of Chad's political crisis – questions that came to inform the subsequent decision-making process.

The primary reason for widespread scepticism over the motives that had led the EU to engage in an operation in Chad was the role of France, Chad's former colonial master and the main proponent of an ESDP engagement in that country. Since decolonisation, Chad has remained under considerable French influence. In various military cooperation agreements, France received a military base and automatic transit and over-flight rights in Chad in return for which it was to provide for external defence and, upon request but at its own discretion, support against

internal threats (cf. Tartter 1988). In the context of armed conflict between Libya and Chad, Paris in 1986 installed Operation *Epervier* (Sparrowhawk) in Chad, which has since remained there. Meanwhile reduced to 950 soldiers, this military presence is tasked to protect French residents in Chad and to provide logistical and intelligence support to the Chadian armed forces as well as medical support to the local population (cf. MoD 2010). Military cooperation however did not imply that Paris would always support the Chadian government. It has in fact allowed for several coups in the past, and its assistance can thus not be taken for granted (cf. ICG 2006b: 17). When it comes to the current president Déby, however, *Epervier's* support has several times proven critical to his regime's survival (ICG 2006b: 19; Handy 2007: 8-9; Marchal 2009: (1); Berg 2009: 67; Helly 2009: 343). In April 2006, just one year before France proposed EUFOR Tchad/RCA, *Epervier* had thus helped Déby repel a rebel incursion into the Chadian capital (cf. ICG 2008a: 17-18; The Economist 2008b; Charbonneau 2010: 223). Given this history, it is easy to imagine that a French initiative for an EU operation in Chad would raise eyebrows in other capitals.

B. PUTTING EUFOR TCHAD/RCA ON THE ESDP AGENDA

It was on 21 May 2007 that EU foreign ministries received notice from Paris which suggested an ESDP military intervention in the Darfur region (cf. Mattelaer 2008: 10; Helly 2009: 340). A few days before, on 16 May 2007, Nicolas Sarkozy had been inaugurated as France's new centre-right president. Two days later, Sarkozy appointed the centre-left politician and humanitarian activist Bernard Kouchner his foreign minister. The very next day Kouchner called a meeting with 'Urgence Darfour' and other NGOs engaged in advocacy over Darfur, and two days later he sent a cable to the other EU foreign ministries which included suggestions to establish militarily secured humanitarian corridors from Chad into Darfur (cf. Marchal 2009: (3); Le Figaro 2007; Berg 2009: 65; Mattelaer 2008: 14). Visiting Sudan two weeks later, however, Kouchner learned that the Sudanese government was adamant in its refusal to accept European military in Darfur – and that humanitarian organizations on the ground questioned the wisdom of such an approach as humanitarian access was not the problem in Darfur (Interviews with CGS and MS officials; Marchal 2009: (3)). Rather, any militarized humanitarian intervention in Darfur proper threatened to provide Sudan with a pretext to block the UN's hopes of taking over the AMIS operation (Interview with CGS official; Helly 2009: 340). Thus thwarted in his original plans, Kouchner decided to focus on protecting Darfurian refugees across the border in Chad (Interview with FRA official).

The reaction that Paris received from other EU capitals upon its proposal for military intervention in eastern Chad was decidedly unenthusiastic. As many officials from all sides underlined, French diplomats struggled enormously to overcome suspicions regarding unsavoury French motives, disbelief into the alleged links between Chad and Darfur, and indifference (Interviews with MS and CGS officials). Asked what he thought were the circumstances that led France to propose the operation, a Dutch official summed up the feeling in Brussels by saying 'France wanted the operation, so they invented a context in which for it to take place, the context of the "Darfur region"' (Interview). The first response to the French initiative thus consisted in many critical questions. Since the French administration was still sorting itself out, such resistance by procrastination helped the German EU Council presidency to keep the operation more or less off the official ESDP agenda until the presidency changeover to Portugal in July 2007 (cf. Mattelaer 2008: 14; Berg 2009: 65).

The French government however kept pushing for its idea. Kouchner, upon taking office, had almost immediately called for a high-level international conference on Darfur. It took place one month later, 25-26 June 2007. What helped the French government push the issue was that the US administration was also under significant domestic pressure from advocacy groups to do something about Darfur (having labelled the conflict a 'genocide' early on), but quite unwilling to consider serious punitive measures (cf. Hamilton and Hazlett 2007). Therefore, in the words of one (European) official, they 'were going to embrace whoever would come through the door and say, we'll do something. […] So they immediately said, "yes, Ms Rice will attend the conference in Paris"' (Interview with MS official). One EU official even claimed that the US State Department considered participating in the planned operation, only to be stopped by 'Ayatollahs in the Pentagon' who opposed US participation in EU military operations on grounds of principle (Interview with CGS official). Although the conference addressed Darfur more widely, France also used it to keep eastern Chad on the agenda, and Paris succeeded, on 23 July 2007, in having the Council of the EU give planning authority to the Council General Secretariat (CGS) for an operation (cf. Berg 2009: 65; Mattelaer 2008: 14). This begs the question what induced the French government to press so hard for an ESDP operation in Chad.

As the eponymous title of an essay by a French expert on the region points out, understanding French policy toward Chad and Sudan is a difficult task (Marchal 2009). French officials interviewed for this study insisted on the importance of the humanitarian dimension coupled with France's singular situational awareness due to its close ties with, and presence in Chad (Interviews). Most interviewees also stressed the personal interest the new foreign minister took in the dossier (similarly, Mattelaer 2008: 10; Marchal 2009: (2)). With Kouchner's background as a humanitarian activist – e.g. co-founding Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) as well as

advocating a 'right to interfere' ('droit d'ingérence') – and French public opinion concerned about Darfur, humanitarian impetus met French domestic political expediency. Moreover, the situation in Darfur had figured prominently in the preceding election campaign (Interviews with MS officials; Marchal 2009: (2); Berg 2009: 64-5).

INTERVENING IN CHAD – AN OLD UN DEMAND?

In light of this French domestic political constellation, the official reasoning of a humanitarian impulse is certainly not implausible. EU official discourse as well as a good number of interviewees further bolstered this case by claiming or implying that the United Nations had also pushed for this intervention in eastern Chad (Interviews with CGS and FRA officials; Council of the EU 2007b: para. 1; Solana 2009; Mattelaer 2008: 8-9). Underpinning this logic, the EU operation was characterized as a 'bridging operation' for the UN, and Javier Solana described it as an exclusively humanitarian operation deployed '[a]t the request of the UN Security Council' (Council of the EU 2007b: art. 1; Solana 2009). Yet this is putting the cart before the horse. Whereas some UN officials had indeed had suggested an international force in Chad as early as May 2006 (cf. Hancock 2006), the UN Secretariat was rather reluctant. After a technical assessment mission, the UN's report contended that '[t]he conditions for an effective United Nations peacekeeping operation do not, therefore, seem to be in place' (UNSG 2006a: para. 84). The UN Secretariat feared that, in the absence of a credible political process, there was no exit strategy (cf. UNSG 2006a: para. 84).

The UN Secretariat's reluctance does not only show in a series of reports that underlined the risks and limited utility of such a peacekeeping operation (UNSG 2007b: para. 89-91; 2008e: para. 52). Several analysts also asserted that it was in fact the French government that had repeatedly pushed the UN Secretariat to explore the possibilities of a peace support operation in Chad (Marchal 2009: (3); Berg 2009: 63-4; 74; Gowan 2008: 44; Helly 2009: 344; Charbonneau 2010: 224). This interpretation is supported by the fact that, according to the minutes of the UNSC meeting in which resolution 1706 – which first tasked the UNSG to explore a potential presence in Chad – was adopted, France was the only Security Council member to invoke the situation in Chad and RCA (cf. UNSC 2006). It is further corroborated by the fact that several French officials privately underlined that the idea for such an operation had been circulating in Paris for some time (Interviews with FRA officials). One of them declared that France had already in June 2006, i.e. before the respective UN reports, presented the idea for such an operation in the EU's Political and Security Council, but had been turned down due to other member states' suspicions of a 'hidden agenda' (Interview). In view of the above, the

suggestion by French and EU officials that the UN Secretariat was (critical) among those pushing for an international peace support operation in eastern Chad carries little plausibility. Since the decisive impetus came from Paris, we cannot deduce a humanitarian agenda from UN ownership but instead have to evaluate the motives that the French government had in taking this initiative.

