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EUSSR GUINEA-BISSAU : RELATIVE SUCCESS OR PREORDAINED FAILURE?

The mission "EU SSR / EUSSR Guinea-Bissau" (16.06.2008 - 30.09.2010) is an important new experience as the first ESDP mission in an integrated manner covering the entire security sector combining defense, justice and police. It is also the first mission fully planned and controlled as part of the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC, established in August 2007) for civilian operations of crisis management by the EU.

In which context this mission has been deployed and what is its value added in the SSR process?

The return of Vieira and the European "come back"

In 2005, the return of former president, Joao Bernardo (Nino) Vieira in his exile in Portugal as President of Guinea-Bissau, has given new impetus to the Portuguese influence in the region. Thus the country has drawn the attention of the European Union which has adopted its own SSR concept in December 2005. An international contact group co-chaired by Portugal and ECOWAS, was also created in 2006. In 2007, the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU has managed to convince European partners to establish a mission dedicated to the security sector reform in Guinea-Bissau.

If at that time, the risks of regional instability that could affect the SSR process were low, Guinea-Bissau, however had maintained links with the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) in Senegal, which some of the troops joined the Guinea-Bissau Armed Forces.

The implementation of SSR after an unfinished DDR

After several unsuccessful DDR programs, implemented at the end of armed conflict in 1998-1999, a (new) Demobilization, Reinsertion and Reintegration Program of former combatants (PDRRI) was presented in Geneva in May 1999¹. This program is based on the Program of National Reconciliation and Reconstruction (PRNR).

Following the mixed results of the third phase of DDR, some argue that the two processes are difficult to develop, and RSS can not be based on an unfinished DDR. The SSR program in Guinea-Bissau² focus

¹ Pedro Correia, « L'après DDR en Guinée Bissau : les défis sociopolitiques et les problèmes sécuritaires », *DDR, Post-conflit et Développement en Afrique de l'Ouest*, Réunion du Groupe régional de travail organisée par le Club du Sahel et de l'Afrique de l'Ouest/ OCDE en partenariat avec la CEDEAO, Paria (Cap Vert), du 28 février au 1er mars 2007, Tome 2 – Document de travail,

² Sangreman, Carlos - Sousa Jr, Fernando - Zeverino, Guilherme, - Barros, Miguel, *A evolução política recente na Guiné-Bissau*, CESA - Documentos de Trabalho n° 70, Lisboa, 2006. ; Concernant les cadres historiques et géopolitiques, see : Türke, András István, *UE RSS/EUSSR Guinée Bissau – Une « mission intellectuelle » et ses circonstances*, CERPESC Analyses, 10/AF/04/2009, 20 novembre 2009.

exclusively on the domestic context, without paying attention to the regional context. This defect seems to have been fixed in the latest DDR program.

Donors have repeatedly engaged simultaneously in SSR and DDR, often combining the two processes, with more or less happy consequences. Indeed, the rhythm of each of these two processes seem too different for it. For example, demobilized soldiers who participated in DDR programs were used to establish a new police force through the SSR process. Without taking into account the simple fact, that a soldier is not a police officer. In a dubious political situation, transforming a soldier or a militiaman to a policeman can create several problems. Yet the international community reiterated this error several times and nothing has stopped the government of Guinea-Bissau to launch a fourth DDR Program.

The present SSR Program in Guinea-Bissau was launched in November 2006 when the government introduced a National Security Strategy (NSS). The international community, including the European Union, were heavily engaged in Guinea-Bissau, benefiting from several programs through the SSR as part of the 8th, 9th and 10th EDF (European Development Fund, FED)³.

Despite making efforts by Guinea-Bissau, UN Secretary-General referred in his report of September 28, 2007, the persistence of serious problems such as partisan politics, the machinations among political actors, social discontent and alarming threat posed by drug trafficking and organized crime. The report recognizes the inability of ECOWAS, and especially the UN mission there, UNOGBIS to manage only the "consolidation process" of domestic politics.

The preparation and launching of the European mission

At the European Union, the EU Council (under the Portuguese Presidency) has estimated October 15, 2007, an action in the field of SSR in Guinea-Bissau would be appropriate. November 19, 2007, the Council confirmed its position before approving, December 10, 2007, the bases for a possible ESDP mission.

