

# Belgian Intervention Policy in the DRC: Causes and Consequences of the Reorientation, 1999-2006

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Over the past ten years, conflict management and peace building in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have become significant elements of the European Union's foreign and security policy.<sup>84</sup> As a former colonial power, Belgium has had an interest in retaining close diplomatic relations with the DRC, Rwanda, and Burundi during the post-independence period. This analysis will focus on recent Belgian security-related interventions in the DRC. Security-related interventions refer to the instances of Belgian national presence and/or Belgian support of a European Union (EU) presence on the ground in the DRC, for military or civilian purposes other than the repatriation of Belgian citizens. This article suggests why and how Belgium has “re-engaged” and redefined its relations with the DRC since 1999 through such interventions.

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<sup>83</sup> This article is taken from her ULB thesis, «*Belgian Intervention Policy in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Causes and Consequences of the Reorientation, 1999-2006*» under the direction of André Dumoulin. The author used French and English language sources. Quotations from French sources were translated into English by the author. In the footnotes, the titles of all French language sources remain in French.

<sup>84</sup> For the purposes of this paper, “EU foreign policy” includes actions taken under Pillar 2's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP), as well as complementary actions taken by the Commission under Pillar 1. This study distinguishes the bilateral (Belgium-DRC) aspects of Belgian intervention from the multilateral (EU-DRC, EU-United Nations-DRC) elements; therefore I will consider Member States' bilateral (strictly national) foreign endeavors as distinct and separate from “EU foreign policy.” Belgian foreign policy encompasses both bilateral policies and EU initiatives that Belgium supports as a Member State.

## Background and Overview

Especially after the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht establishing the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), security-related diplomacy with the DRC became progressively institutionalized on the EU level. The institutionalization has occurred in both the supranational and intergovernmental domains of the EU, and is a partial reflection of Belgium's will to shape EU policies in favor of sustained security-related interventions in the DRC.<sup>85</sup> For instance, Belgium has influenced EU policy (which, in turn, affects Belgium's national policy) in the DRC through the Belgian presidencies of the Western European Union (WEU) in 1996 and of the EU Council in 2001; other key influences are Belgian Commissioners' efforts to make the DRC's security a constant item on the EU political agenda.

In recent years, there have been initiatives within the EU institutions to enhance cross-pillar coordination of foreign policies in countries like the DRC, where the EU as a whole attempts to function as peace builder and security actor. The EU's involvement in the DRC, driven partially by Belgian governing officials' initiatives and encouragement, is one of the EU's more comprehensive conflict management efforts. At this time, it is the strongest example of Belgian re-engagement in its former Central African colonies. Belgium's post-1999 re-engagement in the DRC is thus a product of both Belgium's bilateral (Belgium-DRC) initiatives and of Belgium's multilateral (EU and non-EU) endeavors.

Compared to Belgium in isolation, the EU has a shorter history of security-related intervention in the DRC. In 1996, the European Commission expanded its preventive diplomacy efforts by appointing EU Special Representatives, including one for the Great Lakes region that includes the DRC. The appointment of Great Lakes Special Representative Aldo Ajello showed that the EU was interested in contributing to security and stability in the region. However, the CFSP-related component of EU policy towards the DRC did not, in practice, adequately complement the Commission's Great Lakes security efforts until 1999. When the EU member states agreed to develop an EU-wide Common Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) that June, various institutional changes occurred that rendered the EU able to

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<sup>85</sup> Kabamba, Bob, Interview, University of Liège, 14 May 2007.

participate in conflict management operations with military and civilian, as well as shorter- and longer-term, components.<sup>86</sup> For Belgium, a small member state of limited financial and political means for substantial bilateral intervention in the DRC, the increasing “Europeanization” of member state capacities to conduct security-related interventions in third countries was advantageous.

For most of the post-independence period in the country now known as the DRC, Belgium retained a significant political connection through support of various Congolese political elites, through the presence of a Belgian expatriate community there, and through the Belgian military’s technical cooperation with the Congolese armed forces. However, bilateral Belgo-Congolese relations deteriorated somewhat during the 1990s. After Congolese government forces killed a group of protesting students at the University of Lubumbashi in May 1990, the Belgian government temporarily suspended its diplomatic relations, development cooperation, and Technical Military Cooperation (TMC) with the DRC, then called Zaïre.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, after a series of 1996-1997 senatorial commissions on Belgium’s involvement in Rwanda during the months leading up to the genocide, the

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<sup>86</sup> The DRC is also one of the African, Caribbean and Pacific states (ACP) that the European Community (EC) has traditionally supported through development cooperation via the Commission’s Directorate General for Development. The 1957 Treaty of Rome established the ACP relationship with many countries that were member states’ colonies or former colonies (European Communities, “ACP states: introduction,” Europa, 13 November 2003, <http://www.europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/lrb/r12100.htm>). Currently, the Cotonou Agreement maintains financial avenues through which the EU can “promote and expedite the economic, social, and cultural development of ACP states, contribute to peace and security and promote a stable and democratic political environment” (European Communities, “Cotonou Agreement, Europa, 29 November 2006, <http://www.europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/lrb/12100.htm>). Belgium and the EU exert an influence on security in the DRC through such financial diplomacy, but in this paper, the provision of development aid (even if it is for security reasons) is not considered a security-related intervention since it does not necessarily entail the physical presence of civilian or military forces in the DRC.

<sup>87</sup> Turner, Thomas, “Government and Politics,” *Zaire: A Country Study*, Meditz, Sandra and Tim Merrill, eds, Washington, D.C., Library of Congress Federal Research Division, 1994, [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+zr0149\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+zr0149)). Ultimately, “the incident and Mobutu’s refusal to allow an international inquiry into it ultimately resulted in the suspension of aid by Belgium, the European Community, Canada, and the United States.”

Dehaene government determined that Belgium would cease all direct, bilateral military intervention in former colonial territories.<sup>88</sup> This compounded the Belgian “disengagement” from the DRC and from greater Central Africa that had been occurring gradually throughout the 1990s but that was especially discernible after Belgium’s withdrawal from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) in April 1994.

The stakes of intervention changed in 1999, when a new governing coalition formed in Belgium and the EU began developing ESDP. The rest of the article seeks to explain and evaluate Belgium’s re-engagement from this point in 1999 through the end of 2006 by looking at security-related interventions as defined earlier in this introduction. The focus is on several instances of such intervention: June 2003, when Belgium supported the EU’s military operation in Bunia, Eastern Ituri<sup>89</sup>; Belgium’s resumption in 2004 of bilateral military cooperation with the DRC in the form of a Military Partnership Program<sup>90</sup>; December 2004, when Belgium backed the EUPOL Kinshasa civilian police mission<sup>91</sup>; May 2005, when Belgium contributed to EUSEC security sector reform<sup>92</sup>; and April 2006, when it

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<sup>88</sup> Liègeois, Michel, “La Belgique et le maintien de la paix en Afrique subsaharienne après 1994: une analyse stratégique,” sous la direction d’Olivier Lanotte, Claude Roosens, et Caty Clément, *La Belgique et l’Afrique centrale de 1960 à nos jours*, Brussels, Groupe de recherche et d’information sur la paix, 2000, p.347. This article cites pp.6-7 of the Foreign Policy Note, which states that “Belgium should no longer send ground combat troops to countries with which we have had colonial links.” The Belgian legislature amended this restriction on Belgian military intervention in its former colonies in June 2004. The amended version only prohibited the simultaneous occurrence of Belgian military cooperation missions and direct troop contributions to the UN Mission in the DRC.

<sup>89</sup> European Council, “Joint Action 2003/423/CFSP of 5 June 2003 on the EU military operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo” *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 143/52, 11 June 2003.

<sup>90</sup> Havenne, E, “Les missions belges en Afrique. Le partenariat belge-congolais, *Radio-Trottoir* 55, Brussels, Cercle de Coopération Technique Militaire, June 2006, pp.25-28.

<sup>91</sup> European Council, “Joint Action 2004/847/CFSP of 9 December 2004 on the EU Police Mission in Kinshasa (DRC) Regarding the Integrated Police Unit (EUPOL Kinshasa),” *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 367/33, 14 December 2004.

<sup>92</sup> European Council, “Joint Action 2005/355/CFSP of 2 May 2005 on the EU mission to provide advice and assistance for security sector reform in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC),” *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 112/21, 3 May 2005.

participated in EUFOR's election monitoring and stabilization mission.<sup>93</sup> None of these interventions preceded 2003, but the political dialogue and the diplomatic campaigns that made such security-related interventions possible for Belgium began soon after the June 1999 federal elections. Since the dealings of the 1999-2003 period laid the institutional and political groundwork for the security-related interventions that followed, they constitute an indirect component of the Belgian re-engagement evaluated here.

### Hypotheses

Ultimately, this study's contention is that Belgium has adopted an intervention strategy that mixes bilateral and multilateral types of involvement, using both direct and indirect intervention in order to retain the visibility and credibility of the Belgian state as a participant in intervention efforts for the DRC, while attempting to minimize the possibility of Belgium being perceived as a neo-colonial actor. National and international institutional constraints, as well as individual Belgian politicians' foreign policy priorities, influenced the emergence of a Belgian re-engagement strategy that incorporates both bilateral and multilateral initiatives, but that relies heavily on a European multilateral approach to security issues in the DRC. "Europeanization" of security policy is thus a "multiplier"<sup>94</sup> of power in the conventional way it is for all small EU member states that must pool resources and collaborate with larger neighbors to enact desired international policies; but in the Belgian case, the government adopted further restrictions on Belgian interventions, creating an even greater functional niche for the "Europeanization" of Congolese interventions. Overall, "Europeanization" served as a perk and a necessity, especially when interventions had military aspects or entailed certain combinations of Belgian bilateral and multilateral operations. Multilateral

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<sup>93</sup> European Council, "Joint Action 2006/319/CFSP of 27 April 2006 on the EU military operation in support of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) during the election process," *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 116/98, 29 April 2006.

<sup>94</sup> Coolsaet, Rik and Ann-Sofie Voet, "La Belgique," *Foreign Ministries in the European Union: Integrating Diplomats*, ed. Brian Hocking and David Spence, England, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, p.69.

action was thus an integral component of Belgian engagement: the country was normatively, as well as financially and geopolitically, limited from intervening effectively without some form of regional or international support. From 1999-2006, Belgium's multilateral engagement took place primarily through the EU institutions (always acting upon Congolese governmental approval, and often acting upon UN Security Council resolutions), rather than through direct, national-level force contributions to UN missions or through other alliances of nations.<sup>95</sup>

## Theoretical Standpoint

### The institutionalist perspective

Institutionalist perspectives inform this analysis of Belgian intervention. Institutionalism proposes that “national interests can no longer express themselves exclusively through the power structures of the state.”<sup>96</sup> One of the American institutionalists, Robert Keohane, emphasizes the importance of “international institutions” in international relations, because institutions, as “both formal and informal structures that influence human behavior,”<sup>97</sup> can “reduce transaction costs,...foster transparency and coherence,...provide adequate conflict resolution instruments, [and] offer decisional aid.”<sup>98</sup> Since various non-state institutions influence the decisions of the Belgian federal government (and *vice versa*), the institutionalist approach can enhance our understanding of Belgian re-engagement.

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<sup>95</sup> Tardy, Thierry, “EU-UN Cooperation in peacekeeping: a promising relationship in a constrained environment,” *The European Union and the United Nations: Partners in effective multilateralism* (Chaillot Paper no. 78), Ed. Martin Ortega, Paris, EU Institute for Security Studies, June 2005, p.52. He notes that “...while EU member states are major contributors to UN-mandated peace operations, they contribute very little to UN-led operations.”

<sup>96</sup> Roche, Jean Jacques, *Théories des Relations Internationales*, Paris, Editions Montchrestien, 2006, p.84.

<sup>97</sup> Aspinwall, Mark and Gerald Schneider, “Same menu, separate tables: The institutionalist turn in political science and the study of European integration,” *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 38, 2000, p.4.

<sup>98</sup> Quoted in Roche, *op.cit.*, p.87.