THE DEBATE WITHIN THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT

When it comes to agenda-setting within the French government, EUFOR Tchad/RCA has usually been described as the result of a personal initiative of Bernard Kouchner, if against the backdrop of longer-standing French interests (Mattelaer 2008: 10; Marchal 2009: (3); Dijkstra 2011: 192). This was the reasoning most of the interviewed French officials privately stressed, too (Interviews). Yet these interviews also revealed fissures within the French government. The speed by which Kouchner went into action on Darfur surprised everyone, including the French Ministry of Defence (MoD), which at first hesitated (Interviews with CGS and FRA officials; cf. Le Figaro 2007). This was partly due to the fact that Kouchner's original idea had been to use Chad as a basis for humanitarian corridors into Darfur, an idea that military experts considered hardly feasible and very dangerous (Interviews with CGS and MS officials; cf. Mattelaer 2008: 14; Marchal 2009: (3)). Moreover, the military felt overstretched, and the MoD somewhat miffed at having been ignored in the decision-making process (Interviews with FRA officials; Le Figaro 2007). As one official involved put it, 'the cabinet and political structure in the MoD were simply sidelined' (Interview with MoD official).

Yet the MoD was not the only one hesitating. Even the Elysée, which had supposedly 'fixed Darfur as a priority for Kouchner' (cf. Le Figaro 2007), was cautious. After all, Nicolas Sarkozy had campaigned on the promise of a 'break' with the past, including with respect to French politics on Africa (cf. Holm 2009: 18-26; Prunier 2008; Gowan 2008; McDougall 2007; see also Sarkozy 2008). In particular, Sarkozy had declared in 2006, on tour in Africa, that 'we have to free ourselves from the networks of another time', and his state secretary responsible for cooperation and Francophonie, Jean-Marie Bockel, further specified his intentions with respect to the secretive networks of political and economic influence embodied in the term 'Françafrique' by asserting 'I want to sign the death certificate of Francafrique'[39] (cf. Beuret 2008; Boisbouvier 2008). Finally, Sarkozy had also specifically propounded military disengagement from Africa in his election campaign (Gowan 2008: 44;

[39] The translation (as well as subsequent ones) is provided by the author to his best ability.

Boisbouvier 2008; Beuret 2008). His credibility was thus potentially at stake with an operation that might, intentionally or otherwise, bolster an African president that in many ways embodied the bad old ways (cf. Le Monde 2008d; Gowan 2008: 43-44).

The hesitation of significant parts of the French government over an ESDP operation in eastern Chad suggests that it was indeed Kouchner's personal initiative and thus humanitarian concerns and/or their echo in the French media that stood at its inception. However, this explanation was viewed with suspicion in many EU capitals. While interviewed officials accepted that Kouchner's personal interest had played an important role, almost all of them suspected that Paris (also) had ulterior motives. Most noted among those alleged intentions was Paris' desire to stabilize a critical client in Africa, variously linked to the suspicion that Paris wished to reduce the costs of regional stabilization by multilateralizing France's bilateral engagement, to foster the advancement of military ESDP, or to reinforce the latter's ties to African scenarios (Interviews with MS and CGS officials; see also Mattelaer 2008: 15; 24; Marchal 2009; Gowan 2008: 44; The Economist 2008a). These widespread misgivings beg the question how plausible the 'neo-colonial' motive is.

FRENCH MOTIVES: STABILIZING DÉBY?

Many EU capitals feared that the operation might primarily serve to underpin an unsavoury autocratic French client. To counter this impression, the French government kept stressing the link to Darfur as the reason for the intervention. At a press conference for the EU-Africa summit in December 2007, President Sarkozy thus defended the operation on the grounds that 'Darfur here, Chad there […] It's the same region. It's the same victims. It's the same people who pass from one country to the other. Explain to me the implausible logic which would consist in saying, yes, we need the hybrid force in Sudan, in Darfur, and not the European force. It's the same people. We have the right to be coherent, after all that's not forbidden. [...] But to say: We have to put into Darfur and not into Chad, that's incoherent' (Sarkozy 2007). Simultaneously, the French president conceded that engagement with Chad helped the regime in place, but argued that this also benefited the local population: 'It is true that operation Epervier, in an indirect fashion, helps Chad. This is perfectly true. I would be a hypocrite to deny it, so I will not deny it. At the same time, is it our role to contribute to the destabilisation of a state in a region where there is really no need for destabilisation because, mind you, on the other side there is Darfur, so see? [...] So we also let them collapse. Like that, we have Darfur east of the border; let's make a new Darfur in the West! Who will suffer first? It's the inhabitants of these villages' (Sarkozy 2007).

Other French politicians stressed Chad's strategic importance. A parliamentary report thus argued that France had 'a strategic interest in the stability of Chad

situated at the heart of the arc of crisis, defined by the white book on defence and national security, which stretches from Mauritania to Pakistan. It is also situated at the heart of another zone of crisis: sub-Saharan Africa and, especially, at the borders of Niger and the Sahel zone where Islamist organizations close to Al-Qaida are installing themselves' (Sénat français 2009). The report further stressed the stability that president Déby represented, and even implied that he stood for democratic legitimacy. The ambiguity of Paris' stance in weighing stability against local accountability became even clearer when Bernard Kouchner justified French support to Déby against a rebel attack in February 2008 by stating that 'we have simply chosen to support a legitimate and democratically elected president' (AFP 2008c).

In private conversations, some French officials also explained that the government's fears for regional stability played a role in bringing about EUFOR (Interviews with FRA officials; cf. Vincent 2008). Alexander Mattelaer thus quotes a French diplomat as stating '[w]hat we want in Chad is stability. The rebels aren't any better than Déby, we simply wish to avoid a situation of continuous warfare affecting the broader region' (Mattelaer 2008: 15). French officials also echoed Déby's claim that the problem was primarily the Sudanese government. Asked about the circumstances leading France to propose the mission, one French officer argued that 'Sudan is a rogue state. So the international community has a role in this region to avoid that this country becomes a source of radicalization and terrorism. Déby has always said he was the last barrier to the Islamization of Africa. And he is right. And we have to take care of that. And that is why he is very free in his actions – because all the other African countries support him, because they are all afraid of that' (Interview). Other French officials however denied that this motive played any important role, arguing not implausibly that France could have helped Déby more easily on a bilateral basis, and that the push to involve partners rather served to demonstrate that the government was 'doing something' in the face of the crisis in Darfur (Interviews).

THE REST OF THE UNION

Most EU governments were anything but eager upon being confronted with French suggestions for an operation in eastern Chad. Their lack of enthusiasm was connected to two main themes that interlinked with each other: apprehensions regarding French special interests and lack of interest in involving themselves into a conflict that they had hitherto had little knowledge of. British diplomats in particular suspected that the operation was to serve 'to demonstrate that ESDP is alive' (Interview with UK officials). This suspicion was mixed with, and partly due to, a lack of conviction regarding the objectives of the proposed operation: 'it's not gonna

help solve the problem in Sudan, and what's the strategic gain? It's like sticking a plaster to make it stop bleeding for a bit until the plaster falls off, but you haven't cured anything' (Interview with UK official). Moreover, they resented the distraction from other operational theatres that they considered far more important: 'actually EUFOR did not achieve a fundamental change in the security situation, and meanwhile it distracted forces from UNAMID, and from Afghanistan as well, so I mean, helicopters that went to Chad didn't go to Afghanistan or Iraq, so you got to ask yourself questions about what your strategic priorities are. [...] If you have other theatres which are obviously critical, it's not obviously the best time to create a new ad hoc operation that does not even solve its own problems' (Interview with UK official).

The idea's reception was similar in Berlin, albeit based on a slightly different fear. The German government had two main concerns, which again were linked: those handling Africa issues were mainly afraid to be pulled into supporting an unsavoury regime whereas those dealing with security policy (a community quite apart from the first in Germany) were mainly afraid to repeat the experience of EUFOR RD Congo, an ESDP military operation in 2006 where France had managed to push Germany into a lead role (Interviews with GER, FRA and CGS officials; for Germany's role in EUFOR RDC, see e.g. Schmidt 2006). Even in the case of EUFOR RDC, where the mandate had been quite appealing in terms of domestic political opportunities and risks – temporary support to the UN in a pivotal step towards putting one of the world's basket cases on course to democracy, but without responsibility for the more troublesome tasks and regions – the German government had experienced significant domestic headwind (cf. Schmidt 2006). The main domestic counterargument had been that this was none of Germany's business as there were hardly any German interests involved. Given the feeling, in the case of Chad, that there were good arguments against the operation on its own merits, doing another such operation just to please France seemed a hard sell (cf. Tull 2008; Ward 2008; Tkalec 2008).

