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## CONCLUSION

# Managing Partnership

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Due to the proliferation of actors involved, the expansion in mandated tasks, and the general complexity of conflict dynamics, partnerships are increasingly a fact of life for UN peace operations. However, partnership creates additional challenges – strategic ambiguity, an over-emphasis on process, weakened command and control and unequal burden-sharing – that cannot be eliminated, but rather need to be managed. This article suggests a framework to help guide the UN towards applying specific approaches – power, management, leadership or culture – depending on the varying level of agreement between two partners, with the goal of making partnership more manageable.

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‘The success of peacekeeping’, notes the 2010 Progress Report on the New Horizon agenda, ‘rests on a global partnership of the Security Council, General Assembly bodies, contributing countries, host parties, regional and other partners, and the [UN] Secretariat, all acting within the framework of a commonly understood and comprehensive strategy.’<sup>1</sup> Due to the proliferation of actors involved, the expansion in mandated tasks, and the general complexity of conflict dynamics, collaboration and burden-sharing have become imperatives for the UN. Indeed, the very success of a mission depends increasingly on the UN’s ability to leverage partnerships, work to each partner’s comparative advantage, manage the unavoidable dissent and continually rebuild consensus around the mission’s goals.

This special issue of *International Peacekeeping* has explored the challenges and opportunities that partnership raises for UN peace operations. Despite the differences among the contributors, one clear point emerges: partnerships are a fact of life in UN peace operations, even when they are ripe with tensions and contradictions – as Donald Daniel remarks (this volume) in the case of civilian and military actors partnering to protect civilians. And, although often tested by institutional compartmentalization and turf battles, partnership is also a reality within the UN, among the many departments and agencies of the system. This conclusion first explains why partnership is increasingly significant in UN peacekeeping. Second, it identifies the political and technical challenges that need to be managed – rather than solved – when partnering. Finally, it offers a framework for choosing the best approach or tools to address those partnership challenges.

## Partnership on the Rise

With more than 120,000 UN peacekeeping personnel deployed around the world as of February 2011, peacekeeping has become, arguably, the most frequently used conflict-response tool of the international community.<sup>2</sup> The UN, although the main organization, is not alone. The African Union (AU), the EU, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Organization of American States (OAS) and NATO (if 'peace operations' such as the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan are included) are engaged in more than thirty countries.<sup>3</sup> With this proliferation of actors, peacekeeping has also witnessed an expansion of its agenda. Over the years, the scope of most UN peacekeeping operations has expanded to some 300 individual functions that fall under more than twenty broad categories, including disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), electoral assistance, peace-process management, human rights monitoring, security-sector reform, justice reform and rule of law.<sup>4</sup> Implementing increasingly ambitious and demanding mandates makes partnership even more necessary.<sup>5</sup> Along with the proliferation of actors involved and the expansion in mandated tasks in peacekeeping, a third trend that makes partnership inevitable is the growing complexity of conflict dynamics. Even if the global incidence of civil wars does not increase, it is reasonable to project growing instabilities in societies unable to absorb shocks and manage crises arising from transnational organized crime, environmental changes, resource scarcity and economic downturns.<sup>6</sup> These dynamics call for collaboration among actors with different mandates and capacities.

## The Weaknesses of Partnership

Drawing on articles in this special issue and other literature on the topic, particular challenges of partnership can be identified that need to be understood. These include, *inter alia*, strategic ambiguity, an emphasis on process over substance, weakened command and control, and unequal burden-sharing.

