

The International Peace Academy is an independent, international institution dedicated to promoting the prevention and settlement of armed conflicts between and within states through policy research and development.

On 22 February 2006, the International Peace Academy (IPA) inaugurated a new stream of work focused on regional capacities to deal with 21st century peace and security challenges with a high-level conference in New York. This event, organized in partnership with the United Nations University Comparative Regional Integration Studies program (UNU-CRIS) in Bruges and the Institute of European Studies of the Free University of Brussels, took place on the eve of the constitutive meeting of a new Standing Committee created in 2005 to help deepen and institutionalize cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations (ROs). The relationship between the world body and regional groups will form an important component of IPA's new program on global capacities for crisis management.

This note was drafted by Dr. Catherine Guicherd, Visiting Fellow at IPA. It reflects the rapporteur's interpretation of the conference discussions and does not necessarily represent the view of other participants.

REVIVING CHAPTER VIII: The United Nations and Regional Organizations - Partners for Peace

BACKGROUND

For several years, the United Nations (UN) has worked to deepen its relationships with regional organizations in the interest of building partnerships that can better contend with evolving peace and security challenges. Until last year, this principally took the form of periodic consultations alongside *ad hoc* efforts to strengthen practical cooperation with particular regional organizations (ROs) in relation to specific conflict situations. In 2005, a series of new commitments were made to take the UN-RO relationship to a new level, including at the September World Summit,¹ at the Sixth High-Level UN-RO meeting,² and at the Security Council.³ Taken together, these commitments reinforce the trend toward greater reliance—or, at least, greater expectation of reliance—on regional mechanisms to address peace and security. They also underscore the importance of forging closer, more predictable ties between ROs and the UN based on appropriate divisions of labor and clear mutual expectations. Among the practical outcomes of the 2005 commitments were decisions to meet annually at the heads of organization level, establish a Standing Committee to initiate ideas and follow-up on decisions, and seek additional human resources to manage the process.

Alongside rising expectations are, however, many uncertainties. What kinds of situations call for regional responses? Are ROs up to the task? How are we to understand the evolving comparative capabilities of the

¹ See Summit Outcome Document, A/Res/60/1, 24 October 2005, para. 93.

² See Conclusions of the Chairman of the sixth high-level meeting between the United Nations and regional and other intergovernmental organizations, 25-26 July 2005, Annex I of A/60/341-S/2005/567, 8 September 2005. This consultation process begun in 1994 with ten regional organizations involved, and meetings taking place, on average, every two years. Twenty regional or other inter-governmental organizations participated in the 6th High-Level Meeting in July 2005. For the first time, the Meeting was prepared by a series of working groups, and a decision was taken to further institutionalize the process.

³ Consultations between the Security Council (SC) and ROs were inaugurated by the Mexican presidency of the Council in 2003. Three meetings have taken place since then. Res. 1631 was adopted at the third meeting in October 2005, paving the way to annual SC-RO consultations.

UN and different ROs, and what is the track record of UN-RO cooperation in situations as wide-ranging as the Balkans, Iraq, or Darfur? What is the appropriate basis for UN-RO cooperation, and what does it take for such cooperation to be successful?

Sources of agreement

A few main areas of consensus were clear in the discussions and directly reflected the conclusions of the World Summit:

- First, there is a greater need than ever to develop stronger partnerships between the UN and ROs. Interestingly, despite ambiguity about the formal definition of who constitutes an RO under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, there was no real discussion on this point. Instead, a welcome pragmatism seems to have replaced earlier formal preoccupations. This suggests that Member States are more concerned about practical solutions to dealing with complex peace and security problems and that they would not want, on the basis of form alone, to exclude a priori partnerships that could help lighten the UN's burden.⁴
- Second, different ROs have obviously different histories, capabilities, and functionalities, but this can be the basis of constructive partnerships and niche relationships. Pragmatism, flexibility, and differentiation were concepts that resonated across and within all the regions.
- Third, among the highest international priorities is to assist the development of African Union (and sub-regional) capacities to prevent and manage conflicts. This was among the least controversial outcomes of the Summit, partly also reflecting international confidence in the AU's own initiative in developing a strategic vision and a plan to address Africa's peace and security needs.

