The Absence of the Europeans and the Asymmetry of UN Peacekeeping

For more than a decade UN peacekeeping has been marked by asymmetry with respect to the groups of states that mandate, fund, and implement it. While the United States, Japan, and the EU member-states together supply almost 80 percent of the UN’s Peacekeeping budget, the Security Council formulates and adopts mandates with little participation by the biggest troop and police contributing countries (TCCs and PCCs). The bulk of military and police contingents (more than 70 percent) are provided by African and South Asian countries. Comparison with figures from the 1990s reveals a substantial withdrawal of uniformed Western personnel from UN operations. At the end of the 1990s the Western European and Others Group (WEOG) still supplied more than two thirds of all UN police and military peacekeepers, and at times there were in fact seven WEOG states among the top ten TCCs and PCCs. Today their contribution has fallen below eight percent. In the longer term such an imbalance can erode the acceptance of UN peacekeeping.

The European Union and UN Peacekeeping: Half-time for the EU’s Action Plan

Tobias Pietz

In 2012/13, the European Union (EU) launched its first five missions under the new Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). Like most earlier CSDP interventions, these new deployments in South Sudan, the Sahel, Libya, and Somalia operate in parallel to United Nations (UN) peace operations. If they are to bring about an effective and lasting stabilization, the EU and UN must work closely together. But recent CSDP missions have tended to be characterized more by autonomy than by complementarity with UN operations. At the same time, the growing number of European missions exacerbates a broader trend: the lack of Western uniformed personnel in UN peacekeeping. It is therefore crucial that the topic of peace operations be placed on the political agenda at the European Council in December 2013, on the basis of the “Plan of Action to Enhance EU CSDP Support to UN Peacekeeping” unveiled in summer 2012.
Growing demand for specific capacities and skills is also an argument for greater European engagement in UN peacekeeping. This concerns critical “enablers” in the fields of logistics and mobility, but also other specialist expertise. Presently, member states are unable to meet the UN’s demand for uniformed experts arising from increasingly complex mandates and tasks. Current uniformed contributions principally comprise Formed Police Units (FPU) and military formations from which specialist capacities cannot simply be extracted as required. For example, individual FPU officers cannot be deployed in routine police service or for mentoring and advising local partners. Equally, military personnel often lack the expertise required for training local counterparts. The EU’s focus on its own police and rule of law missions has also worsened the scarcity of expert staff for the United Nations in these fields.

European reticence in providing uniformed personnel for UN missions is rooted, firstly, in the memory of the failures of UN peacekeepers on the ground in Bosnia and Rwanda. Secondly, many states still question the UN’s command and control structures. These misgivings, however, are no longer justified in the view of many experts, given the ability of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) to lead a total of 28 missions with more than 114,000 staff (the EU by comparison currently deploys 17 missions with less than 5,000 staff).

**Integrated or Independent: Experience in the Field to Date**

Many UN missions involve forms of regional cooperation under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. While EU cooperation was initially shaped by ideas of a closely coordinated division of labor, this was soon outweighed by independent CSDP missions operating in parallel to the UN. Such independent missions reflected the increasing weight of European foreign policy and a European wish for greater autonomy. From the outset operational cooperation between European Union and United Nations was largely operation-driven: progress at the political and strategic level came about through the direct implementation of peace operations.

Even before the ESDP/CSDP, a start was made with the UN’s Kosovo mission (UNMIK), where the European Union supplied an integrated pillar (Reconstruction and Economic Development). While cooperation under UN leadership guaranteed a coherent approach by international organizations (the OSCE was also integrated), the decisions were made in New York – sometimes testing the patience of the European Union.

For its first independent missions – the European Police Mission (EUPM) in Bosnia and Operation Artemis in DR Congo, both 2003 – the EU also relied on close coordination with the UN. In Bosnia the EU took over the mandate of the International Police Task Force (IPTF) from the United Nations in January 2003 after a tightly coordinated five-month transition (including the last head of the IPTF continuing in this position with the new EU mission). In summer of the same year a military rapid response force of almost 1,800 soldiers from twelve countries was deployed to DR Congo to support the UN’s MONUC mission.

Even if both joint ventures were regarded as successes, ensuing missions shared the same area of deployment without working so closely together. Examples of such parallel but largely separate deployments include missions in Afghanistan (EUPOL and UNAMA), DR Congo (EUSEC/EUPOL and MONUSCO), Somalia (EUNAVFOR and UNPOS), and Georgia (UNOMIG and EUMM).
Two cases stand out from this trend: In Kosovo EULEX took over a range of tasks from UNMIK (after teething troubles), while in Chad EUFOR prepared and supported the deployment of a UN mission (MINURCAT). In both cases, cooperation with the UN peace operations on the ground was the central reason for deployment.