December 9, 2007, during the EU-Africa summit, the Joint Africa-EU Strategy refer to promoting peace, security and stability in Africa and Europe as key strategic priorities. This strategy and the ESS (European Security Strategy) on 12-13 December 2003 serve as a basis for SSR support in partner countries.

In a letter dated January 10, 2008 (under the Slovenian Presidency of the EU), the Government of Guinea-Bissau called on the EU to deploy an EU SSR mission in Guinea-Bissau. The mission contributes consistently to the activities under the European Development Fund and Community Initiatives. The Union agreed to provide assistance in an advisory capacity, mainly in "Technical Committee"⁴. According to the CFSP Joint Action (112/2008), political control and strategic direction are provided by the PSC (Political and Security Committee) of the Union under Council's responsibility.

In this case the rapid response has not been a key factor: the time of the planning process lasted about seven months, then it can be as short as 12-15 days⁵ in an emergency case. And the implementation was done with a little delay. The preparatory phase began in mid-April, and the mission started officially on 16 June 2008 for an expected duration of 12 months which was extended for the first time until 30 November 2009.

The EUSSR Mission led by Spanish General Juan Esteban Verastegui⁶ consists of a logistical support cell,

³ Security Sector Reform (SSR) in Guinea-Bissau, Africa Briefing Report, Egmont Palace, Brussels – 28 January 2008,

⁴ Daniel Fiott, « European Union Security Sector Reform Missions: The Case of Guinea-Bissau », *European Security Review*, ISIS, Number 38, May 2008,

⁵ The first decision was taken by the Council of Ministers of Defence, 19 November 2007, the general concept of the mission was approved December 10, 2007. The concept of operations (CONOPS) and the Council Joint Action 2008/112/CFSP on the European Union mission to support the reform of the security sector in Guinea-Bissau were approved on 12 February 2008. The operation plan (OpPlan) was validated by the PSC on May 14.

⁶ Airmobile commander of the Spanish Army, succeeded by Colonel Fernando Afonso

15 to 21 international experts from Portugal (11), Spain, France, Germany, Sweden, and Italy (for counselors and / or administration). Swedish, Spanish, French and especially the Portuguese provide 60% of the workforce. The Germans, Italians and an American prosecutor completes the team. Personnel deployed mainly includes military and civilian advisers, working in respectively collaboration with the three armies, the police, the national office of Interpol, the prosecutor, and fifteen local employees of the mission.

Canada and Brazil have declined the offer of the EU to take part in the mission (the latter country, however, planned to send in 2009 a bilateral mission to support military reforms). Cape Verde and Angola could participate in the mission.

The deployment of the mission

Although Portugal, lead nation, has managed to attract the attention of the international community, including the European Union, on Guinea-Bissau one must also know that the original Portuguese project differs significantly from the mission which was finally launched. Indeed, Portugal wished to deploy a military mission more useful to the stabilization (and only in this case) with a Spanish leader. But the European partners have refused such a commitment, preferring a civilian mission.

That is why (after the decision of its European partners) the appointment of a Spaniard at the head of the mission was ultimately poorly perceived by the Portuguese armed forces. Portugal had already had a head of mission and it would have been politically difficult to obtain the appointment of a second. However, it was decided that the Deputy Head of Mission is a Portuguese. The composition of the predominantly Portuguese contingent made he *de facto*, but unofficially the head of mission.

Italy, historically interested in the Horn of Africa, had opposed the launch of the mission, as did France, which wasn't enthusiastic about the project. A compromise was nevertheless found: the Portuguese Presidency has done "everything" to facilitate the preparation of the EUFOR Chad/CAR (marginalized at the time) to obtain French support for the mission in Guinea-Bissau⁷.

The mission EUSSR Guinea-Bissau, established in Bissau, the capital, near the National Assembly, in a building that previously served as embassy to France, is "guided" by the Satellite Centre of the European Union. The mission budget was 5.6 million euros until 31 May 2009. Charges relating to the Head of Mission are supported by the CFSP budget, but each member state shall bear the costs incurred for all members of staff seconded by it, including travel expenses, salaries, health insurance. Third countries wishing to participate and contribute are welcome.

