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INTRODUCTION

Peacekeeping: The Global Enterprise

ADAM C. SMITH

Peacekeeping in its current form requires more predictable, professional and adaptable capacities. It needs a global system to match the global enterprise it has become.¹

Peacekeeping is 'a global enterprise' in the words of the 2009 non-paper, 'A New Partnership Agenda: Charting a New Horizon for UN Peacekeeping' ('New Horizon'), published by the UN Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support (DPKO and DFS). It is hard to argue otherwise. The instrument that was not mentioned in the UN Charter has become, in fits and starts, the world body's most expensive, most visible and riskiest ongoing activity. As of the end of January 2011 the UN deployed over 120,000 personnel (military, police and civilians) in 15 peace operations, while an even larger number of personnel were deployed in missions led by regional and sub-regional organizations.² International interventions in the name of peace run a wide gamut: from military observer operations to executive policing to multi-dimensional peacebuilding missions. And the missions stretch across the globe, from the Solomon Islands to Haiti, from Kosovo to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Surely then, the authors of New Horizon are correct in referring to peacekeeping as a global enterprise. But will a focus on partnerships endow the UN with 'predictable, professional and adaptable capacities'? New Horizon is candid in describing the challenges facing contemporary peacekeeping, and is clear in its premise that overcoming these challenges requires forming productive and reliable partnerships. Yet, partnerships are rarely such. They are inherently complicated and can be challenges in themselves. And while partnerships may help mitigate some challenges for the UN, the articles in this issue suggest that partnerships – at least with external actors such as regional organizations – may not solve the most pressing or the most persistent ones.

Why Partnerships?

The conceptual foundation of this special issue can be traced to a seminar series – itself a partnership – run by the International Peace Institute (IPI) and the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP). The December 2009 seminar, 'Cooperating for Peace: The Challenge and Promise of Partnerships in Peace Operations', produced a set of discussion papers that would serve as a basis for many of the articles in this special issue. The theme that year was clearly inspired by the

recently released New Horizon non-paper; however, it was also influenced by the previous year's IPI–GCSP seminar on 'Managing Complexity: Political and Managerial Challenges in United Nations Peace Operations'. The premise of 'Managing Complexity' was that the UN and its many partners in missions are 'outmatched' by the increasing operational complexity of contemporary peace operations, and the interdependence of so many actors – inevitable as it may be – only further complicates the challenges. This author, along with Caty Clement, argued then that 'the UN does not operate alone in any environment, and in many ways, success or failure depends less on the UN than on the other organizational entities around it . . . Success depends on the UN's ability to leverage its partnerships with other organizations and groups, coordinate activities among them, bring spoilers into the political process, and enable and strengthen host governments.'³ How the UN could 'leverage its partnerships' therefore became the priority of the next year's seminar, in addition to being the subject of New Horizon.

Of course, the issue of the UN working in partnership is not new. Chapter VIII of the UN Charter gives the Security Council the ability to utilize 'regional arrangements or agencies for enforcement action under its authority'.⁴ In 1998, referring to regional organizations, the then Secretary-General Kofi Annan encouraged 'a real partnership, with a more rational and cost-effective division of labour, between those organizations and the United Nations'.⁵ And in more recent years ongoing debates in New York on 'inter-organizational coordination' and on integrated missions touched on many of the same issues as the subsequent partnership discussion. Gordon Peake, in this issue, refers to the theme of partnership as 'old wine in new bottles'. The move by DPKO and DFS to put partnership at the centre of its agenda is not, therefore, seen as a revolutionary shift in thinking.

Yet, as reflected in the articles of this special issue, the discussions at the 2009 seminar on partnership revealed several key lessons that should inform any serious consideration of strengthening partnerships. First, 'partnership' is an overly broad concept that needs to be disaggregated for its implications to be understood. Second, the wisdom of recommending a renewed focus on partnership for peacekeeping depends, of course, on one's analysis of the problems that afflict contemporary peacekeeping. And no matter what the diagnosis, partnership – at least with external actors – will never be a cure-all for UN peacekeeping. As such, it must be pursued strategically and with due consideration of other competing priorities. Finally, partnership is a fact of life for the UN in the field, and the dilemmas raised by partnerships cannot be 'solved'. A more productive approach would be to focus on the management of partnerships and how to mitigate their limitations by employing context-specific tools and strategies.

Partnership's Many Forms

The contributors to this special issue illustrate how varied the forms of partnership can be. Donald Daniel highlights an overstretched UN system of force generation that relies on tenuous, ad hoc partnerships with individual UN member

states. Such a system to generate and sustain troop contributions is subject to the vagaries of daily events in the field and in capitals, and seems to be in a permanent state of imminent collapse. In order to fill the 'rapid-response gap', he recommends taking another look at institutionalizing force-generation mechanisms to create standby, high-readiness brigades.

Jim Rolfe narrows in on partnership arrangements to examine the field-based partnerships, between military and civilian actors, organized to accomplish a shared objective; in this case, fulfilling a mandate to protect civilians. Yet, as Rolfe points out, the strength of consensus and the unity of purpose regarding an overall objective do not, on their own, alleviate the real tension that can occur between two groups with differing organizational cultures and different ideas about how to accomplish the objective. He suggests moving from a largely ad hoc and reactive system of coordination and response to one that emphasizes pre-mission planning and post-mission analysis and evaluation.