In the idea's early days, other EU capitals were similarly cautious. Lack of knowledge on the Chadian situation mixed with concerns about French special interests and colonial baggage. The Economist likely summed up a majority view in Western foreign policy circles when it opined that 'Chad is one of Africa's poorest and least stable countries and Mr Déby one of the continent's worst presidents' (The Economist 2008b). There was hence significant anxiety over the scale and length of the EU engagement that would be required, as well as the potential consequences (Interview with FRA officials). How would the operation influence dynamics in Darfur? Would creating 'safe zones' across the border perhaps even abet ethnic cleansing, as it did in Bosnia? What consequences would such an operation have on Khartoum's position with respect to the envisaged changeover from AMIS to the

hybrid UNAMID operation? And how would it influence the willingness of Darfurian rebels to join the halting political process? With limited knowledge on regional dynamics and no convincing strategic objectives for the proposed operation, EU governments were hesitant to commit to military intervention. In hindsight, French officials self-consciously blamed these ambiguities partly on the 'quite French approach' of announcing the need to do something and of starting to consider the details only subsequently – an attitude that, given France's past role in the region, was bound to create confusion if not suspicion (Interview with FRA officials).

MOTIVES FOR CONSENSUS

Given member states' widespread reservations, why did the European Union eventually agree to collectively intervene in eastern Chad? Two general motives stand out: the desire to be perceived to be doing something for Darfur, even if at the conflict's periphery, and the unwillingness of any government to spoil the new French administration's declared policy objectives (Interviews with MS officials; see also Mattelaer 2008: 15-6; Berg 2009: 67-70). The latter was probably more important in the early days of the operation's planning, and for those merely 'tolerating' rather than actively supporting the operation, in particular Germany and the UK (Interviews with UK and GER officials). However, the first element came to gain increasing purchase with some EU governments because they came to perceive an opportunity to demonstrate that ESDP was about peace-keeping and supporting the UN and thus very much in line with the foreign policy traditions of the 'formerly neutral' countries – Ireland, Austria, Sweden and Finland –, all of which ended up contributing quite meaningfully (Interviews with CGS officials; Mattelaer 2008: 15-6).

For a number of EU governments, it was frustration over the EU's inability to meaningfully contribute to addressing the conflict in Darfur proper that led them to consider helping outside Darfur's borders. The previous EU support had involved diplomacy in various settings, the training of African Union police (AMIS) in Darfur by an ESDP support mission, and the support of the military part of AMIS in terms of financing and logistics. It is testimony to the political attraction that Darfur had for Western policy-makers that the EU and NATO actually came to fight over who would provide support to AMIS (Interview with MS official). With AMIS visibly failing, however, and Sudan largely refusing European capabilities for the 'hybrid' AU-UN operation (UNAMID) supposed to replace it, there was little left to contribute in terms of security. Hence there was a certain readiness in some EU capitals to do something in neighbouring Chad, especially since there was some hope that UNAMID would profit from a stabilizing presence across the border.

Yet probably the most important reason for agreeing to EUFOR Tchad/RCA was that no government wanted to take it upon itself to stop it. This was partly based on a *quid pro quo* attitude whereby EU governments avoid outright opposition to each others' pet projects wherever possible, in the expectation of reciprocity. As one EU official put it, 'with ESDP operations, I have rarely seen member states stand in the way as long as it does not affect them' (Interview with CGS official). One official even characterized this operation as a 'dower' to the new French administration (Interview with MS official). The main arguments against this operation were that it would be tokenistic and potentially harmful in the regional context and with respect to the EU's standing as an independent crisis manager. Yet these risks seemed insufficiently compelling to warrant public opposition, particularly once a number of safeguards regarding the EU's impartiality had been agreed. With neither London nor Berlin willing to fight with Paris over an issue that they considered secondary, the French government was able to secure the EU's consent to the operation.

C. PREPARING EUFOR TCHAD/RCA

Securing consensus, i.e. avoiding any EU government's veto against EUFOR Tchad/RCA, was only part of what the French government wanted to achieve. It was also keen to initiate a 'truly European' operation, notably one where French forces would make up a maximum of one third of the force's overall size (Interview with FRA official). There were three major arguments for Paris to limit its national contributions: first, the operation's legitimacy would partly hinge on its 'European nature' – as opposed to French domination – since France was not only a former colonial power, but also still perceived to be taking sides in inner-Chadian conflicts. A 'Franco-French' force would therefore have faced great difficulties in claiming impartiality and convincing third parties of its humanitarian motives. A European force, by contrast, would be much more acceptable. As one commentator noted, 'no one is fighting in Chad to keep the Irish out' (cf. Gowan 2008: 44). Secondly, it was obvious from the start that the operation would be anything but cheap. Since the greatest part of the costs for European operations tend to stick to the most important troop contributors (given the rule of 'costs lie where they fall'), there was an obvious incentive to try to get other countries to contribute as much as possible. The alleged French motive of multilateralizing its bilateral stabilization assistance would similarly have increased the appeal of substantial involvement on the part of other European nations (cf. Dijkstra 2011: 197). Last but not least, mounting a truly multi-national operation was a way to strengthen ESDP by underlining its relevance and capacity. Although this motive was not pivotal at the operation's inception, it subsequently became more important as EUFOR's repercussions on ESDP were considered more closely.

These three obvious motives, however, made other EU governments reluctant to contribute massively, if for different reasons. The case is clearest with costs, which were treated like a zero-sum game: there is little incentive for any government to give more than absolutely necessary lest it wants to (be seen to) contribute. Since there was a widespread perception that France had imposed this operation on many other member states, the latter already saw it as a concession to agree to it and did not want to pay on top of that. Moreover, there was some suspicion that the military infrastructure that would need to be created for a European force to be effective (airstrips, hangars, roads, barracks, deep boreholes etc., whose provision in a region without transport infrastructure were key to driving up costs) would mainly benefit France in the longer run as the country most interested, knowledgeable and influential in Chad (Interviews with GER and UK officials; Mattelaer 2008: 16; see also Ayangafac 2009: 8-9; Dijkstra 2011: 197). It thus seemed only fair to France's EU partners to impose a large part of the costs on the suspected main beneficiary.

The second motive, providing legitimacy, was similarly unattractive to other EU governments. Before agreeing to participation, France's partners therefore insisted on a mandate that ensured the operation's impartiality and limitation to a one-year 'bridging operation' (cf. Mattelaer 2008: 15; Berg 2009: 66; Dijkstra 2011: 201). Stressing impartiality was seen as a *sine qua non* in order not to have the EU act or appear as a stooge for French interests. While this concern reflected the EU's premeditation not to become a party in inner-Chadian conflicts, it also served to signal its moral claim to the public at home. As one official from a 'post-neutral' country put it to the author, 'we were then particularly difficult in the decision-making, but only to hedge our bets' in terms of pre-empting a potential domestic backlash because 'had something gone wrong with the operation, both ministers [foreign and defence, BP] would probably have had to go' (Interview).

Apart from safeguarding the operation's impartiality, France's EU partners also insisted on limiting its duration from the start. The mission was therefore framed as a 'bridging operation' that would be handed over to the United Nations after one year. This served to limit risks and costs for EU governments by preventing a potentially open-ended engagement, but also to signal the operation's impartiality by presenting it as a measure on behalf of, and in line with the peace-keeping traditions of the UN. Déby had earlier refused a UN force, supposedly out of fear that a UN military deployment would bring political conditionality and intrusive obligations with it as it had in Congo (cf. UNSG 2007b: para. 33; ICG 2008a: 32). Some positive influence on Chadian politics was precisely what many EU capitals likely privately hoped for, of course, but did not want to take responsibility for themselves.

The third motive for 'Europeanizing' the emergent force, strengthening ESDP, met a more mixed reception. Whereas it irked British officials, it tempted some smaller EU member states, particularly those not in NATO. The operation promised to allow them to gain visibility in ESDP and to get some experience with 'serious' military operations, but above all it helped them to present ESDP as a means for humanitarian ends and for supporting the UN, which was appreciated domestically (Interviews with MS and CGS officials; see also Mattelaer 2008: 32). This was particularly important for the Irish government, which in the context of the upcoming referendum on the Treaty of Lisbon in June 2008 reportedly wanted 'to show the Irish that ESDP is not a European army, but that it acts to support the UN and humanitarian purposes' (Interview with FRA official). It hoped to thereby drive home the point that ESDP was an extension of, rather than a break with, the cherished Irish tradition of neutrality and support to the UN. The Irish Chief of Defence accordingly captioned an advocacy newspaper article for this operation 'Irish soldiers deploying to Chad will continue our proud tradition', underlining the operation had 'a clear UN mandate' and addressed 'one of the world's most acute humanitarian crises' (Earley 2008).