The purpose of the mission is expressed by the head of the mission itself: *"Firstly, it is not an EU reform but a reform desired and decided by the authorities of Guinea. There is a clear commitment by national political authorities, shared by the opposition. Thus, we have no direct operational role. We are here to give advice, make plans for the future, a strategic decision to transform an operational concept. Our mission is primarily intellectual."*⁸

The value added to the SSR

The mission EU SSR Guinea-Bissau seeks to assist the authorities in the restructuring of the armed forces, and police. To allow them to play their role in areas such as criminal investigations, fight against drugs and collection of evidence in judicial proceedings. As well as to develop the legal framework for achieving these objectives. The mission supports the training, help in obtaining equipment and supplies, and facilitate donor

⁷ Hugo De Malo Palma, *European by Force and by Will : Portugal and the European Security and Defence Policy*, EU Diplomacy Papers 7/2009, Bruges, College of Europe, p. 16.

⁸ Mission Guinée-Bissau: « rebâtir de zéro » (Gén. Verástegui) entretien fait par Nicolas Gros-Verheyde 20/05/2008, <http://bruxelles2.over-blog.com/article-22757901.html>

contributions.

According to General Verastegui, one of the most important goals is to find a solution to the problem of veterans : Recognizing the dignity which they have conquered during the hardest times of their lives, whom the reform will build an army capable of safeguarding the interests and territorial integrity, performing pre-established missions in accordance with the Constitution. (*"Such a solution necessarily involves a recognition of veteran status and the establishment of a reform creating a national army capable of performing its functions in accordance with the Constitution"*).

Veterans representing a challenge both for the EU mission and for the political stability and security of the country. Indeed, the absence of a functional pension system pushes many of these individuals to the illegal trafficking. The establishment of a pension system seems extraordinarily difficult in a country where even the officials can not be paid for years. How to heal a wound without addressing hundreds of others?

Twenty years after the first joint missions of the European Union (WEU) and five years after the first ESDP mission, this commitment is once again update the same problems. The first problem is the insufficient size of the mission. EUSSR Guinea-Bissau does not have certain key skills such as policy analysis, intelligence gathering and external communication. In addition, liaison with Brussels is poor, the visibility of the mission is quite small on the ground and the people of Guinea-Bissau has little knowledge about its role.

The coordination with the UN Office was inadequate and had led to misunderstandings and information gaps. However, according to a report of April 22, 2009, overall progress on the SSR were slower than expected and the mission had not yet fulfilled its mandate. Limited access to the expertise of the SSR and to basic infrastructure, such as space and office equipment, has also contributed to delays, despite the government appointment of a SSR Special Advisor, and to the fight against drug trafficking, at the Prime Minister.

As in the case of Sudan, "the prestige" of the EU mission remains limited. The rapporteurs stressed that officials of Guinea-Bissau are often unavailable to attend meetings scheduled to discuss about SSR with the EU mission and there are a number of significant delays, especially in the implementation of Army's restructuring plans proposed by the Europeans.

Beyond the internal difficulties of the country, disagreements within the EU mission, including differences of opinion between some councilors, lead also to a deadlock and a high turnover of staff, which greatly slows the progress in the military sector.

After the assassination of President Vieira, March 2, 2009, countries in the region stressed to need for external military intervention to prevent a coup by the army. This option has not been accepted by the EU, which has even refused to deploy a support police contingent (see EUPOL RD Congo) to strengthen the mission.

In the reform of the police sector, several structural challenges are faced, nine different police forces working for five separate Ministers. This structure was reduced to four police forces related to two departments⁹:

- Public Order Police (Ministry of Interior)
- Guinean National Guard (Ministry of Interior)
- State Information Service (Ministry of Interior)
- Judicial Police (Ministry of Justice)

⁹ EUSSR GB NEWSLETTER – 2, European Union Mission for the Security Sector Reform in Guinea-Bissau, September 2009, pp. 1-2., <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/showPage.aspx?id=1737&lang=fr>

A working group comprising representatives of the Ministry of Interior, Border Guard, Fire Department, counselors of the EU mission and members of the Portuguese Bilateral Cooperation, was established to accomplish these tasks. Daily meetings were held and several projects have been developed or were nearing completion.

In January 2010 the working group was established to assist in the development of the *Police Strategy for Bijagos archipelago*. All reports consider this area as one of the main entry points of drugs in Guinea Bissau and highlight the weaknesses of the police. With approximately 80 islands and islets, Bijagos have only two police stations in Bubaque and Bolama, whose mandate does not include the fight against organized crime and surveillance.

