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Building Partnerships in Peace Operations: The Limits of the Global/Regional Approach

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Key Points

- ▶ The post-Cold War changes have led to the emergence of a variety of crisis management institutional actors that now interact with each other in an unprecedented way.
- ▶ Yet, inter-institutional relations have not led to the establishment of a crisis management architecture or inter-locking system.
- ▶ There are five reasons why building partnerships is and will remain difficult.
 - First, regional organisations are highly heterogeneous in their mandate, institutional form, resources, political clout and level of development as crisis management actors.
 - Second, inter-institutional relations are characterised by cooperation as much as by competition between organisations that must permanently demonstrate their relevance.
 - Third, some partnerships are reflections of a North-South divide that characterise the international system and therefore accentuate the politicization of inter-institutional relations.
 - Fourth, if inter-institutional cooperation and burden-sharing have partly developed on the basis of comparative advantages displayed by each organisation, the fact is that nearly all institutions aspire to embrace the entire spectrum of crisis management activities, with little prospect for the emergence of an interlocking system based on different competences.
 - Finally, although partnerships are officially promoted by all institutions, internal coordination and coherence are, for each of them, a more important task than building inter-institutional links.

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A consensus seems to exist on the need to tackle contemporary intra-state conflicts through a multiplicity of actors who display different comparative advantages and levels of expertise. For the United Nations as well as for the regional organisations that, since the end of the Cold War, have emerged as crisis management actors, working together is the way forward. The UN and the EU run or have run simultaneous operations in Africa (Democratic Republic of the Congo and Chad) and Kosovo and have largely institutionalised their cooperation; the UN took over operations initially deployed by the African Union in West Africa and in Burundi and the two institutions have created a hybrid UN-AU mission in Darfur; the EU is assisting the AU in the building-up of its Stand-by Force and finances AU operations; the EU, the OSCE and NATO have for some time shared the burden of security management in the Balkans. As noted in a UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) document, “reinforcing interoperability with key partners [...] can enhance cooperation and ensure that we maximise finite global peacekeeping resources”¹. Indeed, given the scope of crisis management needs, not least the UN overstretch, burden-sharing has become an imperative and its corollary, inter-institutional partnerships, equally central. Yet, the establishment of partnerships among international institutions is facing important political and technical difficulties that make the prospect for an interlocking system unlikely.

Why Institutions Cooperate

Institutions cooperate mainly for materialist motives². Cooperation reduces transaction costs; it provides access to information, expertise, finance or material resources that institutions are willing to share. Inter-institutional cooperation may also allow for legitimacy transfer between a legitimising institution and an organisation whose action’s legitimacy is not generated internally. This legitimising process may come from a UN Security Council resolution that confers both legality and legitimacy to a peacekeeping/peacebuilding operation, or simply from the multi-organisational nature of the operation. Furthermore, partnerships may be a way to gain visibility or influence within the partner institution or more broadly to enhance one’s position. For the EU, partnering with the UN or with NATO is a means to build up its status as a security actor and to show that the concept of “effective multilateralism” is being implemented.

At the same time, institutions may cooperate for ideational reasons, meaning that institutions’ values, normative base and culture shape their propensity and willingness to cooperate with other organisations, especially when these organisations have similar goals. Cooperation is not only interest-driven, but may also reflect a certain conception of international action. For example, the UN and the EU are presented as “natural partners, [...] united by the core values laid out in the 1945 Charter of the United Nations and the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights”³. The two institutions cooperate because they share certain values such as the belief in the virtues of international law and multilateralism, a preference for the peaceful settlement of disputes and a related uneasiness with the use of force⁴. Whether or not this is true, this convergence is part of the official discourse on the nature of the partnership.