To determine how Belgium reversed its non-intervention policies and renewed its presence in the DRC, I will analyze how various domestic (Belgian), international (UN), and intergovernmental institutions (EU/ESDP) have operated together to create new forms of intervention that are politically feasible for Belgium. This part of my analysis lends itself to institutionalism's consideration of "actor behavior as a function of the international institutions or other structures in which actors are located."<sup>99</sup> This does not, however, rule out the idea that individuals, states, and other governments use rational self-interest to make decisions. In the interpretation of institutionalism used here, Belgian and EU institutional constraints simply shape the environment in which individual politicians, state governments, and regional/international entities act upon rational self-interest.

Given Keohane's definition of institutions as "both formal and informal structures that influence human behavior," as well as the fundamental principle that "institutions affect outcomes" as well as "individual[s] actions," institutionalism sub-divides into three branches: rational choice, historical, and sociological. Rational choice institutionalism most explicitly acknowledges the principle of "methodological individualism" by which "human action," rather than structural limitation, "is considered to be the cornerstone of any scientific explanation" of policy outcomes.<sup>100</sup> Thus actors in all relevant decision-making arenas," including individual politicians, "behave strategically to reach their preferred outcome."<sup>101</sup> Historical institutionalism emphasizes "the ways prior institutional commitments condition further action, limit the scope of what is possible, and cause agents to redefine their interests."<sup>102</sup> Taken together, these two

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<sup>99</sup> White, Brian, "Foreign Policy Analysis and European Foreign Policy," *Rethinking European Union foreign policy*, Ed. Ben Tonra, Thomas Christiansen, New York, Manchester Univ. Press, 2004, p. 46.

<sup>100</sup> Aspinwall and Schneider, *art.cit.*, p.10.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, p.17.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid*, p.16. Historical institutionalists studying the EU tend to believe that "exogenous preference formation –member state governments seeking to maximize national benefits rather than achieve a common solution in the 'European interest'—is still an important source of [actor] motivation" (p.17).

branches of institutionalism suggest that to certain degrees, both the preferences of individual political actors and the institutional context influence policy outcomes. Since I will pay particular attention to individual politicians' incentives, EU institutions, and the behavior of governing coalitions in my analysis of Belgian re-engagement in the DRC, rational choice and historical institutionalism are most appropriate. They do "not assume (like sociological institutionalism) that institutions" completely "precede human action."<sup>103</sup> Institutional constraints are thus an intervening rather than an independent variable affecting Belgian intervention.<sup>104</sup> Theoretical analysis will build upon this assumption and the proposition that traditional actors in international relations—states like Belgium—change their modes of operation to accommodate the EU institutions such that the "rational activities of the state" take into account the state's interdependence with the EU political environment.

#### A Postcolonial Perspective

Several basic principles of postcolonial cultural critique underlie the research herein. The resulting analysis of Belgian re-engagement in the DRC supports postcolonial theory's general principle that colonial history has partially "determined the configurations and power structures of the present," like Belgian and EU abilities, tendencies, and requests to intervene in the DRC.<sup>105</sup> Postcolonial theory proves most helpful in sections of this analysis that discuss neo-colonialism. Concerns about Belgium's image as a neo-colonial actor in the DRC played a salient role in determining the balance of bilateral and multilateral forms of Belgian re-engagement in the DRC. This paper will not discuss postcolonialism in great detail, but will implicitly rely on this body of theory since Belgian intervention in the DRC can be considered an integral part of the "continuing cultural and political ramifications of colonialism in both colonizing and colonized societies."<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid, p.11.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, p.12.

<sup>105</sup> Young, Robert J.C., *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2001, p.4.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, p.6.

### Why did Belgium pursue a policy of re-engagement in the DRC?

Possible explanations for the upsurge of Belgium's bilateral and multilateral interventions (1999-2006) cover several broad categories. They are political, philosophical, economic, and social in nature; they encompass the international, regional, domestic, and sub-national levels of analysis. The following analysis attempts to justify several types of influences and to explore the ways in which each possible influence could have contributed to the development of a more active intervention policy. However, I cannot definitively affirm the existence of a causal relationship between these variables and Belgium's re-engagement policy, nor can I measure the relative influence of each factor. Such endeavors would require statistical analysis or thick description that is beyond the scope of this study. However, this discussion of short-term reasons for Belgian re-engagement will help clarify why Belgium was able to promote intervention policies at home, while also multilateralizing—often “Europeanizing”—its intervention policies in order to benefit from pooled political and economic resources for re-engagement.

### Characteristics of Belgian Re-engagement

Before analyzing the possible reasons for Belgian re-engagement in the DRC, we must specify the form and content of the re-engagement itself. From 1999 through 2006, Belgian security-related interventions were civilian and military, bilateral and multilateral, and involved both conflict management and peace building components. The lasting operational rule that Belgium inherited from the Rwanda Commission is that Belgian bilateral military cooperation with the DRC must not co-exist simultaneously with Belgium's direct participation in United Nations combat operations in the country.<sup>107</sup> In effect, Belgium revived its “political engagement” with the DRC, but still opted to carry out its interventions within “the contours of an indirect strategy” motivated by Belgium's experience in UNAMIR and promoted in the laws adopted by the Belgian government in the spirit of the Rwanda Commission.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Kiesel, Véronique, “Feu vert du Sénat à des troupes en Afrique,” *Le Soir*, in *Revue de presse relative à la défense*, Brussels, Service de l'Information de la Défense, 25 June 2004, p.1.

<sup>108</sup> Liègeois, *op.cit.*, p.352.

Bilaterally, Belgium revived its tradition of technical military cooperation with the DRC in 2004 through a Military Partnership Program (MPP) updated for the current state of Belgian-Congolese relations. Through the MPP, Belgium and the DRC work together as equal and “privileged partners” to train troops for the Congolese national army, to provide infrastructure that helps the army function, and to supply non-lethal equipment to the Congolese Integrated Brigades.<sup>109</sup> Phase One of MPP (2004-2006) involved, among various initiatives on the ground in the DRC, formation of the Congolese First Integrated Brigade, training of engineers in the army, and short-term officer training. The Belgian and Congolese militaries agreed to a “train the trainers” program, through which Congolese non-commissioned officers received instruction that they were expected to pass on to colleagues. MPP Phase Two may involve similar programs, but will not begin until President Joseph Kabila’s newly elected government specifies its needs.<sup>110</sup>

The Belgian government also supported multilateral operations, with both European and African states, that complemented bilateral initiatives to strengthen Congolese military capabilities. Belgium and South Africa trained the Congolese Third Integrated Brigade, along the lines of the MPP. Moreover, Belgium supported the French-initiated “Reinforcement of African Peacekeeping Capacities” (RECAMP) program. Since its inception in 1998, RECAMP sought to train African troops to participate in conflict management missions on their continent; it adds dimension to Belgium’s military work in the DRC by fostering cooperation between multiple European and multiple African countries. To this day, the program involves 18-month training exercises that rotate between three African sub-regions: the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the South African Development Community (SADC), and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). One of Belgium’s goals in its bilateral and RECAMP endeavors was to prepare Beninese troops for

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<sup>109</sup> Camelbeke, Luc, Interview, Evere, Belgian Military Headquarters, 21 June 2007. For transcript of the interview, see Annex 2. Training of Congolese troops occurs on the ground in the DRC whenever possible, but also in Belgium. Beyond the training that occurs in the DRC and fits into my definition of security-related interventions, Belgium spends a minimum of 500,000 euros/year to train 10 officers at the Royal Military Academy.

<sup>110</sup> *Idem*

peacekeeping.<sup>111</sup> Belgium's bilateral partnership with Benin furthered these efforts, especially as of 2003, when the UNSC let Belgium bilaterally prepare 650 Beninese troops for the UN Peacekeeping Mission in the DRC (MONUC). This type of Belgian military involvement in the DRC constituted indirect support to a UN mission in a former colony, and therefore did not violate Rwanda Commission rules.<sup>112</sup>

As a smaller EU member state, Belgium has fewer resources and smaller budgets for security-related interventions than European regional powers like the United Kingdom, France, or Germany. Since "Belgium cannot act alone" in the DRC to effect large-scale reform, it is often the member state that "facilitates" EU multilateral interventions in the DRC, gathering general support and convincing larger countries to act as "lead nations" for military and civilian missions.<sup>113</sup> The first EU-supported security-related intervention in the DRC occurred in June 2003, and from that time through the end of 2006, four official EU missions occurred. Belgium promoted these missions within the EU and contributed some form of personnel, equipment, or support to each mission. It provided air transport for Operation Artemis (2003), a French-led ESDP mission that stabilized the town of Bunia in Eastern Ituri.<sup>114</sup> Although Belgian forces did not work on the ground in the DRC, 20 Belgian troops ran a supporting, forward operating base in Kampala, Uganda. Belgium's main contribution to EUFOR (2006) also consisted of air support—roughly 350 Air Force flying hours to take pictures of downtown Kinshasa during the election period,

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<sup>111</sup> Camelbeke, *op.cit.* RECOMP IV trained troops from Benin and other ECOWAS countries on the ground in Benin.

<sup>112</sup> Sénat et Chambre de Représentats de Belgique, "Recommendations of the Senate Commission on Foreign Affairs and Defense," Rwanda Senate document no. 3-255, 27 April 2004, p.5, paragraph C, recommendation no.7.

Only if Belgian troops had participated in MONUC would Belgium have had to suspend its MPP for the duration of the MONUC mission. Indirect Belgian contributions to MONUC are not restricted.

<sup>113</sup> Roosens, Claude, and Olivier Lanotte, "Une 'nouvelle' politique africaine pour la Belgique?" *Studia Diplomatica* LIV, no.5-6, 2001, p.207.

<sup>114</sup> European Council, "Joint Action 2003/423/CFSP of 5 June 2003 on the EU military operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo" *art.cit.*

and four unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) flown by 65-70 Belgian officers.<sup>115</sup>

More often, Belgium participated on the ground in the DRC through EU civilian missions. Ten Belgians help run the EU's Security Sector Reform (SSR) mission to contribute to Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) and to the payment of the Congolese military. One Belgian officer (soon, possibly two) helps run the EU police reform mission.<sup>116</sup> This form of multilateral intervention in the DRC, always done with agreement or request from the Congolese government, allows Belgium to retain its postcolonial connection with the DRC, but in a more distant and varied manner than in previous decades of the post-colonial period.<sup>117</sup>

Thus from 1999-2006, Belgium augmented its re-engagement in the DRC and the amount of multilateralism used to accomplish this. This multilateralism had a distinct, but not exclusive, EU component: Belgium and other member states were more prone to participate in EU missions legitimated by UNSC resolutions than to directly contribute to UN-led missions.<sup>118</sup> A multilateral strategy that favors the EU is more beneficial to Belgium since "the variety of instruments available to the Union allow it to play a significant role throughout the life of a crisis: i.e., prior to its unfolding in conflict prevention and peacemaking capacities; during a crisis through its conflict management tools and peace building policies; and after a crisis with policies for development and long-term peace."<sup>119</sup> Now, we

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<sup>115</sup> Camelbeke, *op.cit.*

<sup>116</sup> *Idem*

<sup>117</sup> Wong, Reuben, "The Europeanization of Foreign Policy," *International Relations and the European Union*, ed. Christopher Hill and Michael Smith, London, Oxford University Press, 2005, p.144.

<sup>118</sup> Tardy, Thierry, "EU-UN Cooperation in peacekeeping: a promising relationship in a constrained environment," *The European Union and the United Nations: Partners in effective multilateralism* (Chaillot Paper no. 78), Ed. Martin Ortega, Paris, EU Institute for Security Studies, June 2005, p.52. EU countries provide 39% of the UN peacekeeping operations budget, but only 2.24% of troops for UN African missions.

<sup>119</sup> Martinelli, Marta, "Helping Transition: The EU Police Mission in the DRC (EUPOL Kinshasa) in the Framework of EU Policies in the Great Lakes," *European Foreign Affairs Review* 11, 2006, p.386.

turn to the reasons why Belgian re-engagement occurred in a balance of bilateral and multilateral forms after 1999.

