

## Peace Operations Partnerships: Assessing Cooperation Mechanisms between Secretariats

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During the last decade, peace operation partnerships between the United Nations (UN) and regional organizations have advanced considerably both in operational and institutional terms. With the growing involvement of regional organizations in the area of peacekeeping, coordination between the UN and its potential partners is important in order to avoid duplication or outright inter-organizational rivalry. Recognizing that institutionalised relations between the UN and emerging peacekeeping actors such as the European Union (EU), African Union (AU) and even NATO can lead to beneficial burden-sharing and mutual reinforcement, organizations have made conscious efforts to move from ad-hoc cooperation to more permanent and predictable mechanisms. Effective peace operations partnerships depend on coherent and strategically structured relations at the inter-secretariat level: different organizational cultures, agendas and approaches need to be systematically integrated. Despite some progress in UN-EU, UN-AU and UN-NATO relations, significant challenges persist in designing, maintaining and improving inter-organizational schemes for peace operations.

### Relations between the United Nations and the European Union

Since the late 1990s, the EU and the UN have developed a wide range of cooperation arrangements, desk-to-desk dialogues and liaison mechanisms. Further to the *Joint Declaration* and *Joint Statement on Cooperation in Peacekeeping* (2003 and 2007, respectively), the two organizations have also established a permanent Steering Committee for exchanging information and discussing country-specific situations as well as thematic and ‘cross-cutting issues’.

Even though the Steering Committee is seen by both organizations as a valuable tool for exchanging information on countries and regions where both organizations are involved and cooperating,

its relatively narrow role has been repeatedly criticised. Both EU and UN officials have stressed the desire for more strategic and forward-looking discussions.

There have also been recurrent calls for more systematic mechanisms to identify and operationalize lessons learned of joint operations. Indeed, out of the four pillars outlined in the 2003 *Joint Declaration* (planning, training, communications and best practices) ‘best practices’ in particular should be given more sustained attention by the Steering Committee, in order to avoid past mistakes in the field and to develop a more effective partnership. If possible, additional dedicated staff should be made available for collecting and disseminating ‘inter-organizational best practices’ in UN-EU Relations.

Relations between the United Nations and Regional Organizations			
	European Union	African Union	NATO
<b>Cooperation Agreement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint Declaration 2003</li> <li>• Joint Statement 2007</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Declaration 2006</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint Declaration 2008</li> </ul>
<b>Liaison Mechanisms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DPKO Liaison Office in Brussels</li> <li>• DPKO officials attend EU PSC</li> <li>• Education Days</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liaison Offices</li> <li>• UNOAU Head attends AU Peace and Security Council (PSC)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NATO Military and Civilian Liaison Officer in New York</li> <li>• DPKO Liaison Office in Brussels</li> </ul>
<b>Institutionalized Cooperation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UN-EU Steering Committee meets twice a year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint Task Force on Peace and Security (JTF) meets twice a year</li> </ul>	

Given the breadth and depth of required discussions on UN-EU cooperation, the establishment of working groups in which specific issues can be discussed in more detail has been suggested.<sup>1</sup> The popularity of ‘meetings in the margins’, i.e. further discussion with experts in the margins of the Steering Committee meetings, points towards the usefulness of the working group format. Yet, realistically, time is already a scarce resource for most EU and UN officials – instead of more meetings, Steering Committee sessions simply require better preparation, balanced attendance and more strategic focus.

### Future Challenges

The key question is in which format joint ‘early warning’ discussions and structured dialogue during crises should take place. Both the UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the EU Crisis Management/Foreign Policy structures are undergoing institutional change. Education programmes and training about the ‘organizational culture and institutional functioning’ of the respective partner organizations need to be intensified. The EU and UN should offer each others’ staff increased access to their training programs.

Overall, however, inter-organizational awareness is still hampered by lack of resources and lack of mechanisms for monitoring and taking into account the agenda and developments in the partner organization. Even though the new DPKO Liaison Office in Brussels should be an important step forward in facilitating exchange, more mechanisms are needed, for example through the provision of short briefings in the EU Political and Security Committee about the Security Council’s monthly agenda and DPKO’s priorities.

## Relations between the United Nations and African Union

In addition to capacity-building programs and technical support for the AU, the two organizations have over the past five years developed a more structured political relationship between the AU Peace and Security Council (AU PSC) and UN Security Council. Political and doctrinal issues, however, remain to be resolved. In political terms, the AU has called for a high-level debate on the “subsidiarity principle” under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter (which deals, in very general terms, with the relations between the UN and regional organizations in the field of peace and security), more recognition of AU peace and security initiatives as well as a deeper and “equal” relationship between the AU PSC and with the UN Security Council. Doctrinal issues include questions about whether it is useful or not to intervene even if there is “no peace to keep”, but instead a “peace to be enforced”.

In September 2010, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Dr. Jean Ping, launched a permanent cooperation forum, the *UN-AU Joint Task-Force on Peace and Security (JTF)*, as a mechanism to enhance strategic cooperation between the two organizations. Similar to the UN-EU Steering Committee, the JTF meets twice a year. Together with the establishment of the streamlined UN Office to the African Union (UNOAU), this formalization marks an important step. However, challenges are similar to those faced by the UN-EU Steering Committee. Whilst the default position of the meetings is to discuss ongoing crisis and country-specific issues where both organizations

<sup>1</sup> See Recommendations of the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (2011) ‘Thematic evaluation of cooperation between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support and regional organizations’, para 93.



are involved, there are calls for using the forum for allowing “senior officials from the headquarters of the two institutions to deliberate on the conceptual, philosophical and practical issues in the partnership”.<sup>2</sup>

Broadening the debate is important, but so is a focus on generating joint lessons learned and anticipating future crises and challenges. Whether or not the JTF is the right and the most effective option for generating joint lessons and strategies is, of course, debatable. The need for a more systematic generation and dissemination of lessons learned and best practices is also a top priority. In this context, lessons and best practices from the now disbanded *Standby High Readiness Brigade for UN Operations* (SHIRBRIG) should be utilized.