It would be cynical, however, to describe the Irish position as a result merely of domestic political calculation. Under the condition of EUFOR's impartiality, a number of EU governments also came to see opportunities for contributing to refugees' well-being. This desire was a function of the humanitarian concerns over Darfur that were present not just in France, but also in most other EU member states. In an opinion piece for an Austrian newspaper, Javier Solana built on these concerns, entitling his advocacy for the operation '[Let us] not acquiesce into suffering without taking action' (Solana 2008). Whereas societal expectations that EU governments help 'save Darfur' should not be overstated, the operation provided them with an opportunity to demonstrate their willingness to do something about Africa's most mediatised conflict. Asked why many of the smaller EU countries eventually participated in the operation, one EU official emphasized that 'it needs to be sold domestically. And with all the refugee pictures on TV, it was easy to sell' (Interview with CGS official). Some EU governments saw an opportunity for promoting a humanitarian agenda even if they had residual doubts about French motives. Alexander Mattelaer thus quotes a representative from neutral country arguing: '[w]e know the French have certain national interests in Chad and that they are in it with a somewhat different agenda. But without the French nothing would happen at all. By and large, we believe the French are honest about this and trying to do the right thing' (Mattelaer 2008: 15-6). French officials similarly underlined that, after an EU process in which all planning documents had to be agreed at 27, 'it was not possible anymore to accuse France of neo-colonialism' (Interview with FRA officials). They also stressed that there was a contradiction between EU partners'

professed wish to distance EUFOR Tchad/RCA from French national policy and their lack of readiness to send troops and expect France to fill up the gaps, thereby undermining the very distance they wished to create (Interview with FRA officials).

Yet beyond such humanitarian motives, contributing countries also had idiosyncratic reasons for participating. Sweden was reportedly very interested in using the so-called Nordic Battle Group, an ESDP crisis management reaction force led by Sweden that was scheduled to be on stand-by during the first half of 2008 (Interviews with MS officials; cf. Dijkstra 2011: 204-5). As Stockholm had significantly invested into the Nordic Battle Group, it felt under pressure to demonstrate the instrument's utility to its ministry of finance, parliament and public opinion (Interview with MS official; see also Berg 2009: 69-70). As one official reminisced, 'Sweden asked France whether there was a possible intervention scenario for the battle group as that would be important for public opinion and the parliament, which had started asking questions about the costs of having the obligation of having these units on alert. France told Sweden they had a solution: namely Chad' (Interview with FRA official). While this 'solution' eventually foundered on a number of technical and political problems, Sweden still participated with around 200 soldiers at the beginning of the operation. A Swedish official by contrast argued that Stockholm had early on discarded the battle group option, but that France and the Council Secretariat had misinterpreted Swedish insistence on a proper crisis management concept as evidence of Stockholm's eagerness to participate at a more important scale (Interview with SWE official; cf. Dijkstra 2011: 204-5).

When it came to Austria, its decision to participate was partly informed by strategic considerations of getting serious military experience at a discount. However, the Austrian government reportedly also wanted to show off its credentials as a security provider at a time when it geared up for a UN Security Council seat from 2009 onwards – and when it contributed exactly one staff officer to ISAF in Afghanistan (Interview with MS official). Some officials voiced suspicion that this motive may have played a role for other governments, too: 'for some countries, it is also about not dealing with the hard things by keeping themselves busy with such operations' (Interview with UK official). Poland, the remaining big contributor, was reportedly particularly interested in burnishing its credentials as a big EU member state and important player in the ESDP (Interview with POL official; see also Berg 2009: 68).

Frequently, however, motives were mixed, as in the case of the Netherlands. As a Dutch official put it, 'we did not want the operation, but at some point the damage of not contributing would have been greater than the costs of doing so – plus, the Marine Corps had not had a mission since Iraq. [...] The purpose of military these days are operations. Use it or lose it. This is why Afghanistan is now an existential fight for NATO' (Interview). Another added that, while the Dutch government at

large had been unconvinced, the labour party and development minister Bert Koenders in particular were eager to show engagement in Africa (Interview; cf. Tweede Kamer 2008: 69-4831). An opposition leader in parliament even suggested 'that the support of the PvdA [labour party, BP] for the mission in Uruzghan is connected to the deployment of Dutch troops in Africa', thereby insinuating that Dutch participation in Chad helped the labour party underline its humanitarian credentials in the context of increasing internal criticism of the party's support for the Dutch contribution to ISAF in Afghanistan (Tweede Kamer 2008: 69-4823).

In short, EU governments had a range of idiosyncratic motives for contributing to EUFOR Tchad/RCA. On the one hand, they had limited interest in providing material support to what they suspected might continue France's traditional Africa policy. On the other hand, they hoped that their participation might help to provide for an impartial intervention – with some added benefits such as demonstrating active support for international security, humanitarian purposes and the UN as well as gaining military experience, and limited risks and costs as France effectively underwrote the endeavour. Moreover, once it had become clear that no one would veto the initiative, most EU governments were keen to prevent the damage to ESDP that might have resulted from an operation publicly announced but cancelled for lack of capabilities. The subsequent section will detail how these conflicting interests played out in the force generation process.

THE FORCE-GENERATION PROCESS

The well-documented difficulties of the force generation process could be interpreted as a sign of the EU's inability or unwillingness to put capabilities where its mouth is (cf. Mattelaer 2008: 24; Helly 2009: 341; Berg 2009: 70; The Economist 2008a). After all, it took the EU until March 2008 to declare EUFOR's Initial Operating Capability whereas the humanitarian emergency had been identified in May 2007. However, such a verdict would not be entirely fair: the first months were spent on questioning the wisdom of the operation rather than on how to generate the necessary forces – and it were the perceived shortfalls in the former that strained the latter.

After the Council had given the Secretariat planning authority on 23 July 2007, the latter produced a 'crisis management concept' – a strategic political and military assessment of the situation as well as the different EU instruments' potential contribution – on which 'military strategic options' were based. The latter in turn formed the basis for the Joint Action, the operation's legal basis which designates a headquarters (due mainly to British opposition, the EU does not have a standing headquarters), appoints an operation commander and establishes a financial framework regarding shared 'common costs' (cf. Mattelaer 2008: 12). In principle, it

was thus only after the Joint Action's approval on 15 October that the commander could start planning and producing a 'concept of operations' on which specific military requests for the force generation process would be based.

With the troop generation process officially starting around October and taking until January 2008, several officials pointed out that, in comparative perspective, three months were actually not a very long period (Interviews with CGS and MS officials). Given that the most important shortfall concerned helicopters, they argued, this lead time should be compared to those within NATO which, frequently in vain, keeps requesting additional helicopters for Afghanistan – or with various UN operations, which often simply have to do without them. The UN successor operation to EUFOR in Chad, MINURCAT, was a case in point, as was the 'hybrid' UNAMID across the border in Darfur, where, one year into the operation, none of the 18 requested helicopters had been committed (Withington 2008). Officials thus blamed problem perception with the EU partly on differences in procedures compared to NATO or the UN: there, the planning is done by the respective Secretariats and subsequently publicly declared – at which point public attention wanes (Interview with CGS official). The EU, by contrast, would only approve the final step in the process, the operational plan, once the necessary assets were available, thereby inviting public scrutiny of a messy process.

It was on the day after the concept's approval at ambassadorial level, on 9 November, that the first official force generation conference took place (Mattelaer 2008: 14). The subsequent process has been described as a 'game of poker' (cf. Mattelaer 2008: 24). Negotiations were complicated by two factors: France's intense lobbying for the operation, which raised expectations that France would be the default provider of lacking capabilities, and the prior announcement of both Germany and the UK that they would not participate with 'boots on the ground' (cf. Mattelaer 2008: 24). The latter enhanced suspicions in other EU governments, as officials asked themselves whether the bigger powers knew some dirty little secret that kept France's main collaborator in the previous ESDP operation in Africa, Germany, from participating this time around. According to French officials, this counter-argument made it more difficult to get other governments to commit (Interview).

It did not take exceedingly long to generate the necessary troops though. The first conference reportedly saw France, Ireland, Sweden and Austria offer substantial contributions (Interview with CGS official). The only significant contributor that was still missing at this point was thus Poland, which committed at the second conference but had bilaterally told Paris before that it would be interested in participating (Interviews with CGS and FRA officials). Thus, the operation basically had enough troops after two force generation conferences. What remained missing

however were 'critical enablers', namely aircraft, helicopters, reconnaissance assets, and a field hospital (Interviews with CGS and MS officials). Not coincidentally, these are the capabilities that are expensive and generally in short supply since they are in high demand for practically all overseas operations. In the end, most of these capabilities were offered by France after the 5th and final force generation conference on 11 January 2008 (Interviews with MS and CGS officials; Mattelaer 2008: 24). Until then, the government in Paris had in vain attempted to convince other EU governments to provide enablers but, faced with the risk that the operation may actually fail for lack of a few helicopters, brought itself to provide them (Interviews with CGS and MS officials).