### Possible Reasons for Belgian Re-engagement in the DRC

National and international institutional constraints, as well as individual Belgian politicians' foreign policy priorities, contributed to Belgium's re-engagement policy—a multi-layered strategy that most heavily relied on a pan-European approach to security issues in the DRC. Belgian historians Claude Roosens and Olivier Lanotte emphasize the domestic influences on Belgian foreign policy in the DRC. In their view, several factors “play an important role in the decision-making process and in the implementation” of Belgian foreign policy in Central Africa, and they include “the institutional distribution of competencies, ideological cleavages, socio-economic and cultural conditions, [and] the personalities in charge of foreign policy.”<sup>120</sup> At the same time, institutionalist scholars of security and international relations theory insist that states—and thus Belgian political processes at the federal level, where foreign policy decisions occur—“are also embedded in a larger and more complex web of interdependent interactions with intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.”<sup>121</sup> Therefore, transnational and sub-national explanations for Belgian policies are both applicable.<sup>122</sup> The influences I discuss come from both traditions of analysis.

#### Domestic Factors

##### *Coalition Politics*

Analyzing Belgian policies in the Congo during the first civil war (1996-1997), Verwimp and Vanheusden generalize that “Belgian foreign policy can, to a large extent, be explained by the nature of coalition politics in Belgium.”<sup>123</sup> This principle also applies to Belgium's more recent

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<sup>120</sup> Roosens and Lanotte, *art.cit.*, p.200.

<sup>121</sup> Kolodziej, Edward, *Security and International Relations*, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p.153.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p.150.

<sup>123</sup> Verwimp, Philip and Els Vanheusden, “The Foreign Policy of Belgium During the Zaire/Congo Crisis: March 1996-March 1997,” in *War and Peace in Zaire/Congo: Analyzing and*

intervention: the policy platform of the June 1999 coalition government fostered the beginning of Belgium's re-engagement in the DRC. This "rainbow" coalition of Liberals, Socialists, and Greens broke several prevailing Belgian political patterns of the post-Cold War era. The traditional dominant parties were the Flemish Christian Democrats and the francophone Socialists.<sup>124</sup> However, the June 1999 elections led to a "general withdrawal of the parties from the previous coalition [government]," the Christian Democrats (Flemish CVP and Walloon PSC) and the Socialists (Flemish SP and Walloon PS).<sup>125</sup> In fact, the new governing coalition completely excluded the Christian Democrats, who were in the opposition for the first time since 1958.<sup>126</sup> Instead, the Liberal family" (Flemish VLD and francophone Federation PRL FDF MCC) was "at the top rung throughout the country,"<sup>127</sup> surpassing both Christian Democratic and Socialist influences for the first time in over 50 years.<sup>128</sup> Regional differences aside,<sup>129</sup> the Flemish and francophone Liberal parties in the coalition tended to be more "interventionist" than their Socialist counterparts who had controlled the Foreign Affairs Ministry in the Dehaene government, unseated in June 1999. The Socialist parties remained in the "rainbow" coalition along with the Liberals, joined by the Green parties (Flemish Agalev and francophone Ecolo). The francophone Liberal wing of the coalition remains the most "interventionist," but Ecolo, for

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*Evaluating Intervention: 1996-1997*, ed. Howard Adelman and Govind Rao, Trenton, Africa World Press, 2004, p.307.

<sup>124</sup> Mabile, Xavier, *Histoire Politique de la Belgique. Facteurs et acteurs de changement*, Popsface 2000, Brussels, Centre de recherche et d'information socio-politiques, 2000, p.5.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9

<sup>128</sup> Hasquin, Hervé, *Les libéraux belges. Histoire et actualité du libéralisme*, Loverval, Labor, 2006, p.311.

<sup>129</sup> Flemings tend to be more reticent about engagement and seek to attach more conditionality to aid in all forms; Walloons tend to be eager to intervene and less strict about aid conditionalities (Camelbeke, *op.cit.*).

example, has also expressed an interest in measures that would render Belgium more able to re-engage multilaterally in the DRC.<sup>130</sup>

The change in the composition of Belgium's governing coalition in 1999 was not a direct reflection of public disapproval about the Congo-related policies of the previous Dehaene government's coalition of Christian Democrats and Socialists. Nevertheless, the policy platform on Belgian-Congolese relations produced by the "rainbow" coalition deviated from that of the previous coalition, and changed the nature of Belgian engagement with the DRC. With a Liberal Prime Minister and Liberal control of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the coalition gradually implemented a more active intervention policy on the ground in the DRC, even though a "unity of views between the different [governing] parties in terms of Foreign Affairs was not automatic."<sup>131</sup>

The Liberal-led policies of the new government grew out of the idea that "the 'non-interventionist' policy of the previous Dehaene governments (especially during the Rwandan genocide in 1994) had led to the progressive degradation of Belgian credibility in the region of the Great Lakes."<sup>132</sup> After Belgium's withdrawal from UNAMIR—while Congo/Zaire faced a humanitarian crisis in the Kivus (1996-97), a *coup d'état* by Laurent Désiré Kabila and the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of the Congo (1997), and civil war (beginning in 1998)—the Dehaene government had pursued restrictive diplomacy with the DRC. To Eric Derycke, Dehaene's Socialist Minister of Foreign Affairs, this entailed conditional economic aid without Belgian support on the ground. The government named this approach *Afrique aux Africains* because Belgium sought to minimize its own intervention in order to bolster Congolese

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<sup>130</sup> Coosemans, Thierry, "Les programmes des partis francophones pour l'élection du Parlement européen de juin 2004," *Courrier Hebdomadaire* 1832, Brussels, Centre de recherche et d'information socio-politiques, 2004, p.17. These measures include "integrating the military capacities of the EU," "restructuring of defense budgets to facilitate the prevention of conflicts," and "increasing structural aid to the Great Lakes region."

<sup>131</sup> Roosens and Lanotte, *art.cit.*, p.205.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p.199.

capabilities to deal with their own security problems.<sup>133</sup> Since the Belgian government had suspended diplomatic relations with the Mobutu government and did not renew them until 1999, military cooperation programs and non-humanitarian economic aid were not possible. Had they been, the political leanings of the governing coalition as a whole still might not have permitted these types of engagement.

The “rainbow” coalition and the Verhofstadt government agreed with Derycke that the DRC needed internal capabilities to deal with its security problems, but furthered their development by promoting more “active” Belgian engagement in the short-term. Especially during the 1990s, the domestic debate over intervention seemed to accentuate Belgium’s sub-regional, Flemish-Walloon divide. Francophone politicians promoted “intervention, and even active [rather than] reactive” initiatives in the DRC, while the Flemish speakers preferred that Belgium “keep more distance from its former colony.”<sup>134</sup> Yet despite regional differences, both the francophone and Flemish Liberal parties of the June 1999 government worked to advance Belgium’s “active” foreign policy in the DRC. The francophone Liberal parties, represented most prominently by Foreign Affairs Minister Louis Michel, spoke of an “ethical” and “moral” approach to intervention and sought to intensify Belgium’s bilateral relationship with the Congolese government.<sup>135</sup> As Belgium’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Michel tried to “conclude a real pact of partnership” between Belgian and Congolese governments that was based on “voluntary and respectful collaboration” and theoretically avoided a neo-colonial perception of Belgium’s presence.<sup>136</sup> Guy Verhofstadt, the Flemish Liberal Prime Minister, signaled this change in tone on Belgium’s Great Lakes policy soon after he became Prime Minister, when he “officially recognized the responsibility of the Belgian state in the negligence..of the international community”<sup>137</sup> during the Rwandan genocide and promoted EU

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<sup>133</sup> Lanotte, Olivier, *RDC: Guerre Sans Frontieres. De Joseph-Désiré Mobutu à Joseph Kabila*, Brussels, Groupe de recherche et d’information sur la paix et la sécurité, 2003, p.204.

<sup>134</sup> Roosens and Lanotte, *art.cit.*, p.201.

<sup>135</sup> Roosens and Lanotte, *art.cit.*, p.200.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid*, p.208.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid*, p.216.

involvement in Central Africa as part of Belgium's 2001 EU Council Presidency.<sup>138</sup> In addition, Verhofstadt and Michel reinforced their adherence to a more "responsible" foreign policy in the Great Lakes by visiting Rwanda and the DRC in 2000, on some of the first government visits since 1990.<sup>139</sup> The trips set the Verhofstadt government apart from the previous Dehaene government leaders, many of whom had never set foot in Central Africa.<sup>140</sup> This change in attitude, even by the less interventionist Flemish branch of the government, indicated that the "rainbow" coalition as a whole was in favor of increasing Belgian involvement in its former colonies. Bilateral and multilateral security-related interventions in the DRC thus became more feasible.

The Belgian governing coalition's re-engagement policy for the DRC continued under Verhofstadt through 2006, although Flemish Liberal Karel De Gucht challenged this policy when he became Belgium's Minister of Foreign Affairs in June 2003.<sup>141</sup> During his first visit to the DRC, De Gucht criticized the corruption of the Congolese leaders in the Transition government and threatened to disengage, but could not follow through with his threats since his stance was more extreme than that of Verhofstadt's governing coalition.<sup>142</sup> Instead, the joint oversight of Belgian-Congolese re-engagement by various members of Belgium's governing coalition (including the Liberals Verhofstadt and Michel, as well as the Socialist Minister of Defense André Flahaut) fostered Belgian security-related interventions in the DRC from 2003-2006. This validates the institutionalist view that "partisan sources of preference," negotiated and

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<sup>138</sup> "Verhofstadt appelle l'UE à se mobiliser pour l'Afrique," *Belga*, in *Revue de presse relative à la défense*, Brussels, Service de l'Information de la Défense, 2 July 2007, p.3.

<sup>139</sup> Roosens and Lanotte, *art.cit.*, p.216.

<sup>140</sup> Kabamba, *op.cit.*

<sup>141</sup> Hasquin, *op.cit.*, p.311.

<sup>142</sup> Nashi, Emmanuel, "La nouvelle diplomatie belge," *Radio-Trottoir* 50, Brussels, Cercle de Coopération Technique Militaire Belge, March 2005, p.44.

expressed through the governing coalition in Belgium, influenced the content of foreign policy.<sup>143</sup>

*Influence of Individual Belgian Political Elites*

Both Louis Michel's notorious activism for Belgian engagement and Karel De Gucht's well-known criticism of Congolese politicians' corruption exemplify the limited, but significant influence that individual political actors had on Belgian foreign policy. Yet according to institutionalist theory, it is not just any given citizen who changes Belgian federal policies. Reform depends not merely upon the beliefs of individuals, but also upon "the way individuals use existing institutions to solve problems."<sup>144</sup> Often, then, the individuals who have direct access to governing institutions, and privilege within them, are better equipped to exercise their personal influence on foreign policy.<sup>145</sup> In practice, this premise has some truth for

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<sup>143</sup> Aspinwall and Schneider, *art.cit.*, p.17. This article evokes "partisan sources of preference" based on Paul Pierson, "The Path to European Integration: A Historical Institutional Analysis," *Comparative Political Studies* 29:2, Sage, April 1996, pp.123-163. In Pierson's own words, "governments of different partisan complexions often have quite distinct views on policy matters dealt with at the EC level" (140). Belgian policy towards the DRC on the EU (rather than EC) level during the 1995-1999 Dehaene government on the one hand, and during the 1999 and 2003 Verhofstadt governments on the other, exemplifies these partisan differences.

<sup>144</sup> Wettersten, John, *How Do Institutions Steer Events? An Inquiry into the Limits and Possibilities of Rational Thought and Action*, Hampshire, Ashgate, 2006, p.218. Methodological individualism is thus not sufficient for explaining policy change. The basic idea behind the principle is that every individual acts in rational and self-interested ways to maximize his own well-being. Even if one accepts the unlikely premise that all Belgian citizens act in rational, self-interested ways to support or oppose the policy of Belgian re-engagement in the DRC, the amount of influence each methodological individual has on the policy outcome hinges upon the power each individual has. Thus according to these principles establishing individuals' limited influence on policy outcomes, we infer that political elites have greater ability to effect change within the government and advance desired results.

<sup>145</sup> Although this paper emphasizes the political elites' individual influence on Belgian foreign policy matters, these individuals' desire to influence their country's policies is not the only factor motivating their public behavior. Strong political personalities like De Decker, Michel, and De Gucht also had personal ambitions they wanted to further. Influence in an area of special interest like Belgo-Congolese relations could increase these individuals' national visibility, advance their careers and profiles as policymakers, and boost their egos to boot.

Belgium's re-engagement in the DRC. Generally, Belgian Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Ministers of Defense influenced Belgian intervention policy more than other politicians and other citizens.