As part of the SSR, the deployment of six police units on the Bijagos Islands was provided : on the islands of Bubaque, Formosa, Caravela, Uno, and Orango Bolama. These units will have to main task to ensure the presence of the state, to enforce law, and to fight against illegal trafficking and organized crime. These units will be equipped with the tools needed to patrol between the islands and fulfill their mandate. The adoption of these projects belong to political and administrative authorities of Guinea-Bissau.

These texts were approved by the Council of Ministers in December 2009. Two of them, the organic laws of the Police Public Order (POP) and the Guinean National Guard (GNG), were further submitted to the National People's Assembly (ANP), in March and in May 2010, to be finally approved with some amendments, as required by the constitutional provisions of the country¹⁰. The adoption of these texts, which came into force in September 2010, brought an end to a legal anomaly :

Since the security forces were with no legislation defining their exact responsibilities and organization - with the exception of article XXI of the Constitution. (The date of entry into force of texts was in September 2010.)

If the adoption of adequate legislation is on track, its implementation policy is increasingly challenged. Following the sacking of Chief of Staff pro-Portugal, Zamora Induta, induced by the Prime Minister of Guinea-Bissau, Carlos Gomes Junior, April 1, 2010, an attempted coup d'état rocked the country. The coup - in which Carlos Gomez Junior was imprisoned and then released the next day - was to take control of cocaine trafficking.

The EU response against this attempt was made to wait: in July 2010, after Antonio Njai (one of the mutineers from April suspected of involvement in drug trafficking) has been appointed Chief of Major, the HR of the EU, Catherine Ashton, offers the supervision of the assistance provided to Guinea Bissau. The European Union is concerned about how SSR is conducted in this country. The future of the mission is therefore questioned.

The current fragile balance in Guinea-Bissau is based on three people: CG Junior (Prime Minister, PAIGC), Malam Bacai Sanha (President, PAIGC, hospitalized in France and Cuba) and Antonio Njai (Na Tchuto ally). Gaddafi is an important ally of the army and of the President Sanha.

Conclusion

Without credibility, the UN mission in Guinea-Bissau is ineffective, and the deployment of the EU mission has not deeply affected the rival parties. Tensions and clashes persist between different sections of the police, as the culture of vendetta that reigns between them. The EU SSR mission is not visible on the ground, and for several months, the Europeans have been in near cooperation with a president who openly threatened to

¹⁰ EU SSR GB NEWSLETTER – 5, European Union Mission for the Security Sector Reform in Guinea-Bissau, January 2010, pp. 1-2., <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/showPage.aspx?id=1737&lang=fr>

kill the Chief of Staff and the PM.

Despite the assassination of the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, and of the President, in March 2009, and despite a *coup d'Etat* in April 2010, finally in legal fields the two most important organic laws were approved. But the application of these laws and the implementation of the spirit of the reform remain highly contested.

The biggest problem is that the reform process has been subject to political rivalry and was designed to legitimize the President (by the international presence) and to weaken his opponents (by the restructuring of the armed forces and police units).

Although the European Commission has completed its role, its presence in this context is rather remained questionable and premature: A delay-action bomb to avoid in the future. As after the establishment of legal framework and institutions of democracy, a country does not necessarily become democratic from one day to the other, the establishment of a modern structure of the security sector will not secure the country, if Bissau-Guineans are unable to reduce corruption, illegal trafficking and (bloody) rivalry between different political groups.

The "prestige" of the EU mission remained limited as in the case of Sudan: African partners could neglect European presence & proposals (despite a significant EU funding), to favor those of other partners that impose fewer obligations. It is doubtful that the plans remain only a dead letter as in Georgia (EUJUST THEMIS), and that these missions really increase the visibility and international weight of the European Union.

In 2010, the EU would have two choices: finish in a good time (date of entry into force of the two organic laws) or strengthen the stabilization process by wider commitment (eg establishment of a police mission). After the coup in April, the first was retained. A wise and sensible decision which is nevertheless a sign of weakness. A sign of weakness of an Union that seeks to avoid taking responsibility for the process.

However the question remains open whether Guinea-Bissau can be considered a country that is willing to reform. We doubt that the SSR can become effective without a complete DDR phase. To ensure the transition it should be put in place a maritime control mission to stop smuggling, and develop an international strategy for the entire region (Gambia, Senegal / Casamance, Guinea Bissau, Guinea Conakry) to contribute to regional stability.

Sources of images :

p. 1. Border Police, 25 June 2009, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/>

p. 8. Border Police, 25 June 2009, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/>

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