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The United Nations, Regional Organizations and a New Generation of Challenges [*]

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This paper summarizes the changing context for peace operations and its implications for cooperation between the UN and regional organizations, and among regional organizations themselves. It argues that a significant number of peace operations will downsize and close in the near future, but that this will not be risk-free process: some countries will return to war or suffer from serious instability. There is a need for the UN and regional organizations not only to cooperate to minimize these risks but also to collaborate in dealing with remaining large-scale crises. The international strategy towards Somalia – which involves the AU, UN, EU and NATO – may be a model for future peace operations partnerships.

The new strategic context: downsizing peacekeeping?

Peacekeeping is at the end of an era.[1] For over a decade, the United Nations, NATO and regional organizations including the European and African Unions have contributed to long-term state-building projects in cases ranging from Kosovo to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The next few years will see a number of these missions downsize or close. The most striking transition will be in Afghanistan, where the NATO-led International Assistance Force (ISAF) is set to wind up in 2014. NATO and the European Union (EU) are also cutting back their military and police operations in the Western Balkans. The UN will reduce its presence in cases including Haiti, Liberia and the DRC. UN police officers and Australian troops are scheduled to withdraw from Timor-Leste. In all likelihood, the AU-UN force in Darfur will also shrink significantly from its current level of nearly 25,000 uniformed personnel.

It is possible that unforeseen crises will demand the deployment of new large-scale missions. The case of Somalia, where the AU has engaged in biggest operations with logistical back-up from the UN and has taken on robust operations, is the main exception to the downsizing trend. The need to deploy a new mission to Abyei in 2011 also highlights the continuing potential for new missions. There is a continuing possibility that ongoing or new crises in the

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Middle East may eventually necessitate the deployment of a large peacekeeping forces or even peace enforcement operations.

But the simultaneous downsizing of multiple missions makes it probable that the overall peacekeeping burden will be significantly reduced by 2015. It is fair to suppose that there will be 60,000-80,000 UN peacekeepers in the field three years from now – down from 100,000 today.

Other organizations are also likely to limit themselves to relatively small, focused operations in the near future. The EU, for example, has notably reduced the rate at which it deploys new missions and is currently focusing on setting up small civilian presences rather than vastly more expensive military interventions such as its 2008 deployment to Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR).

The potential reduction of the peacekeeping burden offers international organizations a degree of relief after a prolonged period of intense activity. In some cases peacekeeping forces have outlived their usefulness, as a prolonged international presence can lose legitimacy and leverage over time.

But the period also presents serious risks. As the 2011 World Development Report (WDR) notes, "many countries now face cycles of repeated violence" and "90 percent of the last decade's civil wars occurred in countries that had already had a war in the last 30 years." [2] Even if countries do not revert to full-scale war after peacekeepers leave, other forms of insecurity can increase. Organized crime can quickly corrode weak state institutions and limited conflicts can affect parts of a country.

Given the amount invested in peacekeeping and state-building to date, there is a need to minimize the risks of stable states reverting to violence. This involves ensuring that national authorities and local actors are fully involved in each transition process, and that development agencies calibrate their aid to reduce the risks of a return to conflict. These policies lie beyond the scope of this paper, but it argues that effective peacekeeping partnerships between the UN and regional organizations can also play an important role in reducing and managing the risks of downsizing peace operations.

The paper argues that it is also crucial for the UN and its partners to balance reductions in their commitments in by increasing support to those weak states that need it most: Somalia is an obvious example, but others such as South Sudan may also need more assistance. The case of Afghanistan, where ISAF is set to leave the UN to carry the political burden alone, is especially problematic.

The state of peacekeeping partnerships

The growth of peacekeeping since the late 1990s has relied heavily on cooperation between the UN and regional organizations. Whereas UN officials were once suspicious of "subcontracting" operations to other organizations, they have now heartily embraced a "partnerships agenda". The doctrines of other organizations have followed a similar strategic trajectory. While the framework for cooperation that exists for managing inter-organizational

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[2] *World Development Report 2011*, World Bank, 2011, p.2.

or multi-organizational cooperation evolved in ad hoc manner, it offers a solid basis for handling the coming challenges outlined above.

