

The Implementation of Peace Operations

Executing Security Sector Reform and Stabilization in the DR Congo

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SCHOOL OF GLOBAL STUDIES



Abstract

Froitzheim, Meike (2018), *The Implementation of Peace Operations: Executing Security Sector Reform and Stabilization in the DR Congo*. PhD dissertation in Peace and Development Research, School of Global Studies, University of Gothenburg, (P.O Box 700, 405 30 Gothenburg, Sweden).

Language: English, with summary in Swedish

ISBN: 978-91-7833-035-5 (PRINT)

ISBN: 978-91-7833-036-2 (PDF)

<http://hdl.handle.net/2077/56125>

The aim of this study is to investigate the implementation of peace operations deployed by the international community in third countries. Considering the lack of knowledge on what happens when peace operation policies are implemented, this inquiry intends to explore in-depth what emerges as security sector reform and stabilization policies are executed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Following implementation studies, implementing actors play a decisive role in implementation since their decisions made, based on their understandings, are assumed to effectively become the policies that are executed. Hence, the key focus of analysis is the implementing actors' understanding of the three aspects of the policy content, actor interaction and the implementation context, which are considered as constituting implementation. The main research question guiding this study is formulated as: How do implementing actors understand the implementation of peace operations in the DR Congo?

The data underlying this inquiry consist of semi-structured interviews conducted with UN and EU officials, national diplomats, and staff of local and international non-governmental organizations between 2012 and 2013 in Goma, eastern DR Congo, as well as in the capital city of Kinshasa. These data are furthermore complemented by other primary and secondary sources, such as legal documents, reports and scholarly articles.

The overall picture painted by implementing actors is one in which the implementation of SSR and stabilization policies, as part of the broader peace operations, is understood as deficient. The findings suggest that the implementation of SSR and stabilization policies in the DR Congo is affected by the vagueness of the policy content and an apparent need of the donor community for visible and publicly exploitable short-term projects. The spatial distance between Kinshasa and Goma, in combination with a hierarchical and capital-focused institutional set-up and lack of leadership, are furthermore highlighted as impeding actor interaction and thus policy execution. Finally, the complexity of both the conflict and the political setting, the latter being characterised by a situation of state fragility and perceived lack of political will, capacity and ownership are frequently pointed out by implementing actors as influencing the execution of SSR and stabilization policies in the DR Congo.

Keywords: Peace operations; policy implementation; implementing actors; security sector reform; stabilization; Democratic Republic of the Congo; United Nations; European Union