#### LOUIS MICHEL

Louis Michel's position first as Belgium's Minister of Foreign Affairs, and later as a European Commissioner, enabled him to promote the Belgian governing coalition's re-engagement policy to the international community. His personal view is that Belgium has a "double responsibility" to better the political and economic conditions in Africa and in the Great Lakes region in particular.<sup>146</sup> Michel has promoted his personal philosophy through his policy endeavors at various points during the Congolese Transition. He wants to promote peace and stability there to "render Belgium credible again" after the Rwandan genocide and to end the Dehaene government's previous "diplomacy of absence" in the former colonies.<sup>147</sup>

When Michel became the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the end of 1999, he called for the reinforcement of the Lusaka Peace Accords in the DRC. He also used his political power to surround himself with other individuals who shared his opinion on intervention in the DRC. In January 2001, he appointed Reginald Moreels his "Special Representative for Humanitarian Affairs" to advance the Lusaka process.<sup>148</sup> Michel also made use of the

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<sup>146</sup> Michel, Louis, *Horizons. L'axe du bien*, Brussels, Luc Pire, 2004, p.93. Michel evokes Belgian responsibility to DRC as a "former colony," distinguishing the origins of responsibility for the DRC from Belgium's responsibility for Rwanda and Burundi, "former territories" that Belgium "received in 1923 from a League of Nations mandate."

<sup>147</sup> Michel, *op.cit.*, p.95.

<sup>148</sup> Braeckman, Colette and Véronique Kiesel, "Reginald est de retour: rencontre avec le nouveau spécial du ministre des Affaires étrangères," *Le Soir*, in *Revue de presse relative à la défense*, Brussels, Service de l'Information de la Défense, 27 December 2000, p.18. Moreels, "a specialist in humanitarian intervention was nominated to the cabinet by Johan Vanhecke, the president of the Flemish Christian Democratic Party. At that time, Vanhecke was trying to renew the party by introducing well-known Christians without party affiliation into the party. Moreels...shared with the party president a strong interest in Africa" and was thus "a strategic addition" to the CVP (Verwimp and Vanheusden, *op.cit.*, p.312). He was controversially interventionist in DRC as Secretary of Development Cooperation and contradicted Socialist Foreign Affairs Minister Eric Derycke, who was more conditional about renewing Belgian intervention.

Belgian Presidency of the EU Council during the second half of 2001, traveling with the “troika” to promote the Intercongolaise Dialogue, and sponsoring a meeting of Congolese opposition leaders in Brussels.<sup>149</sup> Even after the Transition began and Michel became the European Commissioner for Development, he gathered EU support for conflict management and peace building operations in the DRC, while officially overseeing the Commission’s development portfolio.<sup>150</sup>

Michel’s endeavors from 1999-2006 showed that he had a “constant” personal interest in “not letting the [Congolese] peace process wane.”<sup>151</sup> In both political positions he held over these years, Michel used his influence to diversify Belgian intervention strategies in the DRC. He promoted the “Europeanization” and multilateralization of intervention in the Great Lakes—calling for EU forces to be ready to carry out missions in Africa under Security Council mandates—while reasserting Belgium’s integral role in this process as the member state with the longest history of experience in the region. He simultaneously encouraged Belgium to retain bilateral links to the DRC, and even reminded Belgians that “the conclusions of the Rwanda Commission d[id] not rule out..the eventual participation of Belgian forces in peace operations” in former colonies.<sup>152</sup> Although his Flemish counterparts criticized Michel for his eagerness to intervene in the DRC, his attitude ensured that the security and stability in the DRC stayed on the Belgian and EU agendas. His commitment to the idea that the EU should “promote peace and security at all stages of the conflict cycle” in the Congo drove his support of the security-related interventions and the Belgian-Congolese diplomacy that contributed to the DRC’s Transition.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Michel, *op.cit.*, p.100.

<sup>150</sup> Kabamba, *op.cit.*

<sup>151</sup> Bouvier, Paule, with the collaboration of Francesca Bomboko, *Le dialogue intercongolais: anatomie d'une négociation à la lisière du chaos: contribution à la théorie de la négociation*, Paris, Harmattan, 2004, p.216.

<sup>152</sup> “Discours du Ministre Louis Michel à l’Institut Royal Supérieur de Défense: L’impact de la nouvelle politique belge en Afrique sur l’armée,” 7 March 2001, <http://diplobel.fgov.be/News/rt/speeches/n/010307khid.htm>.

<sup>153</sup> *European Union Strategy for Africa*, Brussels, European Commission Directorate General for Development Relations with African, Caribbean, and Pacific States, 2006, p.26.

Without this Transition government in place, Belgian- or EU-sponsored missions in the DRC would have been more difficult to legitimize.

#### KAREL DE GUCHT

Flemish Liberal Karel De Gucht took over as Belgium's Minister of Foreign Affairs when Louis Michel joined the European Commission. He began his tenure as Minister with a visit to the DRC, where he met Joseph Kabila and other Transition government leaders. Afterwards, De Gucht publicly "criticized Congolese leaders...for corruption and bad governance" while commenting that he had " 'met few political leaders who gave [him] a convincing impression.' " <sup>154</sup> Controversial at home and abroad, these statements proved how easily one Minister's actions could threaten the sustainability of Belgium's re-engagement policy. De Gucht's comments alarmed Kabila, which created potential for a diplomatic crisis that could have eventually eroded the legitimate Belgo-Congolese agreement authorizing Belgian intervention in the DRC. De Gucht's VLD colleague, Prime Minister Verhofstadt, reassured Kabila that the Belgian government as a whole did not support disengagement, which would have "unravel[ed] five years of efforts to privilege the peace process in Central Africa." <sup>155</sup>

On the other hand, De Gucht's actions had a limited influence on the overall nature of Belgian re-engagement policy. Verhofstadt's statements to Kabila distanced the rest of the VLD and the governing coalition as a whole from the Foreign Minister's approach; *La Libre Belgique* even reported that De Gucht was reprimanded for sending the disengagement message to Congo's leaders. <sup>156</sup> Throughout his tenure, however, De Gucht defended his right to an individual opinion—in 2005, he again endorsed disengagement from the

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<sup>154</sup> Cros, Marie-France, "Le retour de Karel de Gucht," *La Libre Belgique*, in *Revue de presse relative à la défense*, Brussels, Service de l'Information de la Défense, 16 February 2005, p.2.

<sup>155</sup> Nashi, *art.cit.*, p.44.

<sup>156</sup> Van de Woestyne, Francis, "Pourquoi Verhofstadt couve De Gucht," *La Libre Belgique*, in *Revue de presse relative à la défense*, Brussels, Service de l'Information de la Défense, 22 November 2004, p.4. As Nashi points out, De Gucht was not necessarily reprimanded for the underlying content of the message—that corruption was still an issue that needed to be dealt with in the DRC in order to ensure a successful transition.

DRC, asserting, “I am the one who defines Belgium’s foreign policy.”<sup>157</sup> The francophone Socialist Party countered his claim with the argument that even as Foreign Minister, he was still accountable to the coalition government’s pact that defined Belgium’s Congo policy as a continuation of diverse forms of engagement to promote security in the former colony.<sup>158</sup> De Gucht’s individual initiative, while important, remained limited by the nature of Belgium’s governing institutions.

#### ARMAND DE DECKER AND ANDRÉ FLAHAUT

The contributions of individuals like Armand De Decker and André Flahaut to security-related interventions in the DRC also helped balance De Gucht’s personal influence. As Minister of Development Cooperation, Armand De Decker technically had little control over the type of security-related interventions examined in this study—development cooperation deals with economic aid and does not necessarily entail a Belgian presence on the ground in the DRC. However, one of De Decker’s goals was to “continue to put Central Africa on the world agenda, as Louis Michel did” when he was Foreign Minister.<sup>159</sup> By advocating a special Belgian focus on the Great Lakes region at a time when De Gucht emphasized Belgium’s potential role in Asia,<sup>160</sup> De Decker prevented Belgian re-engagement in the DRC from falling lower on the foreign policy agenda.

André Flahaut, the francophone Socialist Minister of Defense, shared De Decker’s commitment. Throughout De Gucht’s tenure as Foreign Minister, Flahaut defended Belgian military re-engagement in the DRC. The Defense

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<sup>157</sup> Galand, Pierre, “Monsieur De Gucht n’a pas le monopole de la politique extérieure de la Belgique,” Parti Socialiste, 20 February 2005, [http://www.ps.be/print.cfm?Content\\_ID=482145](http://www.ps.be/print.cfm?Content_ID=482145), qtd *Le Soir*, 16 February 2005.

<sup>158</sup> Galand, Pierre, *op.cit.* De Gucht’s behavior again agitated the Belgian regional divide over Congo policy: the “francophones maladroitly sitgmated what they claimed to be [De Gucht’s] ‘lack of knowledge’ about Central Africa.” De Gucht’s individual influence on the Belgian debate about Congolese engagement shows that Belgium has not yet struck a sustainable balance “between the paternalist complacency of the francophones and the, more or less, political disinterest of their Flemish counterparts.” (Cros, *op.cit.*)

<sup>159</sup> Brewaeys, Philippe, “Armand l’Africain,” *Le Soir Magazine*, in *Revue de presse relative à la défense*, Brussels, Service de l’Information de la Défense, 28 July 2004, p.6.

<sup>160</sup> Cros, *art.cit.*

Minister initiated the re-launch of Belgo-Congolese military cooperation after a fourteen-year pause; within Belgium's Council of Ministers, he also promoted the proposal to train Beninese soldiers for the UN Mission in the DRC (MONUC).<sup>161</sup> During Congo's 2006 electoral period, Flahaut reaffirmed the need for Belgian engagement on the ground to include provision of resources and training to the Congolese military.<sup>162</sup>

Even though the individual viewpoints of these governing elites differ—with De Decker and Flahaut working more in the “open” or “accommodating” tradition of Louis Michel, and De Gucht coming from a more reticent Flemish tradition—it is likely that an intensification of security-related interventions in the DRC occurred from 2003-2006 because these governing elites agreed on the necessity of multilateral support for Belgian re-engagement.<sup>163</sup> Michel and Flahaut have both called for Belgium to “involve itself again in Africa but more in a European framework than a purely national one.”<sup>164</sup> Prime Minister Verhofstadt echoed this need,<sup>165</sup> and his VLD counterpart, De Gucht, called for the multilateralization of what has so far been predominantly Belgian training

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<sup>161</sup> “Aide au contingent béninois engagé dans la MONUC,” Communiqué de presse du Conseil des Ministres, in *Revue de presse relative à la défense*, Brussels, Service de l'Information de la Défense, 15 April 2005, p.3.

<sup>162</sup> Brewaeys, *art.cit.* Flahaut claimed, “we should not be hypocritical. If we want a national army, trained, that plays a stabilizing role in the electoral context...we must provide efficient means” to achieve this.

<sup>163</sup> De Decker and Flahaut could also have a common approach due to their atheism. Although both men are from the “secular” Liberal-Socialist tradition, religion does not seem to have determined the differences in the propensities of various governments for intervention in the DRC. Christian Democrats have a longer history of engagement in the DRC because of the Catholic missionary tradition in pre-colonial and colonial Congo, but judging by the recent 1999-2006 re-engagement, the “secular coalition” has been no less forthcoming in maintaining Belgian-Congolese relations and in monitoring security in the Great Lakes region.

<sup>164</sup> “Gabon 2000: Flahaut: s'impliquer en Afrique,” *Belga*, in *Revue de presse relative à la défense*, Brussels, Service de l'Information de la Défense, 27 January 2000, p.11.

<sup>165</sup> “Verhostadt appelle l'UE à se mobiliser,” *art.cit.*

of the Congolese Army brigades.<sup>166</sup> This strategy corresponds to what De Decker calls “accomplishing the bilateral with a multilateral approach.”<sup>167</sup> Despite the differences in their semantics on re-engagement, they agree that Belgium must “try to associate as many European partners as possible, as often as possible” with their interventions.<sup>168</sup>

Ultimately, individual Belgian officials’ foreign policy endeavors were in dynamic interaction with national and international institutional constraints. Wettersten acknowledges that institutions mitigate elite individuals’ behavior by “impos[ing] conditions on [their] attempts to solve problems.” This force was at work during the government’s private discussions after De Gucht’s first Congo visit. However, within any given institutional environment, “only individuals have aims and determine which problems are to be solved.”<sup>169</sup> Whether Flemish or francophone, each of the four prominent individuals discussed recognized the benefits that multilateralism could bring to Belgium’s re-engagement in the DRC. The political elites’ agreement on this aspect helps explain why Belgian security-related interventions there often occurred through the EU, or at least through cooperation with other member states.