Areas for further discussion

Beyond this consensus, however, there were sources of uncertainty, outstanding questions, and issues for debate. The conference highlighted the following questions:

- **Do differences in degree, nature, and history of regional integration in various parts of the world imply different functional capacities as well as potentially different attitudes to cooperation with the UN?** For example, the Organization of American States (OAS) emphasizes capacity building of democratic institutions and civil society, whereas the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) is more active in discreet peacemaking, with some recent inroads also into peacebuilding (Cambodia, Timor Leste, Aceh). Africa's organizational priorities are, meanwhile, to build capacity to deliver across a comprehensive agenda of conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding. The European Union (EU) too, has tried to take a comprehensive approach to security and development in parallel to its increasingly global involvement. The search for a global reach has also growingly characterized the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)'s understanding of its role. In all cases, the nature and scope of RO engagement is heavily shaped by internal priorities and dynamics. In practice, ROs that are characterized by greater internal consensus on their missions and roles tend to be better able to build and exercise capabilities. They are also generally better equipped to establish partnerships—including with the UN—given greater clarity about niche or functionality, on the basis of which they can confidently partner. This is especially evident in ROs that have military capability. In the future, this may set apart the AU and two of the European organizations, the EU and NATO, from others, as their interaction with the UN intensifies.

⁴ To date, the High-Level Meetings involve geographically organized ROs—e.g., the African Union or the European Union—as well as groups organized more on the basis of a historical-cultural connection—e.g., the Commonwealth Secretariat or the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie—and more purely functional organizations—e.g., Interpol.

- **Is it possible or useful to develop a comprehensive framework of interaction between the UN and regional organizations?** The premise of the process underway at the UN is that further institutionalizing consultation between the UN and ROs is useful, though this utility is likely to vary with regional differences in mandates, capacities, and political underpinnings. The EU, for example, already has extensive relations with the UN in the form of regular dialogue at senior levels and almost daily desk-to-desk interaction on specific issues, and may find little added value in a comprehensive framework. The African Union could soon be in a similar position, as it develops its capabilities and range of actions. Indeed, several participants foresaw that bilateral AU-UN interaction would develop along similar lines to that with the EU. Meanwhile, NATO and the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE) were also aiming to formalize an already robust cooperation on the ground with the UN. On the other hand, smaller, less active, or differently constituted ROs may have greater interest in a more multilateral consultation process, as they have fewer alternatives to explore and develop cooperation with the UN. The challenge of the multilateral process is thus to take into account this diversity in order to be useful to the full range of participants. Perhaps this argues for a lighter rather than heavier multilateral process which can build in greater possibilities for flexible arrangements.
- **Is “comparative advantage” more than a buzzword?** The key in this debate is to disaggregate what different organizations can contribute to international peace and security. The UN may be at the center of international security in the normative role

conferred by the Charter, but in operational terms, it is only one among several actors including governments, non-governmental organizations, private firms, and, of course, ROs. On the operational side, however, despite a considerable body of research, analysis, and evaluation over recent years, we still have fairly weak evidence about the capabilities and effectiveness of different institutions. This gap is important to correct in order to make sound judgments about relative roles and missions.