In practice, partnerships have developed between security actors over the last decade. UN-EU cooperation is probably the most institutionalised, with two joint declarations on crisis management (2003, see box 1; and 2007), the establishment of a joint Steering Committee, regular desk-to-desk dialogue and several experiences in field cooperation (in the Balkans and Africa in particular). The UN has also developed cooperation with the African Union, through capacity-building, technical and financial assistance. The UN Department for Peacekeeping operations and Department for Political Affairs are assisting the AU Peace Support Operations Division in the areas of planning, logistics and human resource management. Support is also provided in the field, to the AU Operation in Somalia in particular, and through the UN-AU Hybrid operation in Darfur, that took over the AU mission in 2008. The so-called regional organisations have also initiated partnerships that draw on their respective capabilities and mandates, and contribute to the establishment of a global crisis management system. The EU, NATO and the AU have all engaged in some sort of partnership, with different degrees of institutionalisation and results.

Box 1: “Joint Declaration on UN-EU Co-operation in Crisis Management”, New York, 23 September 2003

“The Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Presidency of the Council of the European Union welcome the existing co-operation between the United Nations and the European Union in the area of civilian and military crisis management.

[...] the United Nations and the European Union agree to establish a joint consultative mechanism at the working level to examine ways and means to enhance mutual co-ordination and compatibility in the following areas:

- **Planning:** including reciprocal assistance in assessment missions and greater contact and co-operation between mission planning units, specifically with regard to logistical resource allocation and inventory as well as interoperability of equipment;
- **Training:** the establishment of joint training standards, procedures and planning for military and civilian personnel; the synchronisation of pre-deployment training for civilian police, military liaison officers and military observers; and the institutionalisation of training seminars, conferences and exercises;
- **Communication:** greater co-operation between situation centres; exchange of liaison officers whenever required (military, civilian police, situation centre, political/headquarters officials); establishment of desk-to-desk dialogue through the respective liaison offices in New York and Brussels;
- **Best Practices:** regularised and systematic exchange of lessons learned and best practices information, including sharing of information on mission hand-over and procurement”.

The Limits of Building Partnerships

In this context however, although contemporary peace operations are, in most cases, characterised by the simultaneous presence of several international institutions, the institutionalisation of their relations has remained relatively limited. In reality, if building partnerships to enhance the effectiveness of multidimensional peace operations is theoretically essential and broadly accepted, in practice it faces fundamental difficulties and is hindered by a series of structural factors that will not be easily tackled. There are five reasons why building partnerships is and will remain difficult.

Heterogeneous Institutions

First, regional organisations are highly heterogeneous in their mandate, institutional form, resources, political clout and level of development as crisis management actors. The UN occupies a key position in the crisis management field and in the development of relations with regional organisations. It aspires to play a central role in defining the terms of inter-institutional partnerships as well as in the elaboration of the legal, political and operational framework in which regional actors will operate. Yet institutions such as the EU, NATO, the African Union or the OSCE are sufficiently different to make any generic approach to their role in a global peace operations system close to meaningless. Be it in terms of capacity, experience or mandates, the EU and NATO can hardly be compared with the African Union or any other regional institution. Furthermore, some regions, such as the entire Asian continent, are currently deprived of any regional security body able to participate in a peacekeeping endeavour. It follows that not only partnerships concern only

a very few institutions, but also that they develop as bilateral relationships with their own specificities, and with one institution usually dominating the other and defining the terms of the interaction. As a result, what we see are unbalanced partnerships characterised by diffused reciprocity among the partners, far away from a global burden-sharing or an interlocking system based on international institutions’ respective strengths.

Inter-institutional Competition

Second, inter-institutional relations are characterised by cooperation as much as by competition between organisations that must permanently demonstrate that they fulfil the functions for which they were created, and that they can adapt to new needs. Security institutions must display a certain number of comparative advantages, as well as ensure their visibility, efficiency and effectiveness as security actors. They are constantly struggling for limited resources, access to information, and identity. Therefore they develop their own agenda, interests and objectives. These imperatives are not, by nature, conducive to inter-institutional cooperation and may, on the contrary, create conditions for competition. Such competition is obvious between the EU and NATO that have similar membership and that both experience an identity crisis in the security field. But it also affects UN-EU or UN-NATO relations. In the field, institutions that are simultaneously present are watched and assessed relative to the other, which may hinder mutually-reinforcing cooperation.

