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TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF PEACEKEEPING PARTNERSHIPS

Prospects, Lessons Learned and the Future of Partnerships in Africa

INSIDE

The conflicts in Africa have presented the international community with an unprecedented opportunity to cooperate in bringing stability to the continent. But despite a history of inter-institutional cooperation in peacekeeping there, developments in Darfur are showing that these relationships and their outcomes are still far from predictable. With these realities in mind, the Center on International Cooperation convened a group of experts in the field to discuss the nature of peacekeeping partnerships in Africa and whether they can be made more consistent.

With the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU) each in the process of deploying fresh peace operations to address the cluster of interrelated conflicts in the Broader Horn of Africa during 2008, and with the extensive and ongoing work in building African peacekeeping capacity receiving heightened attention, a premium has been placed on inter-institutional cooperation in efforts to bring peace to the region. While these cooperative endeavors have been sometimes constructive, past and ongoing experiences make it clear that a more thorough understanding of the various forms of "peacekeeping partnerships" is needed if they are to be predictable tools for delivering stability on the African continent.

Against this backdrop, the Center on International Cooperation convened together with Zentrum für Internationale Friedenseinsätze and with the support of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany a one-day workshop in Berlin to discuss the contours of peacekeeping partnerships in Africa from a historical, operational and forward looking standpoint. Its goal was to identify lessons learned and potential models for improving peacekeeping partnerships on the continent.

Meeting participants included representatives from the UN Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Political Affairs, and the UN liaison office in Addis Ababa; the AU's Peace and Security Operations Department; representatives involved in developing African peacekeeping capacity at the regional economic communities and African Standby Force levels; members of the EU's peace operations in Africa; and members of the policy and academic communities from Europe and the United States.

Backdrop

The discussions were set in the broader context of launching CIC's *Annual Review of Global Peace Operations 2008*, which details a difficult year for peacekeeping. Having rebounded from the series of failures in the early and mid 1990s, by early in this decade the ability of complex peacekeeping operations to deliver results had manifested in an unprecedented surge in demand. Now the international community's instrument of choice in containing threats to security posed by conflict-ridden states, by 2008, there were nearly 200,000 military, police and civilian personnel deployed across the world, a number set to rise still further during the year. These peacekeepers operate mainly under UN, NATO, AU, and EU command with multidimensional mandates that cover an increasingly broad range of tasks from counter-insurgency to the building of competent state institutions.

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Peacekeeping Partnerships

Further, a full 40 out of the over 50 operations covered in the *Annual Review 2008* are seen to operate in some cooperative form of peacekeeping partnership. Indeed, as demand for peacekeeping has steadily risen since the late 1990's, from Haiti and Liberia to Kosovo, Afghanistan and now Darfur, peacekeeping partnerships have come to be the predominant, if not default, peace operations architecture. While each case is individual unto itself, partnerships can be characterized by three broad variants:

1. **Sequential Operations:** Where different peace operations platforms succeed each other;
2. **Parallel Operations:** Two or more platforms operating in the same theater under separate command but to the same broad purpose, and;
3. **Hybrid Operations:** Characterized by unified or joint command, the most rare form of partnership.

From a historical standpoint, meeting participants agreed that the employment of peacekeeping partnerships have demonstrated an impressive amount of flexibility on the part of the international community in addressing diverse conflict situations. Partnerships have been useful in joining up global legitimacy to regional actors (or vice versa), matching different comparative advantages among peacekeeping platforms and marrying legal frameworks with operational capacities.

Conversely, the implementation of peacekeeping partnerships has been largely ad hoc and, despite their contributions, must be recognized for what they are: operational formulations driven primarily by political compromises, dictated by the situation at hand, both by actors in the theater of operation and at the international and headquarters level. At times, partnerships have added unnecessary levels of complexity to peace operations, negatively spread accountability across actors involved and left space for spoilers to employ 'divide and conquer' political strategies.

While peacekeeping partnerships have grown in frequency, a parallel process in developing institutional architectures and a forward-looking peacekeeping culture that recognizes the operational imperative of inter-institutional coordination has been slow coming. There is little in the form of predictability of how a given partnership will function, how it will be financed or how in-theater cooperation amongst one or more peacekeeping platforms will be coordinated.

On the one hand, the deployment of these increasingly complex and long-term peacekeeping operations – bolstered by a growing commitment to norms such as the protection of civilians and agendas such as the effort to contain terrorism – have brought varying levels of security and stability to conflict zones from Latin America and Western Africa to Eastern Europe and South Eastern Asia. But by early 2008, it was clear that the reflex resort to peacekeeping as a conflict solution was reaching its limits.

Peacekeeping Overstretch

At the start of the year, peacekeeping operations from Darfur, Afghanistan and Kosovo, to Lebanon, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia were each faced with respective logistical and political challenges that severely threatened their performance. Meanwhile, commitments made in UN Security Council mandates for peacekeeping

had come to be seen as ignoring the operational reality where the pool of available personnel, logistical and political resources is already stretched thin. These challenges, coupled with the complications arising from the increasing resort to ad hoc partnership formulations has led some to ask if the international peacekeeping community had come full circle, failing to learn the lessons of the past to once again face the potential for system wide collapse, *à la* the early 1990s.

Peacekeeping Partnerships in Africa

Nowhere are these myriad challenges and their potential impact more visible than in Africa. Already host to nearly 70,000 peacekeepers, deployments on the continent are set to grow substantially during 2008 through the joining up of the UN and AU efforts in Darfur. Under the hybrid UNAMID formulation, operational command and control is in the hands of both institutions for the first time, in one of the most complex operational and political environments experienced. It is in this vein that the workshop's discussions regarding the operational realities of peacekeeping partnerships centered largely on the experience in Darfur.