The debate on how to share costs was exemplary for the general predicament of the operation. France argued that it was unfair that those states that carried the main burden in terms of providing soldiers should also be made to provide the largest part of the financial costs. Germany and the UK on their part argued that their concession consisted in not standing in the operation's way despite their doubts, of allowing France to 'Europeanize' a national priority – and that they would not, in addition, also pay for the latter (Interview with MS official). Putting up 90% of the necessary logistics by its own estimate settled France with the largest part of the operation's cost as it failed to convince its EU partners to establish a high financial reference amount for the shared 'common costs' (Interviews with FRA officials).[40] Whereas the EU Military Staff had initially proposed to put these common costs at 420 million Euros, negotiations reduced this to 99,2 million, with the final count at 120 million (Mattelaer 2008: 18). This means that the costs to France as logistics framework nation will easily have been at the scale of several hundred million Euros (cf. WEU 2008: 1).

In the end, 23 out of 27 EU members states (all but Denmark, Estonia, Latvia and Malta) participated in the operation (CGS 2009b; Helly 2009: 340). However, only 14 sent soldiers to the field, and their composition was heavily skewed towards France, which provided around 55% of the operation's personnel, peaking at around 1.700 out of 3.300 soldiers (Interviews with FRA officials; see also IISS 2009: 294; Ehrhardt 2008: 1). The next biggest contributors were Poland and Ireland with around 400 personnel, followed by Austria, Sweden, and several smaller

[40] 'Common costs' are shared according to a scale based on Gross National Income. All other costs are financed by member states according to the principle of 'costs lie where they fall'. According to a June 2007 estimate by the Council Secretariat, the percentage of commonly financed costs is generally less than 10% (CGS 2007).

contributors with (far) fewer than 200 soldiers in the field.[41] Neither the UK nor Germany contributed any soldiers in the field. On the one hand, this still implied that the operation was the 'most highly representative multinational' ESDP operation in Africa so far (Nash 2008). This was true especially for the operation's 'face' on the ground whose three battalions were dominated by Polish, French and Irish soldiers respectively. On the other hand, earlier ESDP African ventures were a low hurdle to take in terms of representativeness, and the operation nonetheless heavily dependent on France: of the critical helicopters, 9 out of 13 were French (Interviews with FRA and CGS officials; cf. Air & Cosmos 2008). And whereas both Ireland and Poland contributed 2 helicopters respectively, these were exclusively for the transport of their own troops (Interview with FRA official).[42] By implication, the operation's ability to intervene in a situation, i.e. to fulfil its mission objective of contributing to creating a safe and secure environment in an immense region without transport infrastructure, was largely contingent on French capabilities.

The lock-in effect of having authorized the operation also tapped a new source of pressure for additional contributions. Appointing an Irish general as operational commander made him formally responsible for planning the operation as well as for vouching for its military integrity, i.e. its ability to achieve the operation's objectives with the given capabilities. This put part of the burden for ensuring that the operation could take place on Ireland. Consequently, the Irish government came to send suppliant letters to its EU counterparts, arguing that the Union's inability to raise a few thousand soldiers undermined its credibility in view of the EU 'Headline Goal' of having 60.000 soldiers ready for crisis management (Interview with MS official). This logic probably contributed to convincing a few member states to make some additional assets available – as indicated by a Dutch official when he argued that 'at some point, the damage of not contributing would have been greater than the costs of doing so' (Interview).

Yet as the above shows, it was the political wrangling over the operation's expediency rather than a general lack of capabilities that impeded the force generation process. Contributions simply reflected the (intensity of) preferences

[41] The approximations above are based on overviews previously put onto the Council website but meanwhile taken off, as well as data published in secondary literature (WEU 2008: 8; ICG 2008a: 32; IISS 2009: 294). The estimates above provide an average over the year and have been cross-checked in several interviews.

[42] Later into the operation, Russia was to provide four further helicopters under slightly embarrassing circumstances for the EU, but highly appreciated by the forces on the ground (Interview with FRA official; cf. Mattelaer 2008: 25; Marlowe 2009b).

that different EU governments had with respect to the operation – and most were unwilling to make a substantial contribution into an endeavour whose benefits seemed opaque and/or limited. Whereas French pressure had been sufficient for other capitals not to oppose the operation, it was insufficient to attract enough positive support. At the same time, once the French government had invested so much prestige, the opportunity costs for providing missing enablers became negative – and the French government finally obliged. All EU governments were aware that France carried the ultimate responsibility. As the International Crisis Group argued, '[i]f EUFOR Chad/RCA is a success, it will be a success for Europe. If it fails, more than anything else, it will be a French failure. The Elysée and the Quai d'Orsay know this. It is this lever that the member states of the EU must pull to get France to fulfil its commitment to changing its policy in Africa' (ICG 2008a: 34).

D. IMPLEMENTING EUFOR TCHAD/RCA

Not least due to the insistence of France's EU partners, EUFOR Tchad/RCA was conceived as part of a broader international effort to tackle the humanitarian and security situation in the region. A UN operation, MINURCAT, was tasked by the UN Security Council to train and advise a Chadian gendarmerie force which would guarantee law and order within the camps, but under Chadian command and control (UNSC 2007b: art. 2). EUFOR in turn would protect Minurcat as well as the UN and NGO humanitarian efforts (funded substantially by the European Commission). Implementing such a concept was clearly challenging because it made all actors depend on each other: the UN needed the EU military force to be able to deploy its police trainers whereas the latter's efficiency depended on help on the policing side since a military force would be unable to tackle the main problem for the displaced, namely criminality. As one officer put it, '[e]verybody forgot and underestimated the dangers posed by banditry, and overestimated the dangers posed by the rebels' (Interview; see also Oberlé 2008).

The problems of these multiple interdependencies were manifold: with the main threat to civilians emanating from bandits rather than organized rebel attacks, EUFOR could only provide a certain deterrent, but hardly tackle the source's problem as it lacked the mandate (and trained personnel) to investigate crimes and arrest bandits – apart from missing a justice and correction service to whom it could potentially have turned them over (Interview with EUFOR member; cf. Oxfam 2008). The operation equally lacked the resources to tackle pervasive crime and impunity: 'had you wanted to put troops into every IDP camp, it would have sucked up more than what was available' (Interview with CGS official). The mandate of creating a 'safe and secure environment' was thus compromised by the lack of a sufficiently large and mobile contingent of troops to deter attacks (cf. Mattelaer 2008: 17). The

biggest issue EUFOR had to contend with, however, was the strategic ambiguity that arose as a result of France's 'double role' of protector of Déby and linchpin of an impartial European operation (cf. Mattelaer 2008: 9).

MAINTAINING IMPARTIALITY

The operation's inception did not bode well. Just after EUFOR's formal launch on 28 January 2008, a rebel attack against the Chadian capital N'djamena took place. With the very first EUFOR troops holed up in their hotel upon arrival and the rebels in control of significant parts of the capital, the operation was put on hold and appeared to be in serious peril: if Déby was to fall to a movement with close ties to Khartoum, the host nation's consent would likely be retracted as the Sudanese government saw the European troops at its border as a direct threat (cf. Bernard and Nougayrède 2008a; Prunier 2008; Natsios 2008). If on the other hand France was to intervene forcefully, EUFOR could hardly have pleaded impartiality henceforth (Interview with FRA official). The French government thus had to tread carefully. It first declared that it would not intervene militarily, but nonetheless warned the rebels ominously that 'if France has to carry out its duties, it will' (cf. AFP 2008a; Bernard and Nougayrède 2008b). It also secured a Security Council presidential statement to this effect (UNSC 2008b).

Paris disputed allegations that French troops intervened directly in the conflict, claiming they only defended themselves at the airport to allow for evacuations to proceed (cf. Reuters 2008c; d'Ersu 2008; AFP 2008b). A few days later however, the French government admitted that this airport was also (and crucially) used by Chadian helicopters as well as for re-provisioning Chadian tanks with ammunition from Libya (cf. Le Monde 2008b; AFP 2008b; see also Bayart 2008; Prunier 2008). Moreover, in the days immediately following the repulse of the rebels and after a stopover by the French minister of defence, Déby suddenly announced his willingness to pardon six French nationals sentenced to an 8-year prison term for having attempted to abduct 103 children, raising suspicions of a *quid pro quo* (Reuters 2008a; Le Monde 2008c; Bayart 2008). When Déby, only one day later, publicly and 'solemnly' requested the EU to install itself as soon as possible to 'rescue Darfurians who are threatened in their existence', this obviously raised doubts about the EU's intentions and potential effects in the region (Thomson 2008).