First, partnerships often create strategic ambiguity in peace operations. It is, of course, not easy to align the interests and values of different participants. When diplomats in the Security Council achieve agreement, the fruit of the compromise is often a resolution sufficiently vague to guarantee a high level of state support. The absence of clarity and specificity produces what Emily Paddon (this issue) labels 'nominal versus effective consensus'. Even if consensus in the Council were to be achieved, the terminology of a peacekeeping mandate is often open to different interpretations both in the field and in capitals. Concepts such as protection of civilians, 'all necessary means' and 'robust peacekeeping' lack a shared understanding, and differences sometimes reflect a North-South divide that characterizes many of the interactions in the international system. Questions about the main goal of the mission, the priority tasks, the ways to assess progress and the definition of success remain unanswered, and so the overall vision and strategy are left vague. Moreover, as Paddon contends, peace operations deployed to volatile environments

exacerbate disagreement over the mission's goals, which provides further incentive to leave the goals and means vague.

Second, because significant effort is required to create a partnership and then maintain it, the process itself becomes a centre of attention. Exact organizational arrangements and the often elaborate means of coordination – process-oriented factors – overtake the substance. There is a risk that insufficient energy goes into understanding the needs and dynamics in the field, thus producing unrealistic mandates, unmet expectations and preconditions for failure. Setting up and managing integrated missions, for example, have entailed high transaction costs in human resources and time. Degrees of success in integration, such as with the UN Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB), are largely attributable to individual UN staff who find ways to work around numerous organizational and political barriers.<sup>7</sup> However, this generally comes at the cost of spending more time 'navigating the system' than carrying out assigned tasks. Accordingly, there is a tendency to create organizations that are more complex than the problem to be solved.<sup>8</sup>

Third, in partnership, the chain of command and control, and thus the strategic oversight is typically weaker than it would be otherwise. The process of achieving consensus through consultation slows down the decision-making process. As well, authority tends to be dispersed. Differences in partners' structures, processes and cultures can greatly increase the difficulty of unified command and control, coherence and coordinated action. In the worst cases, these weaknesses reduce the organization's ability to adapt to changed circumstances and can lead to immobilization. This is one of the reasons why European countries preconditioned their contribution to the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL II) on the creation of an ad-hoc Strategic Military Cell, although some commentators have argued that it had a limited impact.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, partnerships always occur among unequal partners. All organizations vary in resources, mandate and capacities. When two or more partners contribute different shares to an effort, tensions and conflict often emerge over who delivers what. In the field, it is often easy to spot the weaknesses of those who are over-extended. There are several implications of this structural limitation. First, one institution may dominate the other, because of political clout. In Afghanistan, for example, it has been remarked that the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is a weak partner in the relationship with the Afghan government, because it lacks the leverage of the United States or the NATO-led International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF).<sup>10</sup> Second, even if, partners pretend that all the parties are sharing the same burdens, in reality there is always a partner who does more than the others. In Haiti, many South American states participated in the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), in part attracted by the prestige that such participation brought domestically and abroad. However, some had to reduce their participation for budgetary reasons or because of a limited capacity to contribute police officers.<sup>11</sup> Actual contributions to the mission varied greatly between the official contributors. Finally, if one partner falters, others often share the blame. When the DRC army fails to protect civilians – or perpetrates violence against civilians – accusations are levelled at the UN for its partnership with the

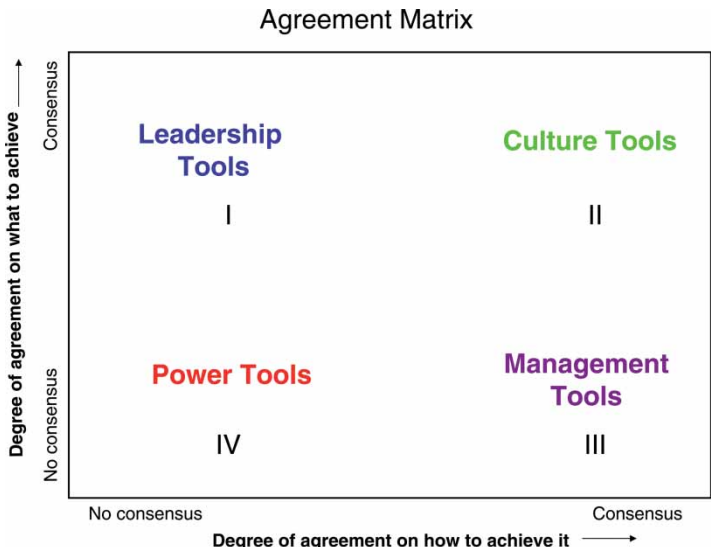
DRC government. Similar experiences were encountered in Timor-Leste, when security-sector institutions collapsed during the 2006 crisis.