Cooperation has been driven by operational realities, not grand strategic designs. Over two-thirds of EU peace operations have deployed alongside a UN mission. All NATO ground operations have involved cooperation with the UN, EU or Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In Darfur, the original AU mission was supported by the EU, NATO and the UN. Since 2007, the UN and AU have run a hybrid mission in Darfur, integrating their military and mediating efforts.

In Somalia, the AU bears the burden of peacekeeping but the UN provides both logistical and political support. The EU is training the Somali army. The EU, NATO and a range of individual powers including the U.S. have ships off the coast combating Somali pirates. This is one of the most complex multi-organizational peacekeeping arrangements currently in action, yet the AU has made progress in bringing Mogadishu under government control and the pirate menace has begun to shrink.

Cooperation is always complicated by bureaucratic, financial and political issues. Turf wars persist. But as Joachim A. Koops notes, "peace operations partnerships between the UN and regional organizations have advanced considerably both in operational and institutional terms."[3] Examples of recent progress on institutional linkages include the establishment of a new UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) Liaison Office in Brussels, the creation of a UN-AU Joint Task Force on Peace and Security and the appointment of a civilian NATO liaison officer at UN headquarters.

In the field, cooperation is often just a fact of life: EU personnel hitch rides in UN helicopters in the DRC, for example, while UN officials take advantage of NATO protection in Afghanistan. In Kosovo, senior officials from the UN, EU and OSCE were able to get round political obstacles to cooperation during the 2008 independence dispute by having breakfast in the same hotel. Good personal relations between mission leaders also allowed (i) UN and ECOWAS officials to successfully diffuse a political crisis in Guinea in 2010; and (ii) the UN, OSCE and EU to contain the 2010 Kyrgyz violence.

Institutional differences can still constrain field-level cooperation. The EU and NATO are unable to share intelligence with partners in many cases. Organizations maintain very different – and sometimes incompatible – command and control systems. Yet there are ways to limit these problems in extremis. After the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, the UN mission set up a Joint Operations Tasking Center (JOTC) involving UN agencies and "military liaison officers from the U.S., Canada, the EU and the Caribbean Community to facilitate the prioritization of humanitarian response, coordination between humanitarian actors, and centralized, strategic planning."[4] In the Libyan case, the UN, EU and World Bank deployed a common assessment team to identify common priorities.

There has been rather less progress in terms of top-level political contacts between organizations. As Mauricio Artiñano points out, "the only regional body that meets regularly with the members of the Security Council is the AU Peace and Security Council" and "there

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[3] Joachim A. Koops, *Peace Operations Partnerships: Assessing Cooperation Mechanisms Between Secretariats*, Zentrum für Internationale Friedensätzse, 2012, p.1.
[4] Alischa Kugel, "Reflecting on the Experiences of Major TCCs – the Case of Brazil in MINUSTAH", unpublished CIC paper April 2012. A version of this paper will be published in a collection of CIC essays in late 2012.

is no indication that any of the other regional organs, such as the European Council or the North Atlantic Council, have any interest in meeting directly with the [Security] Council." [5] This means that even when these organizations commit to deploy missions simultaneously – as the EU and UN did in the case of Chad and the CAR – there is no direct dialogue between the ultimate decision-making bodies. Secretariat officials or diplomats from major powers (France in the case of Chad) must carry messages to and fro instead.[6]

However, the experience of AU-UN cooperation also demonstrates the limits of high-level political dialogue. Discussions have been complicated by differences over the Security Council's unwillingness to mandate a UN force in Somalia, its use of the International Criminal Court in Africa and its decision to approve the use of force in Libya. There is talk of a renewed need for AU and UN officials to "deliberate on the conceptual, philosophical and practical issues in the partnership."[7]

Nonetheless, for as long as missions mandated by different organizations are co-deployed in the field, there will continue to be significant practical and strategic stimuli for cooperation. How will these stimuli alter as and when organizations begin to cut back their operational commitments?

