

Gaëlle Pellon and Michel Liégeois (Eds.), *Les organisations régionales européennes et la gestion des conflits*. Brussels: Peter Lang, 2010. 353 pages. ISBN: 978-90-5201-663-4. EUR 40.50.

This edited volume is an ambitious attempt to explore the extent and limits of the role of regional organizations in the management of conflicts in Greater Europe. In doing so, it intends to fill a gap in the existing literature, which has tended to focus on multi-track diplomacy and the involvement of civil society rather than international or regional organizations. Of course, many books and articles have already been written on the role of specific organizations – such as NATO or the EU – in the field of conflict management including in Europe, but almost none had such an encompassing scope. As stated by Pellon in her Introduction, fifteen organizations operating in Greater Europe are investigated in the book. This indeed would be a valuable addition to the existing literature, particularly as the volume seeks to assess whether the action of these organizations is constitutive of an incipient security architecture in Europe.

At the core of this collective effort – conducted by fourteen researchers, mostly from the Université catholique de Louvain – one finds the acknowledgement that most conflicts in the post-Cold war era in Europe are internationalized intra-state conflicts, compelling regional organizations to transform and adapt in a variety of ways to meet the many challenges of conflict management. Transformation and adaptation strategies include building and strengthening inter-institutional cooperation and partnerships, in different forms and guises. Starting from there, Pellon defines several “axes of analysis” meant to guide the various contributions. Beside the “axis” setting the regional scope of the study and that specifying the actors under scrutiny (organizations), three more are defined. First, conflict management is adopted as the main analytical framework. After a brief presentation of competing approaches to conflict management – control, settlement and transformation – the author states that conflict managers in Greater Europe have developed a similar approach, essentially preventive and gradual, of conflict management, and though there is no consensual definition of what prevention is, they have devised a series of instruments aimed at addressing the various “moments” of prevention. Another “analytical axis” considers violence – both its visible and invisible facets – as an essential criterion for evaluation. The fifth and last axis assesses the

instruments used by conflict managers. Considering that there are too many instruments to allow for an exhaustive study, the project discards those related to the security and socio-economic fields as well as those aimed at the direct prevention of violence emergence, and rather focuses on the “structural instruments” of violence prevention. The combination of these “analytical axes” – a term that has obviously been used too loosely by the author – leads to the division of the book into three parts, respectively tackling the prevention of violence emergence, violence expansion and violence recurrence.

Right at the start, however, the co-editor of the volume, Liégeois, offers an overview of the role of regional organizations in peacekeeping and international security. He first investigates the evolution of the recurrent dilemma between global and regional approaches to peace and security and observes a “proliferation” of peacemakers. This leads him to an interesting typology of inter-institutional partnerships and a discussion of both the pros and cons of regional peacekeeping. After a section devoted to European approaches of regionalism, Liégeois raises the delicate issue of possible incompatibility or dysfunctions between regional and global (UN) multilateralism. However, and this is a regrettable gap, none of the contributions in the volume effectively address this issue.

Ait-Chaalal opens the first part (prevention of violence emergence) with an overview of the approaches developed by the EU and NATO towards the Southern Mediterranean countries since the 1990s. Though this double focus is not very common in the literature, it does not allow here for much new insights. The assessment regarding the limits of both approaches, the problems hindering a greater impact and their useless overlaps is anything but new. The next contribution makes a more explicit effort to deal with the book’s central issue. As he addresses the European Neighbourhood Policy towards the EU’s Eastern neighbours, Dura tries to assess how effective this policy has been so far as an instrument for conflict prevention and management, and its future potential in this realm. He observes a “Europeanization” of conflict management processes but fails to define this notion and what it exactly means regarding the role of the EU as a conflict manager in its Eastern neighbourhood, just as he fails to spell out the implications of the EU’s “Russian complex”, mentioned in his final sentence. The next contribution, by Mughendi, deals with an ambitious topic: integration and its limits as a peace instrument. Using quantitative data from conflict databases, the author demonstrates that integration *per se* is not a universal recipe for peace and deconstructs the common perception equating European integration with peace. He argues that some low intensity conflicts are still ongoing within the boundaries of several Member States and that many of the latter do regularly go to war with third States. This discussion actually reflects common debates on democracy as a pacifying factor, an issue that the author brings more clearly to the fore when he questions democracy as a proper control variable. Drawing on other integration experiences, Mughendi identifies two series of factors: those limiting the success of integration in terms of conflict prevention, and those enhancing it. Though it offers relevant observations and comments, this contribution tends to make hasty generalizations. Moreover, it does not address the theoretical assertion it offers at its very beginning about the conflict-stirring role of the presence within an organization of several States with similar structural standing.

Devoted to the prevention of the spread of violence, the second part of the volume has five contributions, most of which are essentially descriptive and sometimes prescriptive. This is the case of Dura’s chapter about the involvement of Russia, regional and international organizations in the Moldovan conflict. The contribution by Spetschinsky focuses on the role of the Community of Independent States (CIS) in the containment of violence in the former Soviet Union through both peacekeeping and border-guarding missions. She highlights the prominent role of Russia in the various conflicts in which the CIS was involved and raises issues of legitimacy and long-term effectiveness, since the conflicts are frozen rather than solved. The next contribution by Glume is undoubtedly one of the densest in the book. Focusing on the EU and NATO, the author offers an interesting review