Of course such weaknesses are structural aspects of any partnership, and indicate that in practice partnership is less predictable and messier than in theory. Often the structural issues cannot be solved, but only managed. Some have labelled them ‘wicked problems’, in which the complexity of both the content and process makes the search for a single answer impossible.<sup>12</sup> These cases require ‘second-best’ options rather than ideal solutions, because an ideal depends on conditions that are rarely if ever met. This is illustrated well in Jim Rolfe’s description (this volume) of the ideal conditions in which partnership between civilian and military in humanitarian relief would work.

Managing Partnership

The structural weaknesses of partnership present specific challenges for managing UN peace operations. International civil servants and UN staff particular need to develop a set of skills to navigate partnerships. The remainder of this article suggests a framework to help leaders choose an appropriate set of tools to manage partnerships depending on the level of agreement among participants. The framework is based on the work of Howard Stevenson, whose ‘Agreement Matrix’ I have adapted to the peacekeeping partnership context.<sup>13</sup> The matrix assesses the level of agreement along two axes based on two criteria. The first criterion is the extent to which partners agree on what they want. The second is the extent to which partners agree on how to achieve it. For each of the four combinations in this matrix, the model suggests specific tools to handle the different circumstances (see Figure 1). In peacekeeping, the vertical axis represents the

FIGURE 1  
AGREEMENT MATRIX AND THE FOUR TYPES OF PARTNERSHIP TOOLS



level of consensus on the mission's mandate and overall strategic goals, while the horizontal axis represents the level of consensus on the tasks, means and tactics to achieve those goals.

As levels of consensus change, of course, a peace operation may lodge in each of the four quadrants at different points during its lifespan. Indeed debates about the concept and practice of protecting civilians has reflected different phases of agreement over the past decade. The norm of civilian protection now has a higher level of consensus than before, but divisions still exist over how to accomplish it. Consequently civilian protection can be said to have moved from Quadrant IV to Quadrant I.

Each quadrant, though, harbours challenges.<sup>14</sup> For example, a high level of agreement between two partners on their goals and tasks (Quadrant II) might lead the partners to be less likely to adapt to changes in the field. Partners in this quadrant tend to work to preserve the status quo, and if a strategy needs to change, adaptation may be very slow. The challenge is to identify where an operation stands in terms of agreement among the partners and what tools should be used to make the partnership work, since, ultimately, the primary task of management is to get partners to work together effectively.

In Quadrant IV, when partners show little consensus on both what to achieve and how to achieve it, the most promising tools for eliciting collaboration are 'power tools', such as carrots and sticks, threats and coercion. This is not to suggest that partnership should be formed on the basis of threats, though history is rich in such examples. The lesson here is that continuing negotiation, bargaining and strong diplomatic activity is needed to foster partnership. Financial incentives could also be used, but they may backfire in conditions of low consensus. For example, offering more money may help the UN to find troops but may not make them work effectively. UNOSOM I (under Chapter VI of the Charter) and the Unified Task Force, UNITAF, (under Chapter VII) in Somalia in 1992–93 are examples of missions in this Quadrant, with low agreement on goals and tasks. The commanders of the US-led Unified Task Force soon differed with the UN Secretary-General over the definition of what constituted 'a secure environment' for the delivery of humanitarian assistance. The eventual merging of the two forces in a new mission, UNOSOM II, left the problem unsolved, without agreement on what to achieve and how to do it (confrontation versus dialogue and disarmament of the militias).<sup>15</sup> The tragic results are part of the history of peace operations.