Potential challenges for peacekeeping partnerships: (1) the dangers of downsizing

The inter-organizational relationships outlined above have developed to manage the problems of growth in the overall demand for peace operations. Different problems will emerge as missions shrink and close, potentially requiring alternative forms of cooperation between organizations.

When one organization draws down, it can create hazards for others. The story of EU-UN cooperation in Chad/CAR illustrates this. In 2008, the EU deployed a military force to assist humanitarian operations in Chad while the UN sent a parallel police mission. From the outset, it was clear that Chad preferred the EU presence to the UN, but the European mission closed after one year. The Chadian authorities (i) set limits on the transfer of EU assets and bases to the UN; (ii) made a series of demands for aid in return for accepting the UN's continued presence; and (iii) eventually insisted that the UN mission close in 2010, despite the efforts of the Security Council and France.

When an organization closes a peace operation, it may fall to other actors to deal with ensuing tensions and violence. The UN maintained a preventive deployment from 1992 to 1999 in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). In 2001, the country came very close to civil war. The OSCE struggled to prevent the conflict and NATO eventually had to deploy a military mission while the EU deployed one of its first police missions (Operation Concordia) to help restore public order and promote police reform. The crisis in FYROM might have spiked in 2001 if UN forces had still been in place, but they clearly left a vacuum for the three European security organizations to fill.

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[5] Mauricio Artiñano, *Peace Operations Partnerships: The UN Security Council and (Sub-)Regional Organizations*, Zentrum für Internationale Friedensätzse (ZIF), 2012, p.2.
[6] The details on Chad/CAR in this paper are based on Alexandra Novosseloff and Richard Gowan, *Security Council Working Methods and UN Peace Operations: The Case of Chad and the Central African Republic*, CIC, 2012.
[7] Koops, *op.cit*, p.3.

The UN's departure from Timor-Leste at the end of 2005 also precipitated serious disorder, leading Australia and New Zealand to deploy troops (and the UN to launch a peace mission) to restore order in 2006. Sometimes conflicts can erupt as an existing peace operation is approaching closure: the final months of the original UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) were complicated by escalating violence over the region of Abyei. Ethiopia deployed a stand-alone force (UNISFA) to halt the drift to war.

These cases highlight the risks inherent in downsizing any peace operation, even in cases where a mission has done a good job of fulfilling its mandate prior to drawdown. Cases such as FYROM and Timor-Leste were both perceived as success stories for peacekeeping before violence reoccurred.[8]

There are cases of organizations successfully managing the downsizing of peace operations. In the Balkans, for example, the UN and OSCE managed a phased transition of policing responsibilities in Eastern Slavonia (Croatia) in 1997-1998 after the withdrawal of the UN Transitional Administration in the region. The EU took on police duties from the UN in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2003 and military duties from NATO in 2004, ensuring continuous security. The UN and EU managed to transfer rule of law responsibilities in Kosovo in 2008 in spite of disputes over its independence.

In each of these cases, the success of transitions relied on (i) in-depth strategic and tactical discussions between the organizations involved in advance of the transition; and (ii) the willingness of a regional organization to stay engaged in the security situation over the medium to long term. Although the details of each transition were often complicated – EU officials admit that that they fumbled many aspect of the transfer of policing duties in Bosnia, for example – the clear message that international actors would remain engaged in each case helped ensure long-term stability.

Looking ahead, there is at least one case where the drawdown of one organization's peace operation will certainly create challenges for other international actors. When ISAF exits Afghanistan in 2014 it will leave behind (i) a civilian UN mission that has seemed adrift in recent years, and (ii) an EU police reform mission, although the latter may depart alongside NATO. Both will face not only the challenges of operating in a high-risk environment without the assurance of NATO protection for its personnel and maintaining political credibility in the absence of Western military leverage.