The North-South Divide

Third, some partnerships are reflections of a North-South divide that characterise the international system and therefore accentuate the politicization of inter-institutional relations. To put it bluntly, UN peace operations are decided and financed by Western states and implemented by countries of the Global South. As of January 2010, Western countries (the United States, EU member states, Japan, Canada, Norway and Australia) contribute 8,831 military and police personnel out of the 99,943 deployed in the UN framework (which represents 8.8%), while financing approximately 90% of the consolidated peacekeeping budget⁵. Furthermore, none of the main Troops and Police contributing countries – that mainly come from Africa and South Asia – sit at the Security Council as a permanent member, leading to a dichotomy between peace operations “doers” and peace operations “decision-makers”. It is in this context that partnerships between the UN and the EU or NATO are developing. EU and NATO member states are reluctant to contribute troops to UN operations, and support to the UN through partnerships is partly conceived as a way to remedy these absences. EU-UN cooperation in peacekeeping has made apparent the development of a ‘two-speed’ crisis management system: on the one hand the UN is

mandated to intervene everywhere – not least where other institutions do not want to go – with a level of political and operational support that is insufficient; on the other hand the EU has a more selective approach, is better equipped and politically stronger, and is willing, in an *ad hoc* manner, to come in support of the UN through EU-led ‘bridging operations’ (DRC in 2003, Chad in 2008-09) or ‘stand-by forces’ (DRC in 2006). Furthermore, while the EU is often presented as a soft, value-based power, the way it promotes norms and ideas as well as its own conception of its relationship with the UN also reflect power politics, in the sense that the EU pursues its own political agenda and wants to assert its primacy over its partners⁶.

The gap is even wider between the UN and NATO that have cooperated in a number of operations (Pakistan, Darfur, etc.), but whose mandates and political cultures are too different to allow for a truly mutually-reinforcing relationship. In 2008, the signature of a ‘secret’ UN-NATO Joint Declaration on cooperation in crisis management revealed the level of discrepancy between the two bodies. For some UN member states (Russia among others), the highly political nature of NATO posed a clear limitation to cooperation with the UN and its alleged impartiality (see box 2).

Box 2: Power and Hierarchy among Institutions

“The traditional obstacle to cooperation between the UN and ‘regional arrangements or agencies’ has been the basic issue of the primacy of the one or the other. This general question of rank can be expressed in several ways. First, there is the issue of which has *priority* – that is, which is the initial recourse, has the right of regard, takes logical precedence, and, in general, is expected to come first. A second is the issue of *supremacy* – that is, which is higher in terms of legal, political, and moral authority or status, and thus can bestow more legitimacy, implying greater international acceptability. A third is the issue of their relative *ascendancy* – that is, which tends to predominate, actually possessing more power and influence, and thus is able to accomplish more.”

A. Henrikson, “The Growth of Regional Organisations and the Role of the United Nations”, in L. Fawcett and A. Hurrell, *Regionalism in World Politics*, OUP, 2003, p.124.

“Many UN members and staff are afraid that a stronger reliance on NATO assets could reduce UN decision-making autonomy and operational independence. The main troop-contributing countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and Nigeria are especially concerned about possible NATO influence on UN command-and-control structures. The UN’s humanitarian bodies and agencies have also been critical of the [UN-NATO] declaration, fearing that closer cooperation with NATO could jeopardize their neutrality and impartiality in conflict areas and put their staff at risk.”

M. Harsch and J. Varwick, “NATO and the UN”, *Survival*, vol.51, n°2, April-May 2009, p.8.

Division of Labour and Comparative Advantages

Fourth, if inter-institutional cooperation and burden-sharing have partly developed on the basis of comparative advantages displayed by each organisation, the fact is that nearly all institutions aspire to embrace the entire spectrum of crisis management activities, with

little prospect for the emergence of an interlocking system based on different competences (military, civilian, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, etc.). The expectation that NATO would rather do the military heavy lifting while the EU would do more civilian post-conflict peacebuilding and the UN a bit of everything while ensuring overall coordination and

coherence of multi-actors activities does not seem to be the way ahead. The perceived legitimacy of an institution relative to another may play a role here. Yet the fact that the institution best-placed in a given theatre would be the chosen one is never guaranteed. This raises the issue of duplication and overlap in a context of scarce resources, leading back to competition dynamics. In relation to the UN, the debate is then on whether regional organisations' capacities enhance or weaken the UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding role.