The tools to employ in Quadrant III, with little agreement on what to achieve, but some consensus on what to do are called 'management tools'. They include coordination and process-oriented mechanisms, such as strategic planning, standard operating procedures, training and measurement systems. When it is hard to agree and push for a common vision partners should focus on planned activities and work on creating collaboration at the operational level. This is common in UN peace operations, where disagreements at the strategic level, as in Afghanistan and Iraq between the United States and the UN in the former and the United States and NATO in the latter, did not prevent partnering in day-to-day operations. Sometimes, low agreement on what to achieve produces inadequate

mandates, as in missions in Rwanda in 1993–94, in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992–95, and in Sudan in 2004–07.<sup>16</sup> In these cases, the role of the mission's leadership in defining tasks and contingency plans was essential.

Quadrant I, where there is agreement on what to achieve, but little on how to get there, calls for a set of tools, which can be grouped under the label 'leadership'. Many missions operated in this context, such as the early years of the UN Mission in Liberia, where the actors generally agreed on the goal of building government capacity, but could not find accord on how to achieve it. In these cases the use of result-oriented, rather than process-oriented, tools may be relevant. As Richard Gowan shows (in this issue), the UN and EU cooperation in the DRC during the 2008 crisis is another example of agreement on the goal, but disagreement on the methods. In this context, charismatic leadership can be essential. Vision statements and 'salesmanship' can help the partners to sort out priorities and identify a minimum common denominator. In fact, the presence of a 'strong' Special Representative of the Secretary-General (such as Alan Doss in Liberia in 2005) has often turned around a mission that could not define a clear plan or list of priorities.

In Quadrant II, where there is a high degree of consensus on both goals and activities, partnership should come naturally. The consensus on the mandate and a set of actions to achieve it is the essence of a smooth partnership. Organizations that share common values, norms and culture can be located in this quadrant.<sup>17</sup> In peacekeeping, this level of agreement is rare, although examples can be found in the life-cycle of missions. During 2010, the government of the Solomon Islands and the peacekeeping mission there (RAMSI) developed a high level of agreement. However, in August 2010 the election of a new prime minister supported by a party critical of the mission could change this dynamic in the future and move RAMSI out of Quadrant II.<sup>18</sup> EU–UN collaboration in the DRC from 2003 to 2006 could also be considered an example of partners in Quadrant II. In these circumstances, 'cultural tools' can be used, such as reinforcing staff 'rituals' and traditions (having lunch together, promoting intra-partner working groups) and 'apprenticeships' (junior staff of one partner working with and learning from senior staff of the other) can enhance the existing level of agreement. Partners in this fourth quadrant would almost automatically continue in the same direction. Although this seems to be the 'ideal position', such a partnership could be dangerously unresponsive to change and slow to adapt to changing local conditions.

## Conclusion

Peacekeeping has become an intricate enterprise. Multiple players, complex environments and daunting tasks require a high degree of coherence, coordination and capacity in a 'global peacekeeping system', which includes not only member states and UN departments and agencies, but also regional and sub-regional organizations, host governments and civil-society organizations.

Consequently, sorting out the best way to manage partnerships presents a fundamental test for peacekeepers. The New Horizon agenda specifies productive and reliable partnerships as a strategy for overcoming the challenges facing



contemporary peacekeeping. As the articles in this special issue illustrate, partnerships are rarely productive and reliable. They are inherently complicated and partnerships generate further problems. A matrix of approaches to manage partnerships is, of course, no panacea either. 'Ideal' solutions to partnership management can be, and often are, attempted in New York and in the field. But 'second-best options' that take into consideration the structural dimensions of partnership might, in fact, often be the better option.

## NOTES

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3. See Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 'Map of Multilateral Peace Operation Deployments', Dec. 2010 (at: [http://books.sipri.org/product\\_info?c\\_product\\_id=417](http://books.sipri.org/product_info?c_product_id=417)).
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