#### SHIRBRIG

In 1996 seven countries (Denmark, the Netherlands, Canada, Sweden, Norway, Austria and Poland) founded the *Standby High Readiness Brigade for United Nations Operations* (SHIRBRIG) in order to equip the UN with a multinational 5,000-troops strong ‘rapid reaction’ peacekeeping tool, including permanent headquarters as well as early warning and operational planning staff. Between 2000 and 2009, SHIRBRIG grew to 23 member and observer states, took part in six peacekeeping operations (UNMEE, UNOCI, UNMIL, UNAMIS, UNMIS and MINURCAT) and served as a model and key mentor for the build-up of the African Union’s African Standby Force. SHIRBRIG was disbanded in June 2009.

As with the UN-EU Steering Committee, suggestions have been made to establish sub-working groups and ‘Director Fora’, bringing together the directors of core units and also including officials of the Regional Economic Communities. However, the lack of senior participants from the AU side due to resource issues presents a key challenge. For the time being, such additional resource and time intensive meetings are unrealistic. Finally, some restructuring of the African Union Office to the UN is to be expected, given the gap in its capacity to engage with its numerous interlocutors at the UN side.

#### Future Challenges

Overall political issues in UN-AU relations, particularly with regard to Chapter VIII, subsidiarity and political dialogue between the AUPSC and the UNSC, need to be addressed. UN-AU relations remain imbalanced due to AU’s financial dependence on “Northern” donor countries. Difficulties will also persist in bringing coherence to UN-AU relations on the one hand, and UN-AU-Regional Economic Communities relations on the other.

Finally, given the plethora of international actors involved in supporting the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the African Standby Force (ASF), how does the UN-AU partnership fit into this complex picture? This also points to the question of a coherent UN-AU-EU-NATO approach, especially given the EU’s efforts in supporting the ASF and NATO’s recent intentions of advancing a NATO-AU Joint Declaration and mechanisms as well.

#### Relations between the United Nations and NATO

The most dynamic impetus in the UN’s evolution of peace operations partnerships has arisen during the last three years from the developing relationship with NATO. In spite of political obstacles, UN-NATO relations have advanced considerably at the operational and institutional level. The *Joint Declaration* of September 2008 codified what reflected the cooperation in the field in Afghanistan. Furthermore, NATO’s support of UN agencies in the context of anti-piracy operations off the coast of Somalia has further intensified relations.

High-level meetings of the Secretaries-General are increasingly accompanied by desk-to-desk exchanges. The creation of a civilian NATO liaison officer at the UN headquarters, in addition to a military one, should improve the flow of information and mutual understandings significantly. Much also hinges on the effectiveness of the new UN DPKO Liaison Office in Brussels in establishing mutual information sharing between the UN and NATO.

<sup>2</sup> African Union (2011) ‘The UN-AU Partnership on Peace and Security: Towards Greater Strategic Political Coherence’, Draft for the Validation Workshop on AU-UN Strategic Partnership Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 3 May, 2011 (Draft), p. 27.

With NATO's growing involvement in Africa, further opportunities emerge for inter-organizational cooperation with the African Union. Prior to NATO's engagement in Libya, NATO had already been involved in Africa since 2005 by, inter alia, supporting the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) and through various capacity-building initiatives in the context of the African Standby Forces. Hence, a more formal method of coordination (ideally through permanently institutionalized NATO-AU cooperation channels) is certainly warranted.

### Future Challenges

Core political obstacles persist. Some UN members are afraid of a "Westernization" and "NATO-ization" of UN peacekeeping. This needs to be addressed in a frank manner at the member state level.

In addition, differences in organizational cultures as well as lack of knowledge still persist among UN and NATO staff. Education days, even though criticized by some as being too basic, can be an important tool for increasing the understanding of the partner organization's culture, approaches and institutional workings.

The question of how to share confidential documents is still unsettled. As with UN-EU and UN-AU relations, a more systematic approach towards lessons learned needs to be put in place. As noted above, NATO's growing involvement in Africa could provide further impetus for designing lessons learned and cooperation mechanisms between all four organizations.

### Outlook

This paper has highlighted the main cooperation mechanisms between the UN DPKO and the EU, AU and NATO. As similar challenges seem to emerge in each of these relationships, possibilities for promoting a coherent UN-AU-EU-NATO web of information sharing and best practices might be considered. However, significant challenges remain as managing even a bilateral partnership has proven to be demanding.

More resources need to be invested not only to monitor and generate new lessons, but also to identify, utilize and implement existing lessons from organizations that have already dealt with similar challenges in the past. Particularly in the field of rapid reaction partnerships and African capacity-building, the body of lessons identified from SHIRBRIG (see above) might serve as a starting point.

Inter-organizational theory and practice place firm emphasis on formalization and institutionalization of inter-organizational relations, but regularly convening steering committees is no panacea – particularly when acute crises require immediate and concerted action. Flexible and more in-depth arrangements are needed to foster stronger and more forward-looking relations and pragmatic responses.

Finally, it is important to establish clear criteria for *when organizations should not cooperate*. Cooperation and coordination involves substantial costs in terms of time, money, labor and political negotiations. Firm criteria and effectiveness-based evaluations are needed to decide whether cooperation makes sense in a given conflict or whether it might be more effective to 'go it alone'.

Yet, in those cases where different organizational cultures, approaches and agendas can be bridged and integrated, the net benefit will be immense – not only for the capacity of each organization, but also for the success and impact of global peacekeeping as a whole.

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