CHAPTER 15: EU-UN cooperation in civilian crisis management: A promising work in progress

Summary

EU-UN cooperation in civilian crisis management has progressed significantly since the EU began to establish its civilian rapid reaction capacities in 2000. Cooperation has moved from the ceremonial to the operational and some of the mistrust characterising the early days of the relationship has disappeared. The potential for increased cooperation is huge, but capacity problems and the diverging interests and priorities of the two organisations may stall further progress. This Chapter provides an overview of the evolution of EU-UN cooperation to date, assesses its prospects for the future and ends with a set of recommendations that would strengthen the emerging EU-UN partnership in civilian crisis management.

From ceremonial to operational cooperation

With the launch of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) the European Union (EU) signalled its intention to become a global player in the field of crisis management. The EU ambition was to “add value” by establishing a capability to deploy joint civil-military force packages at short notice. While this was a welcome initiative in the eyes of the United Nations (UN), which lacks reliable rapid reaction capacities, it was also a cause for concern as it might challenge the UN’s position as the world’s premier peacekeeper and increase the “commitment gap” resulting from the post-Srebrenica reluctance of West European states to provide military personnel for UN-commanded peace operations. While the commitment gap remains a sensitive issue in EU-UN relations,1 the recent launch of several new UN-commanded operations in Africa has made overstretch, not marginalisation, the principal concern in the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). Thus, the ESDP capacity is no longer seen as unwelcome competition, but as a much-needed resource. The principal complaint from New York these days is not that the EU is encroaching on UN turf but that it is incapable of providing all the support that the UN would like.

In the early years of the ESDP, EU-UN cooperation was limited to declarations of support, information exchanges and high-level contacts. The EU High Representative addressed the UN Security Council in 2000 and the UN Secretary General met with the EU troika later that year. Another step forward was taken at the Göteborg European Council in 2001 which led to the adoption of a set of principles and practical options guiding EU-UN cooperation in the field of civilian crisis management as well as a set of practical arrangements aimed at intensifying EU-UN dialogue and cooperation.2 Cooperation intensified during 2002 as the EU prepared to take over responsibility for the police mission in Bosnia from the UN in January 2003. This experience was largely successful, but it also underlined the need for closer coordination and cooperation between the two organisations, both at the strategic level as well as in the field.3 Additional lessons were learned in 2003 from Operation Artemis, a three-month military operation deployed in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) upon the request of the UN Secretary-General to give the UN time to send more troops to the DRC. These operational experiences set the stage for the signing of the Joint Declaration on UN-EU Coordination in Crisis Management on 24 September 2003, in which the two organisations agreed to establish a joint consultative mechanism to enhance coordination and cooperation in the areas of planning, training, communication and best practice.

The joint consultative mechanism, named the EU-UN Steering Committee, consists of

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senior officials from the EU Council and UN Secretariats as well as the relevant UN bodies and agencies such as the DPKO, and it has subsequently met twice a year to discuss operational issues and identify joint initiatives. The adoption of the Joint Declaration has led to a deepening of cooperation and contacts between the two secretariats. With respect to training, common standards and modules have been created, UN personnel have participated in EU training courses, and a joint exercise study was conducted in April 2005. Its civilian dimension involved a UN handover of a police mission to the EU, a likely scenario for Kosovo in 2007.

At the operational level, an important step towards the implementation of the Joint Declaration was taken in December 2004 when the EU Council approved three main scenarios to guide the operational cooperation with the UN in the field of civilian crisis management:

• National contributions to an operation with information exchanged between EU Member States to improve efficiency;
• An EU “clearing house” to coordinate Member State contributions; and
• An EU contribution following a request from the UN.

Of these scenarios only the latter can be said to add real value to the UN. Although improved coordination of national contributions by EU Member States to UN-commanded operations would be helpful, coordinating Member State contributions to its operations is something that the UN can manage through its own procedures, and this would presumably not increase the willingness of individual EU members to provide personnel to UN operations. The third scenario is therefore the most interesting from the UN perspective, and the EU Council has outlined five practical options for making such a contribution:

• Option i - An EU contribution through an evaluation, assessment and monitoring of a crisis in advance of an UN operation;
• Option ii - A component of a larger UN operation;
• Option iii - An autonomous operation within the UN framework;
• Option iv - An autonomous operation launched before or after an UN operation; and
• Option v - Simultaneous EU-UN operations.

Three of these options have already been employed. The EU provided personnel to a joint fact-finding mission to Burundi in February 2004 prior to the establishment of the ONUB operation (Option i); the EU police mission (EUPM) took over from the UN police mission in Bosnia in January 2003 and the EU has also taken over from NATO operations in Bosnia and Macedonia (Option iv). Finally, the EU has conducted civilian operations simultaneously with UN operations (Option v) on three occasions: the police mission (EUPOL Kinshasa) and the security sector reform mission (EUSEC DR Congo) both in the DRC are conducted alongside the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC), and the EU supporting action to the African Union Mission to Darfur, Sudan (AMIS II) is conducted simultaneously with the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS).