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<sup>166</sup> Belgium helped train the First and Second Brigades, but De Gucht has called for 7 multilaterally trained brigades and has asked the EU for 20 million euros for this (Kiesel, Véronique, “Congo: De Gucht au rapport,” *Le Soir*, in *Revue de presse relative à la défense*, Brussels, Service de l’Information de la Défense, 24 February 2005, p.9).

<sup>167</sup> “Armand De Decker: “Faire du bilatéral avec un esprit multilatéral,” *Marchés Tropicaux*, in *Revue de presse relative à la défense*, Brussels, Service de l’Information de la Défense, 24 December 2004, p.1-3.

<sup>168</sup> De Decker thus downplays the Flemish-Walloon divide on Belgian re-engagement policy. Since there is fundamental agreement about the need for multilateralism, as well as concern over the Congolese transition to democracy, De Decker contends that “both sides are on the same wavelength. There are not two Africa policies in Belgium, even if we have different styles” (Airault, Pascal, “Pacifier les Grands Lacs,” *Jeune Afrique – L’Intelligent*, in *Revue de presse relative à la défense*, Brussels, Service de l’Information de la Défense, 20 December 2005, pp.12-13.).

<sup>169</sup> Wettersten, *op.cit.*, p.211.

*Economic Constraints*

As institutionalist Karen Smith notes, “foreign policy can entail the use of economic instruments” for “aims that are explicitly political or security-related.”<sup>170</sup> Financial limitations were a particular concern for Belgium, and they affected the balance of bilateral and multilateral initiatives through which Belgian re-engagement in the DRC occurred.<sup>171</sup> Belgium is a small state with a limited budget and fewer defense and security resources than several Western European neighbors. Even though the recent governing coalitions tended to favor re-engagement, the Belgian state had a relatively small endowment of resources to support military or civilian interventions on the ground in the DRC. The budget constraint motivated many Belgian government officials to multilateralize numerous security-related initiatives in DRC.<sup>172</sup>

Despite its limitations, Belgium devoted a significant amount of national resources to bilateral security-related interventions. From 2004 to present, Belgium spent 4 million euros to send Belgian military personnel to the DRC to train Congolese engineers; 1.6 million for “train the trainers” missions; and 70,000 euros to set up a permanent MPP cell in Kinshasa. There were also diplomatic and financial costs of providing Belgian troops

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<sup>170</sup> Smith, Karen, *European Union Foreign Policy in a Changing World*, Cambridge, Polity, 2003, p.2. Belgian re-engagement in the DRC, in reality, involves not only military and civilian contributions to missions (which themselves require significant economic resources), but also more direct economic contributions like development aid and debt forgiveness. The latter are important foreign policy instruments in their own right, but will fall outside of the definition of intervention used in this paper.

<sup>171</sup> Of course, the amount of money spent specifically on the DRC also depends on how the governing coalition and the ministries choose to allocate funds among various foreign policy projects. Furthermore, some budget lines, like the one for Air Force flying hours, allocate money in a total amount that covers all operations around the world (so there is not a set amount of Air Force hours funded for Belgium’s support to security-related operations in the DRC). Thus an exact “budget line” for missions in the DRC is not determined before any given year of operations begins (Camelbeke, *art.cit.*).

<sup>172</sup> Luc Camelbeke’s explanation of Belgium’s intervention strategy in the DRC clearly connects budgetary limitations and Belgium’s increasingly multilateral outlook. He says, “The budgetary situation in Belgium does not permit it to invest the same amount of new resources” as it did in earlier decades of the postcolonial phase. “We consider that our help to the Congo would be better off in the multilateral context.”

for security-related endeavors. Belgium sent four unmanned aerial vehicles with detachments of 65-70 troops to EUFOR; ten officers to EUSEC; and one officer for EUPOL. For bilateral endeavors through the MPP, 100 Belgian soldiers went to the DRC to train the First Integrated Brigade of the Congolese army, and the average number of soldiers required for each session of the “train the trainers” program ranges between 30 and 40.<sup>173</sup> The demand for Belgian forces varied each year, but maintaining this approximate level of engagement imposed significant costs on Belgium. From a defense budget of approximately 2.7 billion euros, Belgium allocated roughly 10% to military operations in Africa. Funds for the DRC constituted a considerable proportion of this.<sup>174</sup>

At the same time, Belgium sought the benefits of multilateral re-engagement. With the “Europeanization” of interventions, projects in the DRC drew upon the EU’s modest CFSP budget (106.2 million euros in 2006) for civilian missions and the Athena mechanism for the common costs of EU military missions.<sup>175</sup> For EU military missions, the member states that contributed troops bore the cost of their maintenance. This defrayed mission costs for Belgium, since resources inhibited it from being a major troop contributor. In this environment where resources were partially pooled, Belgium’s bilateral financial contribution had more “value added.” Under such conditions, Belgium’s financial limits encouraged the use of ESDP, CFSP, and other multilateral means of cooperation to “pursue foreign policy objectives” in the DRC that it would have been “unable to achieve on its own.”<sup>176</sup> In Keohane’s terminology, the “interdependence” of EU member states involved made this coping mechanism possible.

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<sup>173</sup> Camelbeke, *art.cit.*

<sup>174</sup> *Idem.* The 10% refers specifically to the amount of Air Transport and Training/Education funding in Defense’s Africa budget that Belgium devotes to the DRC. For bilateral or multilateral civilian missions in the DRC, Belgium can also draw upon the government’s Foreign Affairs budget, which totaled roughly 3 million euros in 2003, but from which proceeds for Congolese interventions are only a small fraction (“Budget and Financial Resources,” Federal Public Service of Foreign Affairs, Brussels, 2003, <http://www.diplomatie.be/en/pdf/activity%20report/2003/EN.pdf>).

<sup>175</sup> European Commission, “CFSP Financing,” European Communities, 1995-2007, [http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/cfsp/fin/index.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/cfsp/fin/index.htm).

<sup>176</sup> Coolsaet, Rik and Ann-Sofie Voet, “Belgium,” *art.cit.*, p.69.

Yet even in the multilateral context, Belgium had to set a precedent for other member states and contribute limited resources to re-engagement in the DRC. Belgium spent 4 million euros on EUFOR, and 1.4 million to train the Congolese third army brigade with South Africa.<sup>177</sup> These financial contributions continue to maintain the niche that Belgium created for itself in the EU foreign policy field as a member state with specialized knowledge of the Great Lakes region. Since national means are never sufficient for Belgium to serve as a “lead nation” for EU missions in the DRC, it provides some personnel and logistical support, but ultimately tries to be the “catalyst” that gets richer member states to contribute the bulk of the personnel.<sup>178</sup> Economic constraints create an incentive for Belgium to seek out “value added” initiatives, and thus Belgium focuses on select multilateral projects while facilitating a broader EU involvement in a range of conflict management and peace building missions in the DRC.<sup>179</sup>

#### *Policymaking at Ministerial Level*

Various ministerial-level influences on Belgian re-engagement policy suggest that ministers like Louis Michel derive their political influence not solely from their personal reputation, but also from the “complex network” in which their ministerial status places them.<sup>180</sup> This idea that political actors have an influence on policy through their “chains of interdependence” with other entities—“parties, parliamentarians, media, experts, bureaucrats, interest groups, other ministers”—reaffirms the existence of the “complex interdependence” on which institutionalist

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<sup>177</sup> Camelbeke, *art.cit.*

<sup>178</sup> Kabamba interview, *op.cit.* Both Lt. Colonel Luc Camelbeke and Prof. Kabamba have affirmed that Belgium works “behind the scenes” to facilitate the organization of EU-level security interventions in the DRC. According to Kabamba, “it is thanks to Belgium” that the Congo dossier is prominent within the EU. “Belgium is the facilitator, the catalyst,” but “Belgium is not in the *groupe moteur*” for interventions, “because for the *groupe moteur* you need resources.” In contrast with leading nations like France and Germany, Belgium’s role is to put the necessary member states together to “get going” on mission implementation.

<sup>179</sup> Camelbeke, *op.cit.* Belgium’s multilateral projects include its participation in the French-led (soon to be EU-led) RECAMP program and its sponsorship of Beninese troops in MONUC.

<sup>180</sup> Eraly, Alain, *Le pouvoir enchaîné: être ministre*, Brussels, Editions Labor, 2002, p.339.

theory is based.<sup>181</sup> Several possible sources for Belgian re-engagement policy arise from this diversity of influences on the ministerial level.

#### MINISTERS' INFLUENCE ON POWER RELATIONS BETWEEN PARTIES OF THE GOVERNING COALITION

Sometimes the party support provided to ministers permits them to mobilize the power of their position to block the influence of other parties in the governing coalition. This was, to a certain extent, the case during the 1995-1999 Dehaene government, when a Christian Democrat and Socialist coalition implemented the *Afrique aux Africains* policy. The Flemish Socialists controlled Foreign Affairs at the time, and Minister Eric Derycke was reticent to re-establish bilateral relations with the DRC (then Zaïre). This reflected Flemish desires to attach more *ex ante* conditionality to Belgium's support of the DRC and to Derycke's personal propensity to avoid interventions that risked seeming neo-colonial.<sup>182</sup>

Socialist domination of Foreign Affairs blocked the traditional, more interventionist tendencies of the Christian Democratic parties. Ever since Congo became a Belgian colony in 1908, "the portfolio of the colonies had most often been given to Catholic members of government."<sup>183</sup> After the Congo's independence, Christian Democrats promoted a strong bilateral relationship through development and military cooperation. Yet despite the Christian Democrats' traditional influence on Congo policy, in 1995 the Socialists could mute this influence by appointing Derycke as Foreign Minister. The "Christian Democrats would have liked to go much further in their cooperation with Zaïre," but "the anti-Mobutu reflex of their Socialist coalition partner prevented the government from taking up direct bilateral relations."<sup>184</sup>

Nevertheless, the Christian Democrats recruited Reginald Moreels to be the Secretary of Development Cooperation during Derycke's tenure as Minister

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<sup>181</sup> Roche, *op.cit.*, p.85. For the original reference to "complex interdependence," see Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*, Boston, Little Brown, 1977.

<sup>182</sup> Verwimp and Vanheusden, *art.cit.*, p.329.

<sup>183</sup> Hasquin, *op.cit.*, p.294.

<sup>184</sup> Verwimp and Vanheusden, *art.cit.*, p.319.

of Foreign Affairs.<sup>185</sup> The Belgian governing coalition wanted to use non-governmental organizations “to increase indirect cooperation” with Zaïre, so Moreels could challenge Derycke through his work on these policies, over which he had formal responsibility.<sup>186</sup> Attempts by Moreels to enforce a more Christian Democratic version of Congo policy in this era added an element of contradiction to Belgium’s policy stance, but Derycke’s disengagement often prevailed. This suggests that the internal power dynamics of the governing coalition influenced Belgian re-engagement policy more than the intervention tendencies of any single political party within that coalition.<sup>187</sup>

Ministerial appointments had a functionally similar, but politically inverse effect on re-engagement policies in 1999. The elections removed the particularly antagonistic ministerial relationship between Derycke and Moreels, and smoother relations between Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation ensued. The Liberal parties gained control of Foreign Affairs and appointed Louis Michel, an individual eager to re-engage with Belgium’s former colonies. The party’s provision of ministerial power to Michel was a strategic choice: by giving control over direction of Belgian foreign policy to an individual who was personally dedicated to re-engagement, the Liberals tried to assure the expression of their “interventionist” leanings.

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<sup>185</sup> Moreels was a “well-known” Catholic and a “specialist in humanitarian intervention” committed to Belgian action in Africa, so he was a well-matched candidate for this position (then controlled by the Flemish Christian Democrats). During the 1995-1999 Dehaene government, Moreels’ desire for Belgian involvement in Central Africa often conflicted with Derycke’s more reticent attitude towards intervention (Ibid, p.312).

<sup>186</sup> Verwimp and Vanheusden, *art.cit.*, p.339. A diplomatic battle ensued when Moreels attempted to re-engage with Zaire against Derycke’s political will. Moreels told the Congolese government that the Belgian government was ready to increase Development Cooperation when the Socialists remained reticent. He also called “Tutsi killings of Hutu refugees in Eastern Congo a ‘genocide’ which implied, at least morally, a duty to intervene” (337).