External versus Internal Coordination

Finally, although partnerships are officially promoted by all institutions, internal coordination and coherence are, for each of them, a more important task than building inter-institutional links. For both the UN and the EU, the challenge

of “delivering as one” through an integrated approach is a political and administrative priority that mobilises energy and human resources in a way that is not comparable with the level of effort put into the development of partnerships. Furthermore, in those institutions, the compartmentalisation of activities between different bodies of the same institution (Secretariat *versus* agencies on the UN side, European Commission *versus* Council secretariat and soon External Action Service on the EU side) complicates the establishment and the visibility of partnerships. In practice, partnerships often develop between organs of international organisations – the European Commission and UNDP; DPKO and the EU Council Secretariat – rather than between the organisations *per se*.

Table: Comparative Advantages in Crisis Management: UN, EU, NATO, OSCE, AU⁷

	Strengths	Weaknesses
UN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impartiality • Legitimacy, mandate • Availability • Experience and institutional knowledge • Long-term commitment • Multidimensional approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overstretch • Lack of political leverage • No peace enforcement capacity and weak ‘robust peacekeeping’ capacity • Slow to deploy
EU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial resources • Political leverage and relative legitimacy • Holistic approach to crisis management • Limited ‘robust peacekeeping’ capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of strategic vision • Lack of political cohesion • Fragmented institutional structure • Contested impartiality
NATO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political support relatively strong • Military capacity and (Planning and Command) structure • ‘Robust peacekeeping’ capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of civilian capacity • Image deficit • Contested impartiality
OSCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility and discretion • ‘Niche’ capacity • Inclusive membership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak political support • No peacekeeping capacity • Contested impartiality • Relevance crisis
AU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legitimacy in Africa • Relative flexibility • Local expertise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young institution • Lack of financial and human resources • Lack of political support

Conclusion

The post-Cold War changes have led to the emergence and development of a variety of crisis management institutional actors that now interact with each other in an unprecedented way. These interconnections have allowed for the institutional, political and cultural *rapprochement* between organisations, the political and operational characteristics of which

can be very different. Yet, inter-institutional relations have not led to the establishment of a crisis management architecture or inter-locking system. Partnerships are still *ad hoc*, uneven, and rather than show the emergence of a community of crisis management actors, they reflect disparities between institutions and divergences of political will to act in certain regions of the globe.

NB: The views expressed in this paper are entirely and solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the GCSP.

¹ “A New Partnership Agenda. Charting a New Horizon for UN Peacekeeping”, DPKO-DFS, 2009, p.vi.

² See K. Haugevik, “New partners, new possibilities. The evolution of inter-organisational security cooperation in international peace operations”, NUPI Report, 2007.

³ See “The Partnership between the UN and the EU. The United Nations and the European Commission working together in Development and Humanitarian Cooperation”, United Nations, 2006, p.6. See also “Renewing Hope, Rebuilding Lives. Partnership between the United Nations and the European Commission in Post-Crisis Recovery”, United Nations, Brussels, 2009, p.4.

⁴ See T. Tardy, “UN-EU Relations in Crisis Management. Taking Stock and Looking Ahead”, International Forum for the Challenges of Peace Operations, Challenges Forum Report 2008, Stockholm, 2009, p.38.

⁵ See “Ranking of Military and Police Contributions to UN Operations”, 31 January 2010, UN website.

⁶ See B. Charbonneau, “What is so special about the European Union? EU-UN cooperation in crisis management in Africa”, *International Peacekeeping*, vol.16, n°4, August 2009.

⁷ T. Tardy, *Gestion de crise, maintien et consolidation de la paix. Acteurs, activités, défis*, De Boeck, 2009, p.196.

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