Many observers assumed that the attack was explicitly targeted at keeping EUFOR Tchad/RCA from deploying (cf. Prunier 2008; Tubiana 2008: 54-56; Berg 2009: 72; Tull 2008: 2-3; Bernard and Nougayrède 2008a). Some also suggested that the rebels had received the necessary armoury and directions from Khartoum (Prunier 2008). Nicolas Sarkozy's equivalent of a chief of staff thus accused Khartoum of attempting to 'liquidate' the regime of Déby (AFP 2008d). Tensions were also

evident when a French soldier was killed one month later after having crossed the border into Sudan, reportedly accidentally (CGS 2008f; IISS 2008a: 2). Last but not least, even months later the operation reported that Sudanese helicopters had attacked a EUFOR patrol in Chad, destroying two vehicles (cf. UNSG 2008d: para. 14). All these incidents indicate that Khartoum perceived the EU operation as a threat. French officials however insisted that EUFOR was 'not a Déby-related operation', claiming that even forces under French national command did not intervene directly although they 'could stop the columns of the rebels in one hour' – as shown in 2006 (Interviews).

In contrast to Sudanese fears, EUFOR likely remained impartial indeed. As one official explained, there was 'no natural opposition' between the operation and the rebels because the latter had no problem with crossing EUFOR's area of operations when they went organized to N'djamena; the problem only started once they had been defeated, returned without their leaders or sufficient provisions and retaliated against the local population (Interview with CGS official). Similarly, the force commander argued that '[m]y mandate is very clear. From the moment where someone [misguided soldiers, rebels or bandits] exerts a military threat against the population, attacks NGOs, Minurcat, or my men, I have to act. As long as they pass on their way, I am not concerned' (cf. Gros-Verheyde 2008; Mattelaer 2008: 27). When the next major rebel attack occurred in June 2008, Déby reacted furiously to EUFOR's inaction, claiming it was part of an 'international conspiracy' to push Chad into civil war (Interview with CGS official; cf. Reuters 2008b; Helly 2009: 344; La Croix 2008). The rebel attack in June 2008 in fact presented an 'opportunity' for EUFOR to fight back since the rebels had stolen humanitarians' equipment and vehicles (cf. Le Monde 2008a; La Croix 2008). That EUFOR chose to limit its activities to inviting humanitarian workers into its camp suggests that support to Déby can hardly have been pivotal to its agenda.

Whereas the operation's behaviour was thus impartial, the evidence is more ambiguous when it comes to French intentions. In an interview after the end of the operation, the Irish commander ominously remarked that '[o]n three occasions, I had to make a very firm stand', revealing only that it was 'in the area of impartiality and interference' (Marlowe 2009b). Several interviewed officials also denoted that Paris attempted to interfere with the operation on Déby's behalf, e.g. by promising the latter that the operation would (not) be in certain areas at certain times (Interviews with MS officials). This was suggested by Roland Marchal too, who claimed that the operation's French force commander 'intended to behave as an European and was heavily criticized by the French Embassy in N'djamena to the extent that in September 2008 many observers thought that he would be recalled' (Marchal 2009: (3)). He was not, but this suggests that (parts of) the French

government tried to leverage the operation in favour of Déby – and at the same time that they did not succeed.

EUFOR'S EXIT

EUFOR's mandate had explicitly foreseen for the operation to be a 'bridging operation' for the UN (Council of the EU 2007b: art. 1). Specifically, this meant that Minurcat was to grow a military arm once the EU operation would leave in order to replace it. This was what some EU governments had demanded in return for agreeing to the operation – and what the EU Council Secretariat had more or less promised (Interview with CGS official; cf. Berg 2009: 66; Dijkstra 2011: 201). In reality, however, it was anything but granted that the UN would take over – 'we were all big liars' as a CGS official put it (Interview). Another summarized the situation by stating that '[t]he United Nations spent all its time trying not to take over the operation' (quoted in Dijkstra 2011: 215). The UN Secretariat had good reasons: without a political mandate, the operation could hardly be expected to help bring about a sustainable solution to the humanitarian crisis. Yet Déby managed to keep a political mandate for Minurcat at bay – supposedly with the help of the French government (cf. Marchal 2009: (3); Berg 2009: 74; UNSC 2009: art. 6-7). As the Secretary-General wrote in a report to the Security Council, 'the mandates of MINURCAT and EUFOR limit the role of the two missions to addressing only the consequences and not the issues underlying the conflict in Chad' (UNSG 2008e: para. 52). The International Crisis Group concurred, arguing that 'the peacekeeping missions are only a dressing on a wound and do nothing to treat the illness' (ICG 2008a: 33). In other words, the international intervention was not designed to sustainably help the local population.

As a result of the reluctance of both Déby and the UN Secretariat, the handover did not go well. Continuity was only salvaged by 're-hatting' more than half of EUFOR to Minurcat, with EU forces initially making up 80% of Minurcat (Interviews with CGS officials; cf. Helly 2009: 345). Most of these were however eager to leave, and the crucial helicopters went home (Interview with CGS official). A number of officials involved in EUFOR poured scorn on the UN's inability to take effective control of a mission handed to it on a plate – with one of them even remarking sarcastically that the handover to the UN was 'like a de-colonization process: you know they will do the job less well' (Interview with EUFOR member). Yet fairness demands to point out that the UN never considered that operation viable and faced far greater political and resource constraints than the EU. Most notably it cannot cherry-pick the operations it might like to take on and, as the default institution, tends to be left with the more desperate cases that no one else wants to touch. What the handover gone awry instead showed was that the EU contended itself with starting to tackle a newly

discovered 'hobby horse' and left it to the UN to try to find a longer-term solution. EU governments thereby arguably showed that, collectively, their interest in the operation had primarily been to do something in response to media attention to Darfur, in the symbolic gesture rather than a responsibility for addressing the crisis in eastern Chad. This emphasis on avoiding blame is also suggested by Dijkstra's conclusion that '[i]n Brussels, however, a critical Oxfam report (2008) on the lack of the UN deployment was well-received. One observer notes that diplomats were pleased that the European Union at least did not receive the blame' (Dijkstra 2011: 211).

E. PROXIMATE DRIVERS BEHIND EUFOR TCHAD/RCA

EUFOR Tchad/RCA came about as the consequence of the initiative of one member state, France, whose newly elected government was eager to demonstrate its commitment to helping alleviate Darfurians' plight. At the same time, this operation was in conspicuous alignment with a number of alleged French strategic interests, such as giving a new impetus to military ESDP and lending support to a regime France considered important for regional stability as well as its own influence in Africa. Although this gamut of motives induced other EU governments to provide less than enthusiastic support to EUFOR, as notably the difficult force generation process showed, they assented to the operation because no one wanted to be the one to say no to the new French administration. Moreover, some EU governments also saw potential benefits in the operation, from the ability to do something to alleviate human suffering and to demonstrate support to the UN to the possibility of fostering the development of ESDP, gaining valuable experience for their militaries, and stabilizing a potentially dangerous region. This mix of motives indicates that the range of drivers underpinning EUFOR Tchad/RCA mostly stemmed from the idiosyncratic national priorities of its member states rather than any shared logic. The subsequent paragraphs will discuss the most important of these in turn.

TRADITIONAL FRENCH INTERESTS?

France's sponsorship of the operation puts the motives of the French government at the centre of any analysis. Four of them stand out: the first two relate to external power, namely the desire to promote ESDP and/or to strengthen a post-colonial client; the other two to humanitarian motives and/or the domestic expectations that the government do something to help Darfur. With respect to the first alleged objective, it was especially British officials who harboured the suspicion that France mainly wanted this operation to 'glorify ESDP and show the world that Europeans are serious' (Interviews). Yet 'glorifying ESDP' is unlikely to have been a major motive behind the operation. The French MoD was initially reluctant regarding the

Chad operation precisely because they 'were afraid that this could hinder, or have bad consequences for ESDP if there was an impression that France was forcing other member states to participate. It could be interpreted as a "retour en arrière" vis-à-vis EUFOR RDC or even Artemis' (Interview with FRA official). As the official underlined, the political structure in the ministry considered their objective to be 'pushing ESDP as such, on a permanent basis rather than a particular operation' (Interview). In other words, the French constituency particularly concerned about ESDP saw the operation as risky for the broader policy.