Yet, arguably the type of partnership that is most pivotal to peacekeeping's ultimate success or failure is the partnership between the 'international community' and the host country. On this subject, Gordon Peake's article on police peacekeeping attempts to uncover why the good-faith implementation of a 'partnership policy' by UN field staff and their managers has largely failed to produce a reliable and effective partner in the government of Timor-Leste. It suggests that rhetorical and technical outreach to a partner may neither be an effective substitute for genuine political engagement nor make up for the lack of a government's will to partner. Peake concludes that new or improved policies regarding partnerships may not be able to increase the effectiveness of a flawed system, one that is overly premised on a policy of 'partnership by osmosis', (as he puts it, 'the notion that a skilled professional on a short tour will somehow work well in a politically, culturally and linguistically alien context'). If the system for policing in peacekeeping operations is based on a faulty premise, how can well-intentioned partnership policies from New York make much difference in the field?

What Problems Are Partnerships Meant to Solve?

The second, fairly obvious, observation is that the prescription for the medicine depends on the disorder that is diagnosed. To determine if the DPKO and DFS are correct that peacekeeping needs a 'global system' of peacekeeping partnership, one must start from an understanding of what ails peacekeeping in the first place. Cedric de Coning argues that the UN's inability to staff its peace operations with enough capable civilian experts is not actually caused by a lack of external supply, but rather, in large part, by the UN's own bureaucratic failings. De Coning's conclusion that the UN should rethink its system for identifying available global civilian capacity would seem to be supported by the March 2011 report of the independent review of civilian capacity in the aftermath of conflict, which recommended considerable internal UN reform.⁶

Emily Paddon argues that the consensus among UN member states on the purposes of peacekeeping is nominal, rather than effective, and that this lack of genuine consensus in New York lies at the heart of many of the UN's operational

problems in the field. Paddon reminds the reader that the UN's search for either increased legitimacy or 'robustness' through external partnerships may ultimately prove unrealistic. As such, the primary focus of reform efforts should be internal, not external. Partnerships are inevitable for UN peacekeeping, but, as for any competing components of an agenda, time spent on them must be prioritized properly. Paddon warns that the heavy focus on external partners – largely driven by operational exigencies – could distract from the ultimately more important (if more difficult) task of repairing relations and strengthening partnerships within the UN, among its many components and member states.

At its most basic level, the 'global system' of peacekeeping is made up of the UN, the regional and sub-regional organizations and the member states or groups of member states that play operational roles in conflict or post-conflict peacekeeping contexts. New Horizon rightly points out, though, that the system is wholly dependent on the states that authorize missions, contribute funds, troops and police, and play host to peacekeeping missions. As such, any prolonged attention to partnership in the global system must give priority to the partnerships between intergovernmental organizations and member states.

How to Manage the Challenges that Come with Partnering

Despite the potential of external partnerships to lighten the operational burden on the UN, there is general agreement among the contributors to this special issue that partnerships are not a panacea for what ails UN peacekeeping, but rather that they often come with their own intrinsic challenges and limitations. Richard Gowan makes clear the risk of a dependence on external actors in his account of the EU decision-making process during the 2008–09 crisis in the eastern DRC. The EU–UN partnership was as institutionalized as any relationship the UN had with a regional organization. Yet even though it was built for this specific purpose, in the case of the EU battle groups, the partnership was still unable to overcome the inherent divergence of interests made evident by the crisis. No amount of partnership strengthening could 'solve' this problem.

While much literature focuses on the institutional forms of partnership, for the most part this special issue has focused on the functional aspects of partnership (protecting civilians, rapid response, generating adequate troops and civilians, and policing) in the belief that function is often more important than form. In this respect, in the conclusion, Francesco Mancini warns against creating partnership forms and structures that are more complex than the problems they are intended to address.

It may be that the limitations and challenges presented by partnerships often cannot be solved. Rather, because those limitations are inherent and the conflicts produced by them inevitable, the partnerships can only be managed. Mancini takes a practical look at the challenges caused by external partnerships, including the high transaction costs of coordination, the marginalization of weaker partners, and the risky dependence upon partners with either limited capacity or limited political will. He suggests that the UN should abandon efforts to find one solution to the challenges created by partnership, and should try instead to

better understand the particular partnership dynamic – be it a divergence in interests, will, organizational culture or otherwise – at the root of each challenge. Once these dynamics are understood, the UN may find it necessary to develop so-called ‘second-best’ strategies for managing each partnership. The proper management of the challenges created by partnerships could indeed be one way forward for the UN to ‘leverage its partnerships’ in peacekeeping to greatest effect, and thereby strengthen this global enterprise for the future.

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NOTES

1. DPKO and DFS, ‘A New Partnership Agenda: Charting a New Horizon for UN Peacekeeping’, New York, July, 2009, p.iii.
2. For data on UN peace operations, see ‘Peacekeeping Fact Sheet’ (at: www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/factsheet.shtml). For data on non-UN peace operations, see Center on International Cooperation, *Annual Review of Global Peace Operations 2011*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2011.
3. Caty Clement and Adam C. Smith (eds), ‘Managing Complexity: Political and Managerial Challenges in UN Peace Operations’, report, IPI, New York, June 2009, p.2.
4. Charter of the United Nations, 1945, Ch.VII, Art.53.
5. Kofi Annan, ‘Annual Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization’, UN doc A/53/1, 27 Aug. 1998, para.41.
6. See the ‘Report of the Senior Advisory Group of the Independent Review of Civilian Capacities in the Aftermath of Conflict’, Mar. 2011 (at: www.civcapreview.org).