INSTITUTE NOTE

THE UN, THE EU, NATO AND OTHER REGIONAL ACTORS: PARTNERS IN PEACE?

A major conference on "The UN, the EU, NATO and Other Regional Actors: Partners in Peace?" was hosted by the Institute, in cooperation with the International Peace Academy, on 11-12 October in Paris. The conference focused in particular on the interplay between the United Nations and other organisations in terms of peace operations in Europe, Africa, and Asia. Keynote addresses were given by Lord Robertson, NATO's Secretary General; Jean-Marie Guehenno, Under-Secretary-General at the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations; Ján Kubiš, Secretary General of the OSCE; Michèle Alliot-Marie, the French Minister for Defence; and Robert Cooper, the Director General for External Relations and Politico-Military Affairs at the Secretariat General of the EU Council.

Two principal themes emerged from the discussion. The first was the debate between the **efficacy and the legitimacy of military operations**. The second can be classified under the theme of **lessons learned**. It must be stressed that the debate over Iraq at the Security Council and the growing divergences across the Atlantic influenced the discussion significantly. Given current global turbulence, a general assessment is that debate and dialogue are vital among the United Nations, the EU, NATO, the OSCE and other regional actors.

1. EFFICACY AND LEGITIMACY OF MILITARY OPERATIONS

As regional organisations have steadily become more involved in peace operations over the 1990s, two issues in particular need to be stressed. The first is **the false alternative between peacekeeping and warfighting**. The second is the **tug-of-war between unilateralism and multilateralism** (**whether within or outside the UN context**).

a) Peacekeeping versus warfighting
The warfighting capabilities of the United States contrast strongly with those of other regional actors to the point that the US commitment to peace operations is questioned. In other words, the perception in Europe is that the US is much more enthusiastic for warfighting (sic. Iraq and terrorism) than peacekeeping, as if war were a noble task. On the other hand, there is consensus on both sides of the Atlantic that addressing the issue of rehabilitating "failed states" is primordial for stability.

Whereas on the European continent (the Balkans), cooperation between the UN, the EU, NATO, and the OSCE has contributed to the stability, and the general evolution has been toward a greater involvement of the EU in rebuilding "failed states", the same does not seem to apply elsewhere. That is to say the post-Afghan war period and the consequences of a post-war Iraq raise many questions about who is to do "window-washing".

b) Unilateralism versus multilateralism
Furthermore, the evident unilateralist policy option adopted by the US raises a number of both abstract and pragmatic concerns. In terms of the former, the fight against terrorism in 2002 parallels the efforts to rebuild the world in 1948 with the United Nations and the Marshall Plan, in terms of the universal or global approach. Of course, whereas in 1948 the US approach was multilateral, today it is not. As a consequence, for the US, the war on terrorism has the potential to become one of cultural and righteous arrogance toward the rest of the world, with devastating consequences. In other words, the teleological approach to eradicating terrorism and combating rogue states could exacerbate the widening gap between the United States and the rest of the world.

Therefore, in terms of practical concerns, both the UN system and regional actors are suffering from challenges to their legitimacy, since some nation-states might feel that these restrict their ambitions and objectives. The problem here has to do with the consequences both on the international order as well as the impact on widely accepted necessities such as dealing with "failed states". This could lead to situations where states decide to act together but without the mandate of the UN, thereby raising challenges to the operational efficacy of organisations such as the EU and NATO (see lessons learned below).

As a result, a number of unanswered questions remain:
- What sort of legitimacy and within what context are we talking about?
- Can the issue of "failed states" contribute effectively to enhanced cooperation between the two sides of the Atlantic?
- To what extent do narrow national interests define multilateralism?
- How to define the "West" in this situation? Do strategic considerations imply a redefinition of the "West" to include Russia as well?
- Does the return of the "nation-state" come at the expense of international organisations?
- What is the right balance between the pragmatism of needing to respond to a given situation and the dogmatism of maintaining certain basic principles?
- Given the current trends that challenge today's world order, should not the EU focus more concretely on a strategic assessment and vision of its priorities than it has to date?

2. LESSONS LEARNED FROM PEACE OPERATIONS

In terms of lessons learned, six in particular stand out:

- The interplay between the United Nations, the EU, NATO, the OSCE and other regional actors demonstrates that institutional cooperation is key if peace operations are to succeed.
- All regional and/or local conflicts have the potential to quickly become major international concerns. It is, therefore, imperative to step in quickly and effectively in order to avoid further escalation and overspill. In other words, early engagement pays.
- Regional organisations have a key role to play, as the case of Europe clearly demonstrates. In other parts of the world such as Africa, Asia and the Middle East, where no regional organisations comparable to the EU and NATO with their operational capacity exist, the results have been mixed at best.
- It is important that regional organisations do not develop capacities and invest in resources that are a drain on the resources devoted to the United Nations to effectively carry out its tasks where needed.
- The United Nations cannot go it alone. It needs the support of regional organisations in maintaining peacekeeping operations. This is imperative, as the trend is toward a greater number of peace operations in the future.
- There is a case to be made for the use of all available tools (example the SAP and PfP in the Balkans) as leverage if peace operations are to succeed.

Some questions for consideration:

- Can Europe learn from the experience of other regions?
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- In regions where no efficient regional actors exist, can local hegemons (powerful nation-states) play a lead role under a UN mandate?
- What is the potential for and value of further EU operational involvement in Africa and the Middle East?
- Given that the United Nations has usually been involved in peace operations in regions of national interest to the Permanent Members of the Security Council, is a more equitable manner to mobilise UN involvement in peace operations in other regions of the world possible?

Dimitrios TRIANTAPHYLLOU