From operational cooperation to strategic partnership?

In six years the EU-UN relationship has moved from a state of uneasiness and some distrust to real and growing cooperation at all levels from the political-strategic to the tactical in civilian crisis management. Progress has gone further and occurred at a greater pace than predicted by most. At the same time, it is still far from the strategic partnership that the UN is seeking in order to help it meet its growing obligations in the field of crisis management (both civilian and military). At the moment cooperation is taking place primarily on EU terms. The EU has more or less dictated the terms and place of the cooperation and has displayed little willingness to enhance its rapid reaction military support for UN-led peace operations, which is what the UN would prefer. It has thus reacted coldly to UN calls for using EU battle groups as strategic reserves for UN operations facing serious challenges or crises. The EU position may be changing, however, as France and Germany are considering a UN request for an EU battle group to act as a deterrent force during elections that are scheduled to take place in the DRC at the end of April 2006. Such a deployment easy

the tension generated by the Western reluctance to provide military personnel for UN-led operations and represents a major step on the road towards a more balanced EU-UN partnership.

In the civilian field the situation appears to be more balanced as the number of civilian police committed to UN operations by EU Member States remains higher (865 as of 31 January 2006) than the number committed to EU operations (some 600).10 These figures are deceptive, however. The picture will change if the UN operation in Kosovo is handed over, as expected, to the EU in 2007. As of 31 January 2005,11 EU Member States provided 656 police to the UN operation in Kosovo and their transfer to an EU-led operation would create an imbalance in favour of EU-led operations similar to the one currently existing in the military field. Moreover, the launch of 11 civilian ESDP operations in a period of just four years demonstrates a clear EU preference for conducting its own operations; a preference that is underlined by the principles of visibility and decision making autonomy that guide the EU’s cooperation with other international organisations in civilian crisis management.12

This does not mean that future EU contributions to UN-commanded operations should be completely ruled out. Added value and interoperability, the two other principles guiding EU cooperation with other organisations, do favour such contributions, and the EU is considering the idea of making integrated police units (police with military status, i.e. carabinieri and gendarmes) available for UN-led operations at short notice. In addition, EU Member States are also more willing to make civilian than military contributions to UN-led operations.

The principal factor standing in the way of a more balanced strategic EU-UN partnership in civilian crisis management characterised by sizable EU contributions to UN-commanded operations is the lack of capacity. Although the EU civilian rapid reaction capacities look impressive on paper with Member State commitments of 5 761 police, 631 rule of law, 562 civilian administration, 4 988 civilian protection and 505 monitors,13 the EU has been struggling to rapidly deploy and sustain its civilian missions even though their combined personnel requirements only constitute a fraction of the personnel committed by Member States. Finding the 600 police required to sustain existing operations is thus proving difficult even though they only amount to about 10% of the total committed.

The problem of force generation is compounded by an inadequate capacity for mission planning and support in the Council Secretariat, the lack of an agreed funding mechanism for civilian missions and onerous procurement procedures. These problems nearly prevented the timely deployment of the police missions in Bosnia and Macedonia as well as the recent monitoring mission in Aceh launched in August 2005. The EU thus had trouble finding the people and funds required in the months that passed from the dispatch of an EU fact-finding mission to the initial deployment. This deployment consequently had to be reduced to 50 personnel and it took another month to get the operation up to full strength (130 EU personnel).14 The other civilian operations launched by the EU have suffered from similar problems, and in the light of these problems what the EU will be capable of providing for UN-led operations in the foreseeable future it is quite limited.15

Capacity-building is the solution to this problem but the process has barely begun. Until now the EU approach to civilian capacity-building is best described as "stocktaking". EU Member States have been asked to provide ever more detailed information about their capacities in selected priority areas and work has primarily focussed on enhancing coordination and making these resources more deployable. Little was done to expand the existing force pool, however.

This has now begun to change. As part of the Civilian Headline Goal process launched in December 2004, a new needs-based approach has been adopted. The new approach, already

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11. UN mission contributions by country, 31 January 2006.
12. The other two are: added value and interoperability. See EU cooperation with international organisations on civilian aspects of crisis management, Annex V to the Presidency Report to the Göteborg European Council on European Security and Defence Policy, Doc 9526/1/01, 11 June 2001.
15. For an elaborate analysis of these problems see Jakobsen, P.V.,(August 2006), "The ESDP and Civilian Crisis Management: Adding Value is Harder than Expected", European Security, Vol. 15, No. 2.
employed in the military ESDP, identifies the capability shortfalls that prevent the EU from honouring its operational ambitions and asks Member States to address these shortfalls. While this new approach represents a step in the right direction, the Member State investments needed to address the capability shortfalls identified do not seem to be forthcoming, and significant initiatives aimed at expanding the force pool of qualified personnel have yet to be taken. It is quite telling that the ESDP Presidency Report from December 2004 suggests that the problem be addressed by lowering expectations instead of giving priority to capacity-building.\(^\text{17}\)