<sup>187</sup> If this is the case, the “pillarization” of Belgian society into Socialist, Christian, and Liberal elements (Eraly, *op.cit.*, p.246) is not especially conducive, in and of itself, to our investigation of reasons for Belgian re-engagement in the DRC.

## CHANGES IN MINISTRY HIERARCHY

In 1999, the Verhofstadt government reorganized the competencies of the Foreign Affairs Ministry and the Secretariat of Development Cooperation.<sup>188</sup> This way, Michel “could control two budget lines known as ‘conflict prevention’ and ‘preventive diplomacy’” and punctually “finance projects in Africa” without approval from Development Cooperation.<sup>189</sup> After this change, the Secretariat of Development Cooperation was initially “under the authority of the Foreign Affairs Minister,” Michel at the time.<sup>190</sup> This consolidated Michel’s ministerial power and his ability to promote his Liberal party’s re-engagement policy.

Since then, the Secretariat for Development Cooperation has become a ministry in its own right, an equal of Foreign Affairs so that Development officials can participate in the Belgian Council of Ministers, access the ministerial cabinets, and “better defend [their] budget.”<sup>191</sup> With Development Cooperation functioning as a ministry but remaining under the Foreign Affairs umbrella, the potential for coherence in these two policy areas is greater.<sup>192</sup> These recent changes in the ministry hierarchy might have fostered Belgian re-engagement in two ways: first, by making the inter-ministerial pursuit of engagement policies easier (since the two ministries are now bureaucratically closer together); second, by facilitating complementarity between development initiatives and short-run security-related missions in the DRC, and in turn rendering Belgian re-engagement projects more sustainable.

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<sup>188</sup> Narinx, Alain, “Ne pas fusionner Coopération et Affaires étrangères,” *Le Matin*, in Revue de presse relative à la défense, Brussels, Service de l’Information de la Défense, 2 October 1999.

<sup>189</sup> Braeckman, Colette, “La diplomatie préventive rabotée,” *Le Soir*, in Revue de presse relative à la défense, Brussels, Service de l’Information de la Défense, 16 February 2005, p.2.

<sup>190</sup> Hasquin, *op.cit.*, p.310.

<sup>191</sup> “Armand De Decker: Faire du bilatéral,” *art.cit.* Ushering in this reform, Louis Michel used his ministerial powers to name Reginald Moreels his Special Representative, sending the message that he had an active re-engagement policy in mind, similar to what Moreels promoted during the last Dehaene government.

<sup>192</sup> Camelbeke, *op.cit.*

## MINISTERIAL CABINETS

Belgium's ministerial cabinets are "a response to the difficult problem of political governance within a coalition government and [within] an environment of bureaucratic institutions."<sup>193</sup> Each is "a special unit, outside of the administrative hierarchy, composed of several dozen members" personally nominated by the Minister or his party.<sup>194</sup> These nominations are not subject to governmental approval, and the cabinet "disappears the day the minister steps down." In 2000, the *Réforme Copernic* reorganized the hierarchy of the governmental administration and the ministerial cabinets, implementing "a substantial reduction of ministerial cabinets and instead advancing a strategic council that head[ed] each federal public service."<sup>195</sup> Even after this structural reform, some Belgian analysts cite the need to "reduce the size of cabinets and force ministers to work more directly with their administration, on the basis of a clearer division of powers."<sup>196</sup> Each minister's personally appointed entourage still exerts private influence on ministerial policy, so it is also possible that the cabinets affected the nature of ministers' contributions to Belgian re-engagement policy from 1999-2006.

## Regional and International Factors

*French Presence in sub-Saharan Africa*

Just as Belgium tries to maintain political and economic ties with the DRC in the postcolonial period, France seeks a link with its own former colonies. However, France also attempts to extend its influence to other parts of French-speaking Africa, including Belgium's former colonial possessions in the Great Lakes. To the chagrin of the relatively less powerful Belgium,

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<sup>193</sup> Eraly, *op.cit.*, p.229.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid*, p.225.

<sup>195</sup> Eraly, Alain, "Les cabinets ministériels et la décision politique," *Les cabinets ministériels et autres. Statuts, rôles, et pouvoirs*, Brussels, Bruylant, 2001, p.81.

<sup>196</sup> Eraly, *Le pouvoir enchaîné, op.cit.*, p.347. Theoretically, the administration examines affairs from a technical and legalistic point of view; the cabinet studies them in terms of the repercussions that they could have on governmental action and on the orientation of ministerial activities" (Wilwerth, Claude, "Introduction," *Les cabinets ministériels et autres. Statuts, rôles, et pouvoirs*, Brussels, Bruylant, 2001, p.17).

France has traditionally “played a central role in the DRC...due to its position on the UN Security Council” and to its national resources, which include permanent military bases in its own former African colonies.<sup>197</sup> Within the institutionalist tradition, the rational choice branch emphasizes “how agents exploit the uncertainty stemming from the imperfect division of power between competing European actors.”<sup>198</sup> Analyzed through this prism, the “Europeanization” of security-related interventions in the DRC from 1999-2006 could have been a Belgian strategy to limit France’s unilateral influence in former Belgian colonies.<sup>199</sup>

Institutionalist theory also supports an alternative dynamic to this relationship: that the EU’s development of military and civilian intervention capabilities encouraged closer cooperation between France and Belgium, and that multilateralization of French and Belgian re-engagement in the DRC through the EU provided a way to defuse possible tensions.<sup>200</sup> Regardless of whether France and Belgium harbor a latent rivalry, multilateral institutions like the EU or France’s RECAMP program “facilitate policy coordination among...states and reduce the likelihood of

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<sup>197</sup> Houbeké, Hans, Stéphanie Carette and Koen Vlassenroot, “Le soutien de l’UE à la RDC,” *L’action de l’Europe en Afrique dans le domaine de la sécurité. Actes du colloque du 25 octobre 2006*, Paris, Centre d’analyse stratégique, 2007, p.64. Some Franco-Belgian antagonism also originates from French and Belgian relationships with Rwanda’s Habyarimana regime. In the early 1990s, France provided military assistance to Habyarimana, but withdrew it when this did not end the government’s conflict with the Rwandan Patriotic Front (Lefèvre, *op.cit.*, pp.169-171). At the time of suspension, François Mitterrand declared that “France had no responsibility to be of use to Rwanda, and was only there because of the inability of the Belgians to play their role of the former colonial power” (Lefèvre, *op.cit.*, p.171, quoted from Péan, Pierre, *Noires fureurs, blancs menteurs*, Paris, Racine, 2005, p.175).

<sup>198</sup> Aspinwall and Schneider, *art.cit.*, p.13.

<sup>199</sup> Since 1999, Belgium has derived its motivation for re-engagement from multiple sources, and it is unlikely that rivalry with the French is the most powerful source. However, a latent Franco-Belgian rivalry for influence in Belgium’s former colonies could help explain the extent of Belgium’s multilateral re-engagement.

<sup>200</sup> Belgian Lieutenant Colonel Luc Camelbeke affirmed this interpretation of the Franco-Belgian relationship—as cooperative rather than competitive—using a logic of mutual gain: “The French have their areas [or] countries of preference, we have ours, and we try to combine our efforts... at this moment we have a relatively good pragmatic approach, through which we look for complementarity.”

mutually harmful competition among them for spheres of influence.”<sup>201</sup> Within the EU, all security-related interventions that occur through the CFSP require consensus of all member states, so in many endeavors Belgium retains an effective veto on initiatives that involve “threatening” French actions.

France, for its part, had limited diplomatic capital to unilaterally intervene in the Great Lakes region from 1999-2006. France’s controversial involvement in Rwanda before the genocide and through Operation Turquoise made unilateral initiatives too politically risky.<sup>202</sup> Therefore Belgium’s multilateral approach to re-engagement in the DRC benefited the French as well. The French could maintain a presence in French-speaking Central Africa, while defraying the additional diplomatic risks and operational costs it would have paid to conduct a bilateral intervention of similar scale. Re-engagement through the EU institutions allowed France, as the lead nation for Operation Artemis, for example, to meet both its national need to “preserve French interests” in the DRC and its international political goal of “reinforcing ESDP.”<sup>203</sup> At the same time, France’s budget constraint for African interventions was less limited than Belgium’s, and because France generally has the political willingness to engage as a “leading” (or non-leading, but troop-contributing) nation in the EU’s Congo missions, it was a strategic partner for Belgium.<sup>204</sup> In this

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<sup>201</sup> Keohane, Robert and Joseph Nye, “Introduction,” *After the Cold War: International Institutions and State Strategies in Europe 1989-1991*, ed. Robert Keohane, Joseph Nye, and Stanley Hoffmann, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1993, p.7.

<sup>202</sup> Houbecke, Carette, and Vlassenroot, *op.cit.*, p.65.

<sup>203</sup> Houbecke, Carette, and Vlassenroot, *op.cit.*, p.65.

<sup>204</sup> A similar “value added” for Franco-Belgian collaboration exists within the RECAMP program, which existed outside of the EU institutional setting from 1999-2006. In RECAMP missions beyond 2006, the EU will take over the leading role from the French. RECAMP’s Europeanization is not expected to greatly change the Franco-Belgian cooperation that already exists within this program, but it could shift the focus of this Franco-Belgian cooperation towards promoting region-wide security goals as defined in the European Security Strategy. The December 2003 document cited five common security concerns (proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, failed states, regional conflicts, organized crime) and called for the pursuit of security-related goals through “effective multilateralism.”

context, Belgium's role as coordinator of EU multilateral interventions after 1999 complemented France's potential to play a more resource-heavy role on the ground in the DRC. Cooperation within the EU framework reinforced the complementarity of French and Belgian roles, and created the potential to enhance EU countries' coherence and effectiveness at re-establishing security in the Great Lakes.

#### *Immigration Concerns*

In recent years, the Belgian government and the EU had mutual interest in controlling the flow of refugees and immigrants to the European continent. When Belgium's "rainbow" coalition government began in 1999, the "normalization of the situation of asylum seekers and 'illegal aliens'" was a major issue on their agenda.<sup>205</sup> During political difficulties in Congo and Rwanda in the 1990s, many Central African immigrants arrived in Belgium.<sup>206</sup> EU-wide regulation of these demographic movements fit in with the EU's goal of preventing and managing the world's "regional conflicts."<sup>207</sup> This is because the EU conceived of its Congolese security-related interventions as a "proactive contribution" to the control of European immigration flows. Creating stability on the ground in the DRC

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<sup>205</sup> Mabile, *op.cit.*, p.14. The number of asylum seekers to Belgium was 22,064 in 1998, but had risen to 40,000 by the year 2000 (Carlier, Jean Yves and Andrea Rea, *Les étrangers en Belgique. Dossier du CRISP* 54, Brussels, Centre de recherche et d'information socio-politiques, 2001).

<sup>206</sup> Dumont, Patrick and Lieven DeWinter, "L'électorat du PSC et les clivages de la société belge" *Les partis politiques en Belgique*, ed. Pascal Delwit and Jean-Michel DeWaele, Brussels, ULB, 1997, p.108. Congolese people had constituted the largest group of asylum seekers in Belgium during the 1980s, and were surpassed by Yugoslavs in the 1990s, but remained a significant percentage of Belgium's asylum seekers, as 10.6% in 1997, 7.8% in 1998 (Kagné, Bonaventure and Marco Martinello, *L'immigration subsaharienne en Belgique*, *Courrier Hebdomadaire* 1721, Brussels, CRISP, 2001, p.5).

<sup>207</sup> European Council, *Une Europe sûre dans un monde meilleur. Stratégie européenne de sécurité*, Brussels, 12 December 2003. This goal was formally expressed in the Security Strategy, but existed throughout the 1999-2006 period under scrutiny in this study.

could improve the Congolese government's "protection capacities"<sup>208</sup> for its citizens and "prevent refugee flows."<sup>209</sup>

As an EU member state, immigration issues provided Belgium with both domestic-level and regional-level impetus to intensify its security-related interventions in the DRC. As predicted by American institutionalists Keohane and Nye, the potential cooperative, multilateral interventions occurred when there was potential for mutual benefit: the "complementary interests" of various member states in controlling levels of immigration to the EU made "joint gains" from Congolese intervention possible for Belgium and for other member states.<sup>210</sup> Since most member states perceived intervention as a beneficial way to further EU security, it became easier for Belgium to conduct some of its re-engagement efforts in a European multilateral context.