UNAMID has come to be seen as the final resort to insert a more robust international force in a dire conflict zone. Participants shared a general view that the mission was being deployed in the absence of answering the tough political questions that lie at the root of the conflict there. The compromise UNAMID has been shaped by an intransigent Sudanese government, as well as the individual policies of members of the UN Security Council. As a result of these political realities, UNAMID's mandate has not been matched with the necessary resources and capacities - military, civilian and logistical. The operation's dual decision-making and command structures risk watering down accountability across the UN and AU, an issue that has also plagued the parallel UN/AU hybrid mediation process. Participants broadly concluded that UNAMID and its inherent deficiencies represent the misapplication of a peacekeeping partnership, with serious consequences.

Alarmingly, UNAMID's difficulties were recognized to be a continuation of the issues that dogged its predecessor operation, the AU's AMIS. While not usually considered a peacekeeping partnership on the surface, AMIS was conducted with a high level of often impromptu inter-institutional cooperation, with the AU acting as the main strategic and tactical actor with the EU, UN and NATO each providing financial, logistical and strategic support. Despite AMIS's ability to lend some semblance of security to Darfur through these partnerships, the failure to learn from its deficiencies to the benefit of UNAMID reflects how far from understanding partnerships the international community is.

Beyond the operational conception of peacekeeping partnerships, the workshop also focused on cooperative experiences associated with efforts aimed at building organic African capacity or peace operations. While initiatives such as the UN's *Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme for the African Union* and the more recent *Joint EU/AU Strategy and Action Plan* provide the frameworks for building African capacity, they are recognized as only the beginning in fomenting properly functioning partnerships on the continent.

The AU and other sub-regional structures building their peacekeeping capacity are in no shortage of offers for partnership in this regard. Currently,

NATO, EU, UN and the "G8++" all supply some sort of capacity building support on the continent in the form of financial assistance and training personnel. But it is the very nature of the partnerships that are causing some degree of difficulty and slow progress. Across the participants with experience in this area, three broad thematic issues for better capacity building partnerships were articulated:

1. Terms such as "African capacity" and "African ownership" lack adequate definition and have been over-used to the point where they mean quite little. Support from partners must come in terms of defined end states and not simply providing assistance toward broad catch phrases.
2. Coordination among partners is crucial to avoid redundancy, alleviate associated administrative burdens and to harmonize results.
3. Financial assistance is key, but without first building the very basic capacity to properly allocate and account for funds (or providing that capacity, as part of the assistance program), little operational capacity can be built.

The overall consensus among participants on capacity building initiatives on the continent is that they are in serious need of overhaul in terms of approach, starting at the very basic levels. Providing financial support with restrictive conditions attached is little help to anyone and causes frustration on both sides.

Looking Forward

Despite these varied results that peacekeeping partnerships have registered in Africa and beyond, it is certain that political and operational realities in the field will dictate their continued application for the foreseeable future. But with peacekeeping activity at a precarious high that is set to be surpassed during 2008, several key thematic threads that ran throughout the workshop deserve to be reiterated in conclusion.

First, while contemporary peacekeeping operations have proven to deliver results, they cannot continue to function as the international community's chief response to conflict situations. Peacekeeping as a tool can be used to contain conflict, but it is rare that it solves conflicts, a misapplication that is vividly on display in the peacekeeping operations currently deploying across the Broader Horn of Africa. Resort to resource-heavy peacekeeping operations could be avoided with more proactive approach to conflict prevention and a heightened use of mediators as a tool to answer tough political questions that lie at the heart of a given conflict. But just as peacekeeping is expensive, so too is the political capital associated with mediation and conflict prevention, thus an appropriate balance between the two approaches is desired.

Secondly, when peacekeeping operations are necessary, it is crucial that their mandates be realistic in terms of both recognizing the inherent capabilities of peacekeeping operations and the available pool of resources. If peacekeeping operations continue to be under-resourced and over-tasked, concepts such as the Responsibility to Protect will continue to ring hollow.

Finally, bearing in mind the utility and ongoing need for peacekeeping partnerships in both capacity building and operational formulations, these relationships must be made more predictable. The seminar identified a number of lessons from past operations that can be car-

ried forward to make peacekeeping partnerships more predictable. These are:

1. From the outset, the **timing** of a given peacekeeping partnerships must be taken into account realistically. From planning to implementation, partnerships are inherently complex by nature of the interacting bodies and thus move quite slow in reality. The speed of expected outcomes should be tempered bearing these realities in mind.
2. The importance of using **joint planning** among actors throughout the duration of a partnership cannot be overstated. Where operational cooperation is needed in the theater, an advanced level of communication across the respective planning elements will avoid problems of strategic coordination.
3. **Personnel** turnover between successive actors, from the strategic to tactical levels, has proven to be problematic. Efforts to reduce the costs associated with mission handover, including the re-hatting of personnel should be employed.
4. **Financing** needs to be made more consistent for peacekeeping partnerships, especially in terms of capacity building. The EU's African Peace Facility (APF) represents an earnest attempt at such a financial instrument, but in the future should be extended at a broader international level and insulated so as to avoid destabilization from single crisis situations.
5. **Reporting lines** in operational partnership formulations should be parsed to ensure the least amount of redundancy and miscommunication.
6. Most importantly, the establishment of a **common political framework** for in-country action is a fundamental priority and should be a prerequisite before any partnership is operationalized. A shared political vision provides the basis for harmonized goals and ensures complementary efforts.

The workshop is part of the Center on International Cooperation's (CIC) program on Global Peace Operations. For more on the program and CIC's other related work please visit http://www.cic.nyu.edu.

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