The Inherent Limits of Partnership in Contemporary Peace Operations

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 A consensus seems to exist in Europe 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 organizations 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 institutionalized 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 maximize 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.

Why Institutions Cooperate
Institutions cooperate mainly for materialist motives[2]. 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 legitimizing institution and an organization whose action's legitimacy is not generated internally. This legitimizing 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-organizational 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.

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 organizations, especially when these organizations have similar postures. 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 force[4]. 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 institutionalized, with two joint declarations on crisis management (2003 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 resources 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 organizations 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 institutionalization and result.

The Limits of Building Partnerships

In this context however, although contemporary peace operations are, in most cases, characterized by the simultaneous presence of several international institutions, the institutionalization of their relations has remained relatively slow. 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 organizations 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 organizations. 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 not only that 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 is un-balanced partnerships characterised by diffused reciprocity among the partners, far away from a global burden-sharing or interlocking system based on international institutions' respective strengths.

Inter-institutional Competition

Second, inter-institutional relations are characterized by cooperation as much as by competition between organizations that must permanently demonstrate that they fulfill 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 characterizes the international system and therefore accentuates the politicization of North-South relations rather than attenuates it. 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 (United States, EU member states, Japan, Canada, Norway and Australia) contribute 8,831 military and police personnel out of the 99,943 deployed[5] in the UN framework (which represents 8.8%), while financing approximately 90% of the consolidated peacekeeping budget. 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 partners[6].

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.

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 organization, 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-actor activities does not seem to be the way ahead. The mere fact that the institution best-placed in a given theatre would be in the lead is not a likely and systematic development. 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 organizations' 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 mobilizes 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 compartmentalization 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 organizations – the European Commission and UNDP; DPKO and the EU Council Secretariat – rather than between the organizations per se.

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 organizations, 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.

[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- organizational 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.