Take the question of conflict prevention. Some argue that the UN has a good track record in preventing wars between states, but less evident impact in preventing conflict within them. There is little in the Charter to underpin the latter role, and the UN also has limited capacity.⁵ Many ROs, on the other hand, have significant potential capacity, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) with its High Commissioner on National Minorities and its field missions, or the Organization of American States (OAS) with its democratization programs, or the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) with its civil society networks. A potential further advantage of ROs is that they should be better able to focus on long-term engagement aimed at promoting the kinds of structural developments that can prevent crises from occurring or re-occurring. The UN also has such potential, primarily in its agencies, programs, and funds. However, the decentralization of these capacities adds a further challenge by requiring a level of strategic coordination which does not exist at present within a plural UN system.⁶

In any event, claims to comparative advantage and efficacy by the UN, ROs, or

⁵ There is counter-evidence to this argument, however, especially if one includes the role of peacekeeping and peacebuilding in preventing the resumption of civil wars. The statistically greatest risk factor for internal conflict is the occurrence of a previous war in the country concerned, and the UN's track record in post-conflict peacebuilding is considerable.

⁶ This is part of the logic underpinning the newly established High-level Panel on UN system coherence.

other actors need to be assessed as much as possible on the basis of empirical documentation, case studies, and comparative assessments.

- **Is the UN ready to partner?** Some participants pointed out that despite the swell of support for partnership between the UN and ROs, old habits toward institutional monopoly were likely to die hard. This tendency was reinforced by some continued confusion about how roles could be broken down into different components (e.g., as between the UN's normative and operational roles) in a way that could encourage a flexible division of labor. The matter was highlighted in the context of a discussion on Darfur, where one speaker, referring to the Security Council Presidency Statement of 3 February 2006,⁷ described a lack of imagination on the part of the Council and within the Secretariat in considering more flexible solutions to follow up on the African Mission in Sudan (AMIS). The unification of the mission under the UN proposed by the Council, he argued, was a far cry from the spirit of Council Resolution 1631. Real partnership would require a change of mind within the Secretariat and among Member States and greater openness to political, financial and administrative innovation.
- **Should cooperation between the UN and ROs be approached organization-by-organization or situation-by-situation?** Participants weighed pros and cons of both approaches. Proponents of a situation-based approach argued on the basis of efficiency. In a particular conflict or crisis, it was better to identify what combination of capabilities⁸ was most needed and who was best equipped to provide them rather than engage in "theological" debates about who should take the lead. This had been amply demonstrated,

both positively and negatively, in the Balkans and in several African theatres.

Without disagreeing on this, proponents of an institution-based approach pointed out that it was also important for the UN and ROs to "take the time to know each other", as the internal dynamics of an institution necessarily have a strong influence on its style and performance in addressing crises. It was therefore important for the UN and ROs to understand each other's distinct institutional cultures, mechanisms, and capabilities. The institutional approach could go too far, though: some pointed to the current enthusiasm for Memoranda of Understanding or framework agreements, and others cautioned that attention should stay focused on producing concrete results in the field. The risk of consuming excessive time on process, placing an undue burden on already scarce human resources, should not be underestimated. What is needed, said one, is "not a heavy mechanism, but flexibility and responsiveness." Here, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) would be a good forum to develop concrete forms of cooperation between the UN, including the Security Council, and ROs.

- **What is the optimal balance between institutional arrangements and politics?** Finally, as one speaker noted, the relationship between the UN and ROs cannot avoid a power element. Sometimes this element is more subtle—e.g., when there is underlying consensus between countries that exert leadership in both the UN and a given RO—and sometimes it comes to the fore—when such a consensus does not exist. It was important to keep this in mind when discussing division of labor and roles: even if guidelines are agreed, predictable arrangements will be subject to the politics of any

⁷ S/PRST/2006/5.

⁸ Capabilities have to be understood here as encompassing both elements of political legitimacy and material resources.

given situation, which will continue to shape the parameters of response to most crises. The role of individual leadership will also be a wild card and cannot readily be institutionalized - e.g., Kofi Annan's role in bringing UN attention to Darfur, or Amr Moussa's leadership in Arab League engagement in Iraq. Conversely, embedding RO-UN interaction in institutional frameworks, especially if

flexibly conceived and based on assessment of real capacities to fill the specific needs of particular situations, would provide an important balance in both respects: first, in hedging the vagaries of power politics, and second in providing leaders with the backing they need to follow-up when they are willing to take initiative.