The risks of drawing down missions elsewhere are less certain. However, it is possible that the downsizing of the current UN missions in West Africa and the DRC may (i) precipitate significant new conflict or (ii) at least create the conditions for increased low-level violence and political crises. This is not to argue that countries in these regions definitely face further instability. Ultimately, their stability rests on ingenuity and commitment of their own leaders. However, it would be irresponsible of international actors not to consider how to mitigate the security risks involved.

The UN and other organizations have taken serious steps to avoid countries reverting to violence as peace operations shrink and close. They have maintained operations in cases including Haiti and Liberia for far longer than was initially expected. The UN has also developed detailed transition planning frameworks – in Timor-Leste, for example, the

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[8] It is worth noting, however, that the UN's withdrawal from FYROM resulted from a diplomatic dispute in the Security Council rather than recommendations from UN officials on the ground, who were aware of ongoing risks.

outgoing missions have tried to identify actors capable of taking on each of its tasks after it has gone. The UN also invested in peacebuilding offices to take up duties from peace operations in cases including Burundi and Sierra Leone. It is likely that such offices will be set up as a matter of routine as other blue helmet missions close.

Similarly, the EU aims to build on its recently-founded European External Action Service (EEAS) to improve its assistance to fragile states, an issue that the European Commission previously prioritized. The AU has a network of liaison offices, mainly in countries where the UN has peace operations (including Côte d'Ivoire, the DRC and Liberia) or the AU has sent troops in the past (such as Burundi and Comoros). These small missions could be the basis for new peacebuilding initiatives.

But it is necessary to envisage a fuller array of mechanisms to reduce the risk of countries returning to violence. In a contribution to the 2011 WDR, the leading peacekeeping officials of the AU and the UN called for "creative solutions" to address this challenge, including "long-term programs for security development and reform, light monitoring and over-the-horizon reinforcements."[9] The final section of this note returns to these policy options and frameworks for implementing them.

Potential challenges for peacekeeping partnerships: (2) managing the hardest cases

Although downsizing missions may be the main priority over the medium term, it should not distract from the continued need to stabilize outstanding failed states. As we have noted, the most obvious of these is Somalia and the international response involves multiple organizations working together.

The Somali experiment may best-be-described as "plug-and-play" peacekeeping: different organizations have brought different capabilities to contribute to the overall stabilization process. This would be an alternative to setting up a large-scale integrated mission (such as the UN presences in the DRC and Liberia). Some of these roles (such as the EU and NATO maritime deployments) go beyond regular peace operations. The UN's contribution, providing the logistical framework for the AU mission, is also a significant innovation: it may have to play a similar role as a "service provider" in future cases.

The main lessons of the Somalia operation include (i) the need to continue developing the military peacekeeping capacities of the AU (and potentially other African organizations) to take on sustained robust operations; (ii) the utility of the UN as a logistical "service provider" to other organizations; and (iii) the need to expand thinking about peacekeeping to include maritime and aerial operations.

But it is also necessary to recognize that the combination of organizations involved in Somalia (the AU, UN, EU and NATO) did not come together through a rational planning process. Their efforts are still far from fully coordinated. Instead, as we have noted, it has emerged through a series of compromises that have caused AU-UN tensions. There were also significant early flaws in the UN's logistical support – sometimes even affecting the provision of basic rations to AU contingents.

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[9] *World Development Report*, p.281.

The greatest lesson from Somalia may be the need to improve the mechanisms for planning complex multi-organizational operations. Organizations that usually work well together can struggle to cooperate effectively in the planning stage of a new mission due to political and operational uncertainties. However, international and regional organizations have found ways to improve common planning by deploying joint assessment missions such as that sent to Libya by the UN, EU and World Bank last year – the UN and regional organizations need to build on these precedents.