For three years during the negotiations for the Lisbon Treaty and the ensuing major restructuring of the European foreign and security policy institutions, no new CSDP missions were deployed. That changed in 2012, when civilian missions were sent to Niger, South Sudan, and the Horn of Africa. All three are small to medium-sized (50 to 200 staff) with very specific tasks (judicial reform, border policing, et al.). Unlike early initiatives in Bosnia and DR Congo, or later in Kosovo and Chad, the European Union no longer defined the need for the “new” CSDP in relation to existing or planned UN missions, but oriented CSDP missions instead on European regional interests and the wish for greater visibility of the CSDP.

But in 2013 – with EUBAM in Libya and EUTM in Mali – the European Union once again mandated missions whose remit inherently involves division of labor with UN missions on the ground. While it is still too early to assess this cooperation, the first ever joint UN/EU pre-deployment assessment mission – tasked to analyze the security sector in Mali – appears to have been a success.

**Action Plans, Structures, and Symbolic Politics: Aspects of Cooperation**


The Joint Declaration, finalized under the Italian Presidency of the Council of the EU, was heavily influenced by the transition in Bosnia that had been in planning since 2002, the Joint Statement negotiated under the German Presidency in 2007 by cooperation in Chad. The thrust of both agreements is closer integration of UN and EU peacekeeping efforts. However, with the exception of formal contacts and the newly established EU-UN Steering Committee, very few of the proposed mechanisms have actually been implemented. Additionally the Lisbon Process after 2008/09 reinforced the EU’s focus on its own operations. As a consequence, the Steering Committee fell by the wayside, holding none of the scheduled twice-yearly meetings in 2010 and 2011.

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This changed with the Actions adopted in November 2011, and above all with the ensuing “Plan of Action to Enhance EU CSDP Support to UN Peacekeeping” published in June 2012, which set clear deadlines (6 to 24 months) for implementation. In the Plan of Action the EU emphasizes partnership with the UN as a central task of the CSDP: “Supporting effective multilateralism and contributing to UN efforts in peacekeeping have been, since the inception of CSDP, at the forefront of EU engagement in the field of crisis management.”

The six fields of the Plan of Action (A–F, see table) outline various models of UN-EU cooperation and define steps required to clarify the legal basis, the partners’ contributions, and timeframes. With this process the European Union has established a toolbox on which it can draw in future cooperation with the United Nations.
Two of the models in particular represent a qualitative leap in reinstating the possibility of integrated European contributions to UN peace operations. Under the “Clearing House Model” (Field A) the EU would function as a platform or intermediary for civilian, police, and military contributions provided bilaterally to the UN by its member-states. According to the “Second Progress Report on the Implementation of the Plan of Action” this model should be implementable by the end of 2013.

The second model is even more ambitious, allowing the EU to provide a complete CSDP component to a UN mission and to integrate it into the mission’s command structures, in a kind of return to the “UNMIK model”. This Modular Approach (Field B), until recently regarded as utopian and legally unviable, should be implementable by the end of 2014 under the Plan of Action.

Additional factors have sustained progress: firstly, the active diplomacy of the new DPKO Under-Secretary-General (USG) and, secondly, the Irish Council Presidency in 2013. Ireland, traditionally strongly engaged in UN peacekeeping, ensured that the Plan of Action was placed on the EU agenda, that the Political and Security Committee (PSC) had to be briefed on progress in implementation twice within six months, and that for the first time ever the USG joined a meeting of the European defense ministers – a powerful political symbol. A third Progress Report is due at the end of November 2013.

A Chance for the Action Plan: European Council on CSDP

Whether implementation of the Plan of Action will continue to proceed so smoothly is unclear. It has not been identifiable as a priority of the Lithuanian or Greek Council Presidencies. The European External Action Service (EEAS) and the High Representative are currently preoccupied with the review of the EEAS and preparations for the European Council in December 2013. Instead of addressing the strategic question of whether and how European countries wish to support future UN peace operations (especially after troop withdrawals from Afghanistan 2014), the preparatory documents for the Council are primarily concerned with operational issues and a focus on procurement policy. UN peace operations do not figure at all.

If Europe fails to implement the Plan of Action it risks missing an important opportunity to strengthen UN peace operations and end the asymmetry. The complexity of problems in fragile states demands complementary action by the United Nations and European Union, or at least a well-coordinated division of labor. A clear commitment by the EU, including in the form of additional police or military contingents from its member-states, would strengthen the United Nations as central actor in global crisis management – and ultimately also the European Union itself.

The topic of peace operations thus belongs on the agenda of the December 2013 European Council. Looking further ahead, the Italian Presidency of the Council in the second half of 2014 presents an opportunity to crown the implementation of the Plan of Action with the creation of the first tailor-made CSDP component and its integration into an existing or new UN peace operation.

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