Creating a strategic EU-UN partnership in civilian crisis management

The creation of a more balanced relationship is the single most important precondition for maintaining the momentum and strengthening the EU-UN cooperation that has emerged in civilian crisis management over the last six years. Without balance a real partnership cannot be created. It is consequently imperative to prevent an increase in the number of EU-led civilian operations from resulting in a significant decline in the number of civilian personnel that EU Member States commit to UN-commanded operations. The emergence of a civilian commitment gap similar to the one in the military field has to be avoided. The EU must therefore display a greater willingness to provide civilian personnel and other forms of assistance to UN-commanded operations. At the same time, it is equally clear that such a gap may be inevitable in the short term as a result of the expected transfer of responsibility from the UN to the EU in Kosovo. The longer term solution to this problem is to enlarge the pool of qualified civilian personnel that is available for deployment on crisis management operations at short notice. The first recommendation flowing from this analysis therefore emphasises the importance of doing so.

Recommendation one: A joint EU-UN effort is required to enhance the pool of qualified civilian rapid reaction personnel.
The single greatest obstacle to civilian rapid reaction and EU-UN cooperation is the desperate shortage of qualified personnel. It is therefore imperative that the EU and the UN give priority to enhancing the force pool. This will require structural reform in the Member States as they will have to build “excess” capacity in the relevant personnel categories. There is more to this than merely enhancing the number of, say, police officers and judges. While quantitative increases may be required in these areas, changes in the incentive structures and education systems may be sufficient in others. Individual states could make international service more attractive for rule of law and civil administration personnel by making it count in their own personnel management. At the moment international service is generally not a trump in the promotion game for civilian personnel in the public sector. If that was changed and civilian crisis management operations were made part of the curricula in law schools, public administration schools etc., the pool of qualified personnel willing to serve on such operations would no doubt grow. The EU and the UN should encourage such changes in their Member States and in addition make a major effort to support the training and recruitment of qualified personnel outside of Europe. Africa should be a priority area in this respect since the majority of the crisis management operations conducted by the two organisations will take place on the African continent in the foreseeable future.

Recommendation two: The institutional capacity for civilian rapid reaction crisis management should be enhanced in both Brussels and New York.

Enlarging the personnel pool is only half the battle as it will not make much difference unless it is accompanied by a strengthening of the EU and UN Secretariats. Both secretariats are currently planning and supporting civilian operations with a minimum of staff and resources, and additional personnel and resources are therefore required - not just to enhance operational effectiveness, but also to create space and time for effective cooperation between the two bodies. EU Member States can play a crucial role here by strengthening the Council Secretariat in Brussels while at the same time providing strong support for the UN Secretary-General’s efforts to establish a standing civilian police capacity in the UN Secretariat.\(^\text{18}\)

17. ESDP Presidency Report, Annex III, Doc 16062/04, 13 December 2004, p. 64.\(^\text{18}\)
Recommendation three: Joint solutions and a pooling of resources should be pursued to the greatest extent possible to avoid wasteful duplication.

Given that both organisations are currently struggling to build up their civilian rapid reaction capacities, the EU and the UN should pool their limited resources and seek joint solutions to the problems they are facing. The criteria employed by both organisations for recruitment, vetting of personnel, training and personnel management, the establishment of law and order packages and joint civil-military force packages, security etc. should be the same. Moreover, since the organisations are establishing them at the same time, it would make most sense to let joint inter-organisational task forces do it. At the very least both organisations should be represented in the working groups and task forces set up to address such issues. This also applies to the establishment of databases for personnel management, lessons learned, the development of best practice etc. Joint training and exercise programmes are also logical given that both organisations are relying on the same force pool. Finally, joint mission analysis and planning would also seem logical for operations involving components from both the EU and the UN.

Recommendation four: Cooperation in areas of planning, training, communication and best practice should be stepped up.

Implementing this recommendation will require personnel exchanges between the two secretariats and use of liaison officers to create the personal networks usually required for effective inter-organisational cooperation. This would also be the simplest way to ensure timely information sharing between the situation centres in the two organisations. However, this can only happen if the bodies responsible for civilian rapid reaction crisis management in both organisations are provided with additional resources.

Recommendation five: A secure communications system should be established between Brussels and New York.

Joint cooperation along the lines suggested here would involve the handling and sharing of sensitive information related to personnel management, mission planning and support and lessons learned. To make this possible secure communications between the two secretariats is a must, and it should go beyond the mere establishment of a hot-line.  