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**REVIVING CHAPTER VIII:
The United Nations and Regional Organizations – Partners for Peace**

*Millennium U.N. Plaza Hotel
One United Nations Plaza, New York
(44th Street between 1st and 2nd Avenue)
2nd Floor, Ballroom*

22 February 2006

Agenda

8:45 - 9:15 *Registration*

9:15 - 10:30 **INTRODUCTORY SESSION**

9:15 - 9:30 *Welcome: Mr. Terje Rød-Larsen, President, International Peace Academy*

9:30 - 9:50 *Opening Remarks: H.E. Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs “A Stronger Relationship between the United Nations and Regional Organizations”*

9:50 - 10:00 *Respondent: Dr. Bruce Jones, Co-Director, Center on International Cooperation, New York University*

10:00 - 10:30 *Discussion*

10:30 - 11:30 **SESSION 1: REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND THE SEARCH FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST - THE CASE OF IRAQ**

Chair: Dr. Kennedy Graham, University of Canterbury, New Zealand / United Nations University, Bruges

10:30 - 10:50 *Presenter: Mr. Hesham Youssef, Chief of Cabinet of the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States*

10:50 - 11:00 *Respondent: Mr. Ian Williams, Former contributor to “Middle East International” and contributor to “The Nation”*

11:00 - 11:30 Discussion

11:30 - 11:45 *Coffee Break*

11:45 - 12:00 **SPECIAL PRESENTATION: PROSPECTS FOR COOPERATION BETWEEN THE OSCE AND THE UN DURING THE BELGIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE OSCE**

Presenter: H.E. Mr. Johan C. Verbeke, *Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Belgium to the United Nations*

12:00 - 1:00 **SESSION 2: IMPLEMENTING THE “RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT” THROUGH PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE UN AND REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS – THE AU/UN FUTURE ROLE IN DARFUR**

Chair: Mr. William O’Neill, *Consultant*

12:00 - 12:20 Presenter: Mr. Xolisa Mfundiso Mabhongo, *Minister Counsellor, Permanent Mission of South Africa to the United Nations*

12:20 - 12:30 Respondent: H.E. Mr. Colin Keating, *Executive Director, Security Council Report*

12:30 - 1:00 Discussion

1:00 - 2:00 *Lunch*

2:00 - 3:15 **SESSION 3: FOSTERING EU-UN COOPERATION IN SUPPORT OF AFRICAN PEACEKEEPING**

Chair: Dr. Elizabeth Cousens, *Vice President, International Peace Academy*

2:00 - 2:20 Presenter: H.E. Ms. Elda Stifani, *Head of the Liaison Office of the General Secretariat, Council of the European Union to the United Nations*

2:20 - 2:30 Respondent: Dr. Sven Biscop, *Senior Researcher, Royal Institute for International Relations*

2:30 - 3:15 Discussion

3:15 - 3:30 *Coffee Break*

3:30 - 4:45 **ROUNDTABLE: THE UNITED NATIONS AND REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS –
A FUTURE PARTNERSHIP FOR PEACE**

Chair: H.E. Ms. María Holguín Cuellar, *Permanent Representative,
Permanent Mission of Colombia to the United Nations*

Panelists:

H.E. Mr. Ronaldo Mota Sardenberg, *Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission
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H.E. Mr. Hamidon Ali, *Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Malaysia
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H.E. Dr. Simeon A. Adekanye, *Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent
Mission of Nigeria to the United Nations*

H.E. Dr. Günter Pleuger, *Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission
of Germany to the United Nations*

4:45 *End of Seminar*

5:00 **BOOK LAUNCH FOLLOWED BY RECEPTION**

(This event will take place at the Permanent Mission of Belgium to the
United Nations located at 345 East 46th Street)

*“Regional Security and Global Governance: A Study of Interaction between Regional
Agencies and the UN Security Council”* by Kennedy Graham and Tânia Felício