#### *UN-related Limitations*

The UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo has been present in the country since 30 November 1999 under UN Security Council Resolution 1291. With an approximate annual budget of 1 billion dollars, MONUC has up to the present day committed to "forcibly implementing the cease-fire agreement" of the Lusaka Accords;<sup>211</sup> "monitoring" the cease-fire; promoting "disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement, and reintegration" of former combatants; and "facilitating the transition

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<sup>208</sup> Lavenex, Sandra, "Shifting Up and Out: The Foreign Policy of European Immigration Control," in *Immigration Policy in Europe. The Politics of Control*, ed. Virginei Guiraudon & Gallya Lahav, London, Routledge, 2007, p.136.

<sup>209</sup> Thielmann, Eiko and Torun Dewan, "The myth of free-riding: refugee protecting and implicit burden-sharing," in *Immigration Policy in Europe. The Politics of Control*, ed. Virginei Guiraudon and Gallya Lahav, London, Routledge, 2007, p.156.

<sup>210</sup> Keohane and Nye, *op.cit.*, pp.4,6

<sup>211</sup> The Congolese signatories of the Lusaka Accords agreed to a cease-fire and "accepted that the content of negotiations would cover: 'the new political order in DRC,' 'the process of free, democratic, and transparent elections,' 'the consitutional project...'" (De Villers, Gauthier, *République démocratique du Congo. Guerre et politique. Les trente derniers mois de LD. Kabila (aout 1998-janvier 2001)*, en collaboration avec Jean Omasombo et Erik Kennes, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2001).

towards the organization of credible elections.”<sup>212</sup> Belgium’s combination of bilateral and EU multilateral tools allowed it to intervene in additional contexts that supported the UN Mission’s ends. This potential for complementarity is another possible reason that Belgian re-engagement occurred during MONUC’s presence.

MONUC encompasses projects with “military, political, rule of law, and humanitarian” functions. The EU’s Artemis military mission temporarily replaced the UN in Bunia, Eastern Ituri while MONUC awaited a new mandate.<sup>213</sup> In other cases, the functions of EU missions paralleled those of UN efforts, as with the EUPOL mission in Kinshasa that occurred in accordance with the Joint Declaration on UN-EU Cooperation in Crisis Management.<sup>214</sup> The EU and MONUC also do complementary work on Security Sector Reform.

Belgium has been especially supportive of EU actions that reinforce the work of MONUC. However, Belgium may have been motivated to re-engage in the DRC alongside MONUC, through the EU (instead of by contributing Belgian troops to the UN Mission) because Belgium’s bilateral and EU multilateral programs use different tools to achieve their goals. MONUC remains “the only actor with the military organization, administrative experience and logistical capacity to deploy and sustain a force of 20.000 military and civilian personnel” in the Great Lakes region.<sup>215</sup> While the EU cannot engage as many troops as MONUC, in recent years it has offered “rapid reaction capacity,...movement control, intelligence [and] medical units or logistics” that the UN lacks.<sup>216</sup> Belgian bilateral cooperation also provided military training that was not part of the UN mandate. Thus Belgian re-engagement outside of the UN enhanced international community endeavors in the DRC. This reasoning may have

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<sup>212</sup> UN Mission in the DR Congo, “Mandate,” United Nations, 15 June 2006, <http://www.monuc.org/News.aspx?newsID=11529&menuOpened>About%20MONUC>.

<sup>213</sup> European Council, “Joint Action 2003/423/CFSP of 5 June 2003,” *art.cit.*

<sup>214</sup> European Council, “Joint Action 2006/319/CFSP of 27 April 2006,” *art.cit.*

<sup>215</sup> UN Mission in RD Congo, “A central role,” United Nations, 1999-2006, <http://www.monuc.org/news.aspx?newsID=11530>.

<sup>216</sup> Tardy, *op.cit.*, p.53.

motivated various Belgian decisions to re-engage in the DRC, even with MONUC already there.

The Rwanda Commission conclusions adopted by the Belgian government also limited the range and flexibility of direct Belgian re-engagement in the DRC, if through the UN. In 2004, Belgium prohibited itself from running a bilateral military cooperation program in the DRC while also contributing Belgian troops to UN combat operations there. If Belgium participated in the latter, it was required to suspend its MPP for the duration of the UN endeavor.<sup>217</sup> Alternatively, Belgium could simultaneously participate in the MPP and in EU military missions in the DRC.<sup>218</sup> Belgium's strategy of intervening primarily through the EU kept the greatest number of multilateral and bilateral options open.

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Ultimately, it is likely that many, if not all of the factors discussed here influenced the emergence of a Belgian re-engagement policy in the DRC. Institutionalist theory, with its emphasis on the principles of rationality underlying cooperation, has shaped the analysis of these influences. According to Keohane and Nye, "international political processes" forge cooperation, which is possible "despite the lack of common government in international politics." This cooperation occurs when the parties involved in policymaking have "mutual interests," norms of "reciprocity," and "long-term relationships among a relatively small number of actors."<sup>219</sup> Along these lines, Belgium's re-engagement in the DRC is one component of security-related interventions that are becoming an "international political process" for a select group of European actors. As EU members have increasingly dedicated themselves to the advancement of the CFSP, the ESDP, and the entire EU project, Belgium has also been able to meet domestic demands for multilateral re-engagement. The existence of a combination of domestic and regional/international reasons for intervention

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<sup>217</sup> Sénat et Chambre de Représentats de Belgique, "Recommendations of the Senate Commission on Foreign Affairs and Defense," *op.cit.*

<sup>218</sup> This ESDP-MPP combination of engagement did not occur 1999-2006, but is not prohibited.

<sup>219</sup> Keohane and Nye, *op.cit.*, p.4

in the DRC has fostered cooperation between Belgium, the EU, and other individual European and African states.

Yet in terms of foreign policy in its former colonies, “Belgium remains influenced by multiple movements and trends that can be antagonistic.” They reflect the “community, linguistic, ideological, cultural, social, economic, and political divides” of the policymaking environment on this issue.<sup>220</sup> Institutional theory helps us navigate these cleavages to understand why Belgium and its partners cooperated to “internationalize” (or in this case, regionalize) their political endeavors in the DRC. Without denying the influence of divisions and rivalries, institutional theory brings the concept of mutual benefit into the equation. As of 1999, Belgium defined its re-engagement in the DRC as a hybrid bilateral and multilateral endeavor. The multilateral portion of this policy—and thus the fundamental hybridity of the whole effort—hinged upon various states’ willingness to cooperate on foreign policy issues, which only occurs when it brings mutual benefits to the actors involved. As this study has shown, a broad range of factors may have facilitated the multilateral element of Belgium’s intervention policy: Belgian domestic desire for cooperation, and the interest of individual member states and the EU as a whole in such cooperation.

## Conclusions

In Belgium’s case, it is true that the presence of “international institutions...affect the strategies states choose and the decisions they make.” Retaining and enriching the EU framework for intervention remained a necessity if Belgium wanted to remain involved in DRC to a large extent. However, legal institutions—namely, the Belgian intervention norms enforced by the Rwanda Commission—also set parameters for Belgium’s attempts to multilateralize its security-related interventions in the DRC, and shaped the way Belgium’s federal government could interact within the EU, the UN and other alliances. For Belgium, multilateralism was even more important because it allowed the government to support DRC initiatives of greater magnitude with its limited financial, civilian, and military resources.

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<sup>220</sup> Dumoulin, André, Extrait de "Les partis politiques belges et la défense", conférence, IRSD, Brussels, 16 November 2006.

Belgium based its security-related interventions, whether bilateral or multilateral, upon basic principles of international law. However, the Verhofstadt government did not completely avoid accusations of promoting neo-colonial projects in the DRC throughout its re-engagement from 1999-2006. Responding to these postcolonial realities in a way similar to France, Belgium sought to multilateralize its Africa policies to “legitimize interventions [that] had largely been perceived as neo-colonial,” especially before their multilateralization.<sup>221</sup> Although Belgian participation in missions on the ground in the DRC through the EU dilutes its direct influence, thereby decreasing the likelihood that Belgians alone would be accused of neo-colonialism, the entire EU, as a Western institution comprised of several former colonial powers, still risks being perceived as a self-interested actor in Africa. Regardless of whether the EU’s current interventions are neo-colonial, the disparity of resources between Belgium-EU and the DRC, and the relative wealth of Belgium and the EU, provides these actors with economic and diplomatic leverage to promote the Congolese security-building projects they favor. These interventions have been relatively successful in achieving limited, short-term goals in the DRC, but must evolve to encompass longer-term, cross-pillar, complementary actions to a greater degree.

Throughout 1999-2006, the EU’s re-engagement in the DRC also occurred in a larger framework that encompassed a longer-term financial commitment by the EU to promote “African ownership” of conflict prevention tools.<sup>222</sup> The EU funded the African Peacekeeping Facility,<sup>223</sup> and both Belgium and the EU consistently committed development aid to the DRC. These initiatives occurred under the guise that security and development in the DRC are self-reinforcing.<sup>224</sup> To truly put such a philosophy into practice, the EU and Belgium will need to work with the Congolese government to determine a proactive, long-term, and flexible

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<sup>221</sup> “Deuxième table ronde,” *op.cit.*, p.7.

<sup>222</sup> “Le Plan d’Action belge pour l’Afrique centrale mis sur papier,” *art.cit.*

<sup>223</sup> Martinelli, “Helping Transition,” *art.cit.*, p.382.

<sup>224</sup> Goerens, *op.cit.*, p.69.

plan for intervention that links economic and on-the-ground aspects of security policy.

Admittedly, this kind of blueprint is difficult to produce. The European countries' adherence to any long-term plan for future interventions will be legally impossible if the new Congolese government chooses to limit or terminate the intervention of external actors. At the time of writing (July 2007), Belgian re-engagement policy in the DRC had halted while officials awaited further communication from the Kabila government about security-related interventions, and while a new federal government formed in Belgium. Yet the recent Congolese elections also provide Belgium and the EU with an opportunity to reflect and to build upon lessons learned from their engagement during the Congolese Transition period. Belgium's 1999-2006 involvement in the DRC shows that its bilateral and multilateral contributions to improving security conditions in its former colony can make a difference. If the new Congolese government approves Belgian intervention either bilaterally or through the EU, Belgium could reinforce its interest in conducting meaningful diplomatic relations with the DRC by increasing long-term planning, whose shortage weakened performance in initial phases of re-engagement.

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Several more precise empirical conclusions also emerge from this study of Belgian re-engagement in the DRC. Conclusions in response to the central questions—why and how Belgium used security-related interventions to re-engage in the DRC from 1999-2006—are both historical and policy-oriented attempts to clarify the nature these interventions, and to decipher the reasons Belgian re-engagement policies took on their various forms. Some conclusions also build upon the traditional principles of institutionalism to contribute to a newly emerging part of political science literature that analyzes state behavior in the specific context of EU foreign policy development.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> White, *op.cit.*, p. 47.

### How Belgium Re-engaged in the DRC: The Form of Security-Related Interventions

- Belgian re-engagement policy in its former Central African colonies and territories had both political and economic aspects. This study paid attention to one element of this policy: on-the-ground security-related interventions in the DRC, and the political and economic elements directly tied to such endeavors. In fact, the type of re-engagement that distinguished the Verhofstadt governments (1999-2003, 2003-2007) from the final Dehaene government (1995-1999) was the former's promotion of Belgian support and participation in security-related interventions in the DRC. The Dehaene government, on the other hand, provided humanitarian aid and debated the resumption of development aid, but its financial endeavors did not entail Belgian presence in the DRC.
- The Belgian, European, and Congolese political environments created both opportunities and constraints for the resumption of Belgian security-related actions in the DRC. As a product of these institutional parameters and of the methodological individualism of various Belgian political elites, Belgian intervention policy combined bilateral and multilateral methods.
- Belgium made a significant portion of its military personnel contributions on the ground in the DRC through its bilateral MPP. The common view at Belgian Defense is that bilateral military cooperation complements Belgium's multilateral endeavors in the DRC,<sup>226</sup> and this analysis finds it true for the short-term. Belgium's MPP was designed to train Congolese integrated brigades and engineers.<sup>227</sup> This focus was different from the one Belgium had in the multilateral RECAMP, which trained African troops specifically for peacekeeping purposes, and from that of the EU, whose military reform measures focused on an earlier, DDR stage of the army reform process that dealt with militia members who would not be integrated into the Congolese national army for training. Thus from 2004-2006, Belgium's MPP met brigade training needs that multilateral initiatives did not.
- Multilateralism was a key element of Belgium's security-related intervention strategy in the DRC, since Belgium did not always have the

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<sup>226</sup>Camelbeke, Luc, *op.cit.*

<sup>227</sup>Idem

resources or the political approval to conduct bilateral military or civilian operations that surpassed the modest scale of the MPP. Many security-related interventions resulted from cooperation between Belgium, the EU, and other individual European and African states. Belgian diplomacy “facilitated”<sup>228</sup> a convergence of these interests in Congolese security-building interventions.