More generally, there is little evidence that the desire to promote ESDP informed Kouchner's initiative, or indeed that the new French president and foreign minister were committed to ESDP. True, France's simultaneous reintegration into NATO was presented as a means to strengthen ESDP by transcending Anglo-Saxon fears over French ulterior motives. It is however just as likely that this rationale was primarily propounded to ensure domestic assent to the new president's wish for closer transatlantic relations, i.e. to reassure French foreign policy elites steeped in Gaullism (see also Marlowe 2009a). Indeed, one official involved in EUFOR claimed outright that neither the French president nor his foreign minister believed in ESDP (Interview with FRA official). Yet, a French academic explained, ESDP was perceived in France as one of the successes of the EU, and after the failed referendum on the European constitution in France there was political will to show that the new slogan of an 'Europe des projets' worked (Interview). Another twist of this argument was given by an EU official who surmised that the 'purpose of the operation was to show the French political elite that, despite France's return to NATO, ESDP is still in the cards. It served to convince domestic foreign policy elites' (Interview with CGS official). Rather than showing the *world* that the EU was serious, it is thus more plausible that the French government coveted the symbolic value of an ESDP operation for domestic consumption.

Whereas it is unlikely that Paris primarily sought to promote the ESDP, the evidence is more ambiguous regarding second imputed, external power-related motive of stabilizing a French client. Although it was Kouchner's activism over Darfur that led to France's proposal, the operation was also in alignment with Paris' wish to prevent further destabilization in the region as well as its desire to spread the burden for underpinning this stability. France's historical role in Chad and the manifest concerns in Paris over regional stability thus likely explain why Kouchner was successful in convincing the traditional French security policy establishment to support his ideas (cf. Marchal 2009: (2)). Still, the operation was more likely intended as a means to palm off some French responsibilities rather than to strengthen French influence (cf. Marchal 2009: (3); Tubiana 2008: 53; Ayangafac 2009: 8-9; Gowan 2008: 44). Such an interest in sharing out responsibility for Chad is also suggested by France's earlier attempts to put eastern Chad onto the UN's

and/or EU's agenda, as well as by the government's quasi-simultaneous strategic review with its recommendation for reducing military engagement in inner Africa (cf. Commission du Livre Blanc 2008: 156-7).

Whereas it is likely that Chad's stability informed Paris' calculus, it is less clear that it sought to leverage the EU to (indirectly) support Déby. By pushing for a European operation, the French government invited European scrutiny into a region where it had previously enjoyed a quasi-monopoly on information. EUFOR's Irish commander thus 'nodded in agreement' when confronted with Marchal's analysis that the only positive result of the operation was that Europeans would 'no longer have the stereotype of the wicked Sudanese. Now they know we are dealing with bad guys on both sides of the border' (Marlowe 2009b). This result may have been unintended. The hypothesis that Paris set up EUFOR for neo-colonial purposes however implies that the French bureaucracy was so skilled as to have been capable of convincing all the other EU capitals into supporting an operation serving a narrow French agenda. Under these assumptions it is difficult to believe it would not have foreseen this in-built threat to such an agenda. Dismissing EUFOR Tchad/RCA as simply a post-modern form of implementing the old politics of 'Françafrique' thus seems too easy (for a similar conclusion, see Marchal 2009: Marchal Responds 1.; Charbonneau 2010; and Berg 2009: 67 conclude the opposite). Rather, the French government's inconsistency seems to have resulted from vacillation between its overall wish to 'break' with its Africa policy of the past and the exigencies of the moment, i.e. its habit and interest in keeping a close relationship with Déby.

In short, it is possible but not very plausible that EUFOR Tchad/RCA was a smokescreen behind which France conducted traditional power politics. Evidence for such an interpretation would be the long-standing support France has provided to Déby and the signs that France sought to nudge the operation towards accommodating the Chadian dictator. Yet this narrative would not only run against the public and private claims of French and EU officials. It is also contradicted by the crucial role Bernard Kouchner played in bringing it about. It was the 'newcomer' and humanitarian activist who set the agenda, partly against the wishes of the security policy establishment. A 'neo-colonial explanation' thus supposes that Kouchner had been duped, or had acquiesced into such an undertaking. Moreover, it supposes the same for the UN Security Council and other (participating) EU governments. The required cunning on the part of French diplomats again sits uneasily with the predictable scrutiny of Déby and the constraints on French bilateral action that the operation brought about. The inherent contradictions in the alleged strategic agenda behind EUFOR Tchad/RCA hence suggest that we look at the nexus between humanitarian concerns and domestic politics rather than French power politics.

THE DOMESTIC POLITICS OF HUMANITARIAN IMPETUS

If France's strategic interests provided a facilitating backdrop to its initiative for intervening in eastern Chad, how about French officials' claim that the main impetus had come from the 'need to do something' in the face of a mediatised crisis? At face value, explaining the French government's initiative by domestic expectations is plausible because the plight of Darfur had indeed figured prominently in the French presidential election campaign preceding the initiative. Well-known media personalities had highlighted this conflict, and, as several interviewees stressed, their advocacy was perceived by politicians as considerable pressure from public opinion (Interviews with academic observer and MS officials; see also Hamilton and Hazlett 2007; Gabrielsen 2009). By way of example, one interviewee pointed to Hollywood actor George Clooney who was seen to command a huge following in France. Addressing the UN Security Council, Clooney had argued that '[i]n many ways, it's unfair, but it is, nevertheless, true that this genocide will be on your watch. How you deal with it will be your legacy, your Rwanda, your Cambodia, your Auschwitz' (Clooney 2006; cf. Linton 2006; de Waal 2007a: 1043).

This type of rhetoric came to reverberate in the French political arena. Under (perceived) pressure from civil society during the campaign, the key contenders in the French presidential race undertook to help protect Darfurian refugees. All mainstream candidates thus publicly signed a pledge on 20 March 2007, i.e. one month before the first round of the elections, which read: 'I pledge: […] In collaboration with the states concerned, to mandate the French forces garrisoned in Chad and the Central African Republic to effectively protect the refugees, displaced persons, and members of humanitarian organizations who operate in these countries [...] To use all influence to make possible a European action to protect the civilian population of Darfur, notably to put into place humanitarian corridors' (Urgence Darfour 2007a). Kouchner was among those present and expressed his passionate support. According to the event's host, 'Bernard Kouchner, overcome by emotion, exclaimed enthusiastically: "This evening, a fire has been lit in the plains. This evening, a trigger has clicked. This evening, Darfuri, is the beginning of victory."' (Urgence Darfour 2007b). The civil society network organizing the meeting summarized the spirit of the day by claiming that 'one felt that a new page of the history of French humanism was being written under our eyes' (Urgence Darfour 2007b).

The French presidential election campaign had thus created rather far-reaching expectations as to the efforts the incoming administration would undertake. Not only was the new president personally committed to the issue, his foreign minister-to-be had vocally promoted taking action in Darfur and his appointment, according to one observer, 'was marginally dictated by this single issue' (Marchal 2009: (2);

see also Le Figaro 2007). Moreover, as a former Socialist minister and adviser to Sarkozy's electoral rival Ségolène Royal, Kouchner had to justify joining a conservative administration, which implied an enhanced need to demonstrate that such a move would advance humanitarian and NGO agendas (cf. Berg 2009: 65). There were thus domestic political incentives for the Sarkozy administration to push for EUFOR Tchad/RCA.

Whereas the above considerations suggest that humanitarian concerns as well as their reverberation in French domestic politics may have played a role in the operation's inception, these two follow potentially different logics. Was it thus normative impetus or political opportunity that moved the French government? In the end, circumstantial evidence is insufficient for conclusive judgment. On the one hand, Kouchner's personal history clearly lends credence to his concern for humanitarian crises. On the other hand, Paris' readiness to shift attention from Darfur to Chad coupled with its unwillingness to push Déby to address the Chadian sources of this crisis throw doubt on the sincerity of French concern over human rights abuses in the region. The French government's insistence on a military operation that brought domestic visibility – but only temporary respite for the displaced rather than an attempt to address the underlying problems – suggest a preoccupation with domestic political gain. As Roland Marchal opined, '[t]o a large extent, Eufor was a public relations success for the French. The mission despite its cost (between 900 million-1 billion) did not face major casualties and offered to the European public the well appreciated pictures of European soldiers bringing peace and aid to destitute people' (Marchal 2009: (3)). A French official gave a similar reasoning, explaining that, with pictures of people suffering on TVs and Darfur high on the agenda, the idea to do nothing was not very comfortable for French politicians (Interview). That does not mean that humanitarian concerns did not play a role in triggering Paris' initiative. However, the latter were selective and embedded into a political setting where inaction on Darfur may have implied significant domestic opportunity costs – whereas action in eastern Chad delivered a visible proof of French alignment with a noble cause against a brutal dictator in Khartoum (but not N'djamena).