The Somali case is not an easily transferable model to areas where there is no regional organization or sub-regional body ready to take on the same risk as the AU. In the last year, other regional organizations have taken steps towards a greater role in peace operations. The Arab League deployed monitors to Syria and the Association of South-East Asian Nations mandated a military observer mission to deploy o the Thai-Cambodian border. More experienced organizations such as the UN, EU and NATO should encourage the Arab League and ASEAN. But, unless the League is drawn into a larger peace operation in Syria, the new players will take some time to evolve.[10]

Recommendations

This paper has argued that two major peacekeeping challenges lie ahead, and that each has implications for inter-organizational partnerships: (i) managing and sharing the risks involved in downsizing and closing a number of major peace operations simultaneously; and (ii) preparing responses to major crises that will require multiple organizations to deploy military and civilian assets. In this context, the UN and regional organizations can pursue three strategic policy priorities:

i.   **Develop joint mechanisms risk assessment and risk management:** where peace operations are winding down, the UN and concerned regional organizations can pool their resources and information and set up joint risk assessment mechanisms to track security dynamics. Such discussions must involve the host government, which has ultimate responsibility.

ii. **Experiment with joint tasking mechanisms:** going beyond joint assessments, the UN and its partners can build on the example of the JOTC in Haiti described above, setting up "clearing house" mechanisms for organizations to share responsibilities especially as missions close.[11] Organizations can also develop joint transition plans – modeled on those that the UN has used in cases such as Timor-Leste – to work out responsibilities as peacekeepers depart.

iii. **Strengthen regional frameworks to manage risks:** the UN and regional organizations can cooperate in developing regional contact groups and initiatives such as the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to address regional conflict dynamics. Equally, the West Africa Coastal Initiative (WACI) set up by the UN has tackled threats from drug-related organized crime in the region, and may be a model for partnerships in other regions.[12]

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[10] See Richard Gowan and Jake Sherman, *Peace Operations Partnerships: Complex but Necessary Cooperation*, ZIF, 2012.
[11] Such mechanisms are more likely to work in cases (like Haiti) where there are no major political obstacles to cooperation, but may be less easy to construct where there are complex dynamics involved.
[12] See James Cockayne and Camino Kavanagh, "Flying Blind? Political Mission Responses to Transnational Threats", in the *Review of Political Missions 2011*, CIC, pp.19-30.

iv. **Explore systems of regional security guarantees to reinforce/replace peace operations:** in cases where the risks of a reversion to violence appear significant, the UN and regional organizations can develop security guarantees for countries where peace operations are downsizing. These could include commitments by a regional organization to reinforce UN mission if a crisis blows up as it is drawing down or after its departure. In Africa, the development of sub-regional stand-by forces may facilitate these commitments, but for the time being most such guarantees will have to be agreed on an ad hoc basis. Again, it is essential that national authorities are comfortable with the proposed reaction mechanisms.

v. **Expand the UN's role as logistical "service provider" and make wider use of the EU/NATO logistical capacities:** if the AU and regional organizations are to (i) continue to undertake operations such as that in Somalia or (ii) reinforce existing missions as they downsize, it is essential that the UN increase its ability to offer them logistical support as a quid pro quo. The EU and NATO, having provided logistical support to AU in Darfur, can also offer increased logistical support to other organizations as the Afghan campaign winds down. Many questions over the command and control of logistical assets remain unresolved, but cases such as Darfur and Somalia suggest that pragmatic solutions can be found in the field.

Related readings

- UN-OIOS, Thematic evaluation of cooperation between Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Services and regional organizations, UN doc. A/65/762, February 2011.
- Report of the African Union-United Nations panel of modalities of support to African Union peacekeeping operations (the "Prodi Report"), UN doc. A/63/666-S/2008/813, December 2008.
- NATO, Strategic concept for the defence and security of members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, November 2010, especially pages 26 to 32.
- Government of Ireland, "Food for thought paper: enhancing EU-UN cooperation" (circulated to EU member states), January 2010.
- Timothy Sisk (rapporteur), "Cooperating for Peace: the challenges and promises of partnerships in peace operations", Geneva Center for Security Policy, 2010.
- Adam Smith and Francesco Mancini (editors), "Partnerships: a new horizon for peacekeeping?", special edition of *International Peacekeeping*, 2011.