- Belgium relied more heavily on the EU than on the UN for security-related interventions from 1999-2006. The original Rwanda Commission conclusions banned Belgian military presence in the DRC, but the reformed conclusions of 2004 only ruled out the simultaneous occurrence of direct Belgian troop contributions to the UN and Belgian bilateral MPP in the DRC.<sup>229</sup> After the 2004 reforms, the ESDP (whose development had diversified the EU’s military and civilian capabilities and strengthened its overall capacity for conflict management and peace building) provided a new institutional pathway for more flexible Belgian re-engagement, by enabling Belgium’s direct participation in multilateral military endeavors along with MPP.
- This cooperation lends credence to the institutionalist principle that “the EU can be considered as a set of international institutions and arrangements within which the interests and preferences of member states and other actors can be coordinated.”<sup>230</sup> For Belgium’s sensitive relations with the DRC, the EU was a regionally specific form of “international institution” that, at least in the short-term, provided Belgium with an opportunity for sustained yet varied multilateral endeavors in the DRC from 2003-2006, while leaving Belgium a margin of flexibility in terms of its participation in each mission (in accordance with the EU’s intergovernmental procedures for foreign policy and defense issues). Thus one reason Belgium relied heavily upon the EU was because it easily accommodated Belgium’s desire for a high-profile organizational role and lower-profile military commitments for DRC from 1999-2006.

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<sup>228</sup> Roosens, Claude, and Olivier Lanotte, *art.cit.*, p.207.

<sup>229</sup> Kiesel, Véronique, “Feu vert du Sénat à des troupes en Afrique,” *art.cit.*

<sup>230</sup> Hill, Christopher and Michael Smith, *International Relations and the EU*, London, Oxford, 2005, p.8.

- In this period, Belgium was eager to contribute to all EU missions in the DRC, and even provided personnel for the EU's military and civilian missions during the Congolese election years, but was still risk-averse to sending combat-ready Belgian troops. Belgian involvement in the DRC through the EU gave Belgium's generous but limited contributions "added value" and effectiveness due to the larger scale of EU initiatives. EU sponsorship of these missions also tempered the degree to which Belgian contributions could be perceived as independent Belgian policies that, by their bilateral nature, would have more easily evoked the memory of Belgium's controversial bilateral relationships of the past with Zaïre and the Congo.

#### How Belgium Re-engaged: The Content and Value of the Interventions

- Belgium was able to increase its visibility and credibility in the DRC through its combination of bilateral and multilateral methods of intervention that relied most heavily upon the EU. Belgium's position within the EU as a smaller, less resource-rich member state gave it a niche within the institutional framework that conditioned its behavior as a facilitator of EU-wide cooperation.<sup>231</sup> Keeping in mind that foreign policy (and thus security-related intervention) is a domain that remains largely within the jurisdiction of member states and can be difficult to coordinate on the EU's intergovernmental level, Belgium's multilateralization of security-related interventions in the DRC from 1999-2006 was an organizational success; Belgium's diplomatic efforts helped retain the DRC security situation as an element of the EU foreign policy agenda. Belgium worked creatively within and outside of EU boundaries to overcome potential restrictions on Belgian state actions that budget and legal constraints posed.
- First, Belgium has made use of the EU as a "multiplier" of power, thus exhibiting behavior similar to what analysts have observed for other aspects of Belgian foreign policy.<sup>232</sup> Applying this general concept of "EU as multiplier" to Belgium's interventions in its former colony, Belgium's status as a "small state," with limited military capacity, operational

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<sup>231</sup> Kabamba, Bob, *op.cit.*

<sup>232</sup> Coolsaet, Rik et Ann-Sofie Voet, *art.cit.*

resources, and funding for Congolese interventions,<sup>233</sup> made the EU an appealing and useful outlet. Security-related interventions through the CFSP and the ESDP were intergovernmental, and member state resources were partially pooled. Belgium thus had an incentive to use the EU in order to organize and participate in security-building endeavors of a greater magnitude than it could achieve on its own. This incentive was particularly acute given Belgium's national resource constraints. Its bilateral contributions of money, personnel, and equipment had the greatest potential for "value added" when made through the EU. If Belgium had directly contributed troops to MONUC (where resources of various countries were also pooled), the range of projects would have been more limited compared to the EU (where the Commission and Council had the potential to coordinate their policy endeavors), and would have compromised Belgium's MPP. Alternatively, if Belgium had coupled its bilateral cooperation with multilateral RECAMP endeavors, this would have entailed a bilateral-multilateral combination of tools, but only on military cooperation endeavors. Finally, if Belgium had confined itself to bilateral Belgian-Congolese projects, it would not have attained sufficient resources to enact large-scale security-related reforms in its former colony. This strategic logic helps explain why Belgium's re-engagement policy materialized as a multi-layered strategy that most heavily relied on a pan-European approach to Congolese security issues.

- Second, Belgium found indirect ways to support MONUC, a multilateral force that coexisted with EU forces on the ground. The Belgian government's contribution of non-military observers to MONUC and its training of the Beninese troops that began participating in MONUC in 2003 both exemplified how Belgium used pragmatic and flexible policy to remain engaged in the DRC though the UN, without violating Rwanda Commission rules.
- Normatively, diverse interpretations of individual and state rights preclude any single ethical judgment of Belgian intervention. Belgium's bilateral and multilateral interventions adhered to international law by

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<sup>233</sup> Belgium does not currently have the capacity to be a "framework nation" for an EU operation, since framework nations must contribute 20-30% of the troops for the operation (Pfister, Stéphane, "Les avantages comparatifs de l'Union européenne en matière de gestion des crises et la sortie des conflits," *Europa* 25, Geneva, Institut européen de l'Université de Genève, September 2004, p.61).

gaining Congolese government consent, and the UN Security Council mandated most EU interventions. These means legitimated Belgian action to the international community and government leaders, but did not guarantee universal acceptance of the Belgian presence and the power dynamics reflected. The EU provides European states with “a means to re-engage in areas of former colonial influence in Africa and Asia” without assuming the entire burden of this engagement by itself.<sup>234</sup> However, Belgium’s attempts to prevent its missions from being characterized as neo-colonial projects indicate that Belgian-Congolese relations, even when partially conducted through the EU, are still sensitive to the events of the past. Institutionalist analysis accounts for the occurrence of cooperation through the existence of “mutual benefits” for the parties involved,<sup>235</sup> and this helps explain why Belgium was motivated to intervene in the DRC, aside from altruistic reasons. Belgium intervened in the DRC out of humanitarian concern, and out of its commitment to diplomatic partnership with the DRC, but it also did so also out of self-interest. Among other reasons, Belgium valued conflict management and peace building in the DRC because “if the situation deteriorate[d] in one of its former colonies, the political consequences [we]re immediately felt domestically.”<sup>236</sup>

- Belgian security-related interventions achieved precisely defined short-term goals for the reform of army and police sectors, as well as for the prevention of armed conflict within city limits of Bunia and Kinshasa at key political moments. However, they less effectively encompassed the specific longer-term, cross-pillar, complementary actions that Belgium and the EU still need in order to have a sustainable security-building strategy in the DRC.

### Why Belgium Re-engaged: Reasons for Promoting Security-Related Interventions

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<sup>234</sup> Wong, *op.cit.*, p.147.

<sup>235</sup> Keohane and Hoffman, *op.cit.*, p.4.

<sup>236</sup> Political Commission of the Western European Union, *Le maintien de paix en Afrique subsaharienne: une approche concrète*, Document A/1913, Paris, Assembly of the WEU, 6 December 2005, p.11.

- Recent Belgian intervention in the DRC could have occurred for a variety of political reasons that were domestic and regional/international. Institutional constraints as well as the personal views of Belgian politicians influenced Belgium's re-engagement policy.
- Institutions—organizations like the EU or UN, as well as sets of norms like those created by the Rwanda Commission—influenced the occurrence and the nature of Belgian security-related interventions in the DRC, as both historical and rational-choice institutionalism would predict. EU security objectives like controlling refugee flows to Europe and dealing with fragile states gave the EU an interest in engaging with the warring (and later, Transitional) DRC that aligned with the Verhoftadt government's re-engagement goals. MONUC's differing resources and limited coverage of DRC security-building needs also left room for Belgium to promote bilateral and multilateral interventions that could expand the international community's range of efforts in the DRC, with permission from the Congolese Transition government. Within Belgium, party-level shifts created a domestic political environment in which the pact of the governing coalition foresaw more intense re-engagement. Although restricted militarily in varying degrees from 1999-2006 by the Rwanda Commission conclusions, Belgian political elites sought to plan and eventually implement re-engagement in the DRC. Historical institutionalism, highlighting the strong influences of domestic and international institutions, helps clarify how Belgian actions from 1999-2006 could have been functions of the sub-national and international systems in which the Belgian state was situated.
- At the same time, Belgian political elites with their own opinions about their country's link to the DRC voiced their opinions through governing institutions. Even though these elites were working under pressures from the governing coalition, their political parties, and their ministerial cabinets, an element of individual opinion on Belgian interventions also shone through in their diplomacy on this issue. Comments made by individuals like Louis Michel and Karel De Gucht may not have always changed Belgian government policies, but their images as individuals contributed to Belgium's profile on this issue.
- Whether Flemish or francophone, many of the prominent elites recognized the benefits that multilateralism could bring to Belgium's re-engagement in the DRC. The political elite's agreement on this aspect helps explain why Belgian security-related interventions often occurred

through the EU, or at least through cooperation with member states. Thus, it is not just institutions that matter, but also the way individuals make use of their limited range of action within the prevailing setting.<sup>237</sup> Belgium's security-related actions in the DRC reflect the interplay between institutional constraints and methodological individualism in a country's foreign policy.

- Security-related interventions, whether bilateral or multilateral, also depended on the legitimate consent of the Congolese government and thus did not occur until 2003 when an internationally legitimate Transition government of national unity took over in the DRC. The Belgian government formulated re-engagement policy from 1999-2003, but did not participate in security-related interventions until the Transition.

#### Beyond 2006: Challenges

- If Belgium seeks re-engagement for the permanent improvement of the Congolese security situation, it will have to garner support not just for short-term interventions like the Artemis, EUPOL, EUSEC, and EUFOR of the past, but also for a long-term EU vision for peace and security in the DRC.
- Belgian policymakers committed to constructive re-engagement should therefore work within the EU to establish an even closer link between economic and on-the-ground aspects of security policy, within a long-term framework.
- In addition to Belgium's need for a more specific, long-term plan for involvement in the DRC, one of its greatest challenges will be to keep the DRC at the top of domestic and EU agenda, now that democratic elections have occurred and army integration is underway. Establishing a working relationship with the new Congolese government is essential to the survival of Belgian re-engagement in all forms.

The field of international politics has seen many studies of Belgium's foreign policy in Central Africa. It is my hope that this one provided a new perspective on the existing literature by clarifying the Belgian state perspective on security-related interventions in the DRC and Belgium's strategic logic in pursuing such re-engagement both bilaterally and

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<sup>237</sup> Wettersten, John, *op.cit.*, p. 211.

multilaterally. The analysis also emphasized how not just domestic, but certain international conditions—changes in European conceptions of security, and the development of the ESDP—partially explain Belgian involvement in Central Africa. In this context, the DRC (where several initial ESDP missions occurred) was an especially appropriate country study to illustrate how Belgian and greater European foreign policies continue to intersect.