THE ROLE OF THE OTHER EU GOVERNMENTS

France was decisive not only for bringing the operation onto the EU's agenda, but also for implementing it, as evidenced by the scale of French contributions. The contribution of the other EU governments consisted in tolerating this initiative and in providing sufficient support so that it was not simply a French operation painted blue. Whereas tolerating the French initiative was above all a consequence of the unwillingness of any government to stop Paris, the contributions followed a more

positive logic. Much civil society advocacy on Darfur had aimed at bringing in UN peacekeepers (cf. de Waal 2007a: 1043-45). Deploying troops in Chad thus represented a measurable if second-best result, particularly since it was touted as a measure of support for the UN presence in Darfur. Moreover, this context implied that 'it was very hard to say anything against that operation' (Interview with UK official).

The fact that, apart from France, it was particularly the 'neutral' countries with their tradition of support for UN peacekeeping which carried a disproportionate share of the contributions strengthens the case for humanitarian motives vis-à-vis any putative geopolitical agenda. After all, these countries hardly had an interest in supporting France's alleged strategic interests, but rather an international reputation of impartiality to defend. What led their governments to eventually contribute were reassurances about the operation's impartiality as well as their own interest in a humanitarian mission that reassured voters about their militaries' and the ESDP's purpose. With the potential exception of Poland, partners' objectives thus also suggest an emphasis on humanitarian concerns and/or domestic expectations. Yet distinguishing between the two is again difficult because they imply similar behaviour – national self-conceptions of doing good might directly inspire policy-makers or lead them to assume that living up to such images was good politics.

Both Irish and Swedish officials made credible arguments that humanitarian motives had been pivotal for them, though the latter also stressed that Sweden had participated in every single ESDP operation so far as an expression of its general interest in the policy (Interviews). Yet that humanitarian concerns were qualified for most EU governments is suggested by two factors: first, many of them limited their contributions out of domestic political convenience. This is particularly true for the German government's reluctance to participate, but also for the unwillingness of most countries to make expensive enablers available. Second, EUFOR's limited mandate suggests that the EU was less keen on taking responsibility than on showing that it was active and responsive to the domestic foreign policy concerns of the day.

Collectively, the EU thus created an occasion to congratulate itself on a humanitarian intervention while minimizing the risks attached to political responsibility, risks which consisted in getting caught in a long-term project whose demands in terms of resources would likely not be matched by domestic political support over the longer run. As notably Ireland's (and Finland's) commitment to staying on under MINURCAT's successor mission showed, this was not true for all governments. Yet collectively the Union managed that risk by pushing in an unwilling UN as an exit strategy. Javier Solana would summarize the operation's accomplishments in an editorial that underlined 4 points, namely that EUFOR 'demonstrated how the EU

has become a global provider of security and stability', 'proved itself a valuable partner for stability for the UN', 'affirmed the credibility of our military capacity' and has 'given further substance to [Europe's, BP] commitment in the joint EU-Africa Strategy' (Solana 2009). In other words, the operation had demonstrated EU governments' ability to count in matters crisis management.

F. CONCLUSION

What does EUFOR Tchad/RCA tell us about the strength of our four propositions regarding the drivers underlying ESDP operations? Regarding balancing behaviour, the operation arguably represents the most likely case among all ESDP operations: it constituted the most important display of EU hard power so far, it took place at French insistence, and it was conducted 'autonomously', i.e. without involving NATO's command structures and thereby the US. Yet there is nothing to indicate that the operation served to constrain the US in any way. Despite their critical stance, not even British diplomats suggested that this may have been a French motive. The US also did not express any reservations vis-à-vis this operation; at the time, the Congressional Research Service rather mentioned Congress' concern for the humanitarian situation in eastern Chad and noted that 'despite concerns regarding poor governance the Bush administration considers the Déby government an ally in the war on terror' (Ploch 2008: 6). This makes it unlikely that the US had any objections against the operation, but instead indicates that it likely welcomed it – whether due to shared interests in propping up Déby or shared concerns over the humanitarian situation at the border to Darfur (see also Prunier 2008; Charbonneau 2010: 225). The only, and rather limited way in which 'balancing' may have occurred resides in the fact that the EU managed to do a logistically challenging operation on its own, i.e. by relying on France – and that the enablers that went into Chad could not be used in Afghanistan, as British officials noted with regret. Concluding that it was therefore about 'balancing' the US however implies stretching that concept.

More generally, considerations of relative external power were remarkably limited. Whereas a case might be made that Paris proposed the operation for such reasons, the underlying rationale does not apply to other EU governments. The fact that EUFOR maintained its impartiality even in the face of an 'opportunity' to impose itself vis-à-vis the rebels demonstrates that, at least at the collective level, the EU was determined not to be drawn into taking sides. Moreover, the operation's self-limitations in terms of mandate, time and exit strategy made it unfit to change the balance of power on the ground. EUFOR was simply not designed to not impose its will on anyone save some bandits in eastern Chad, and thereby evinced a lack of strategic aspiration. Whereas one might surmise that regional stability in Northern Africa could have represented a shared objective for EU governments, it is difficult to

see why those governments that contributed would have had a greater stake therein than those who did not – with the obvious exception of France. Finally, French sway over Chad would likely grant fellow EU governments greater influence than the likely alternatives, i.e. the US or China. However, there are no traces of such arguments being employed or having an impact, and they sit ill with the fact that Ireland and Austria rather than Britain and Germany would have embraced this logic.

As their overall reluctance showed, EU governments also did not see the operation as a convenient means to promote the EU or the ESDP – nor did the European institutions play an important role in bringing it about. With the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to conceive of EUFOR Tchad/RCA as one more step of raising the stakes for ESDP, in the service of the project itself rather than the particular operation. Yet the process leading up to the latter also showed the limits of such an explanation: the objective of strengthening ESDP hardly played a role at the operation's inception, actually argued against the latter from the French MoD's perspective, and could not convince EU governments to pledge significant capabilities, despite the questions that this raised about European capabilities. Finally, there is little to suggest that the motivation of those EU governments who joined the operation related to promoting European integration at home – though the Irish and perhaps the Swedish government admittedly sought to use it to justify past steps towards European integration.

This leaves us with two propositions, namely that EU governments acted out of ethical conviction or to respond to domestic expectations. To be sure, beyond France and Germany officials did not invoke domestic politics as a reason for intervening or otherwise even if they pointed to the importance of being able to justify any action domestically. This raises the possibility that normative concerns may provide a sufficient explanation of the operation. The fact that several EU governments apparently felt a certain 'responsibility to protect', and that others at least did not dare to openly oppose this logic, goes some way to explaining the operation's genesis. For some EU governments at least, it is plausible that the desire to help refugees was an important driver in its own right, albeit in a domestic political setting where such undertakings were likely to be viewed benevolently.

Yet these motives also have to be weighed against the results that EUFOR could reasonably be expected to bring about. Here, the operation's features suggest a preoccupation with minimizing risks that qualifies concern for refugees as the overwhelming motive behind the operation. The timing of the operation (4 years after the conflict escalated), its geographical flexibility (Chad rather than Darfur), and the unwillingness to address the structural causes of refugees' suffering (or at least not to arbitrarily limit the EU's responsibility for protecting them to one year)

cast some doubt on an explanation that would equate the main driver behind the operation with the EU's role conception as an 'ethical power' (cf. Toje 2008). This does not belie humanitarian motives: some governments likely grasped an opportunity to do something when it finally presented itself. Moreover, the EU can only decide by unanimity, and under these conditions the choice was between this operation or none whatsoever. Yet at the collective level the operation was informed by both the impulse to help and a reticence to truly commit.

The EU's conflicted stance regarding this operation shows that EU governments were torn between normative concerns (and the arising political opportunities) and the political risks resulting from engagement in a politically difficult region. It thereby highlights the fact that policy-makers depend on domestic political will in order to be able to act on ethical considerations (cf. Power 2002: 509). This (anticipated) domestic will varied across member states, and humanitarian motives thus prevailed or otherwise. Rather than being a direct cause, ethical considerations thus informed a calculation in which governments weighed them against other concerns, such as the risk to be perceived to act on a French agenda and/or to engage in useless symbolism, and reluctance to take responsibility for addressing another difficult conflict.

In sum, the motives for EUFOR Tchad/RCA were a mix of humanitarian concerns, perceived domestic political constraints and, less importantly, strategic considerations regarding Chad. Yet the outcome was an operation that did not decisively change the situation on the ground in terms of either relative power or humanitarian objectives. Due to the compromise that it represented, its mandate and implementation turned it into a gesture which was better suited to impress European audiences than to impact on relative power or to help refugees beyond the short term. On the one hand, this shows that the sum of national objectives can also be less than its parts, in contrast to the Union's aspirations. On the other hand, most interviewed officials saw their (national) position vindicated even with the benefit of hindsight, which suggests that most governments were happy enough with the operation's (non-)results and their role therein. This in turn brings us back to the overarching question guiding this study, namely the generic objectives EU governments pursued via ESDP operations. The subsequent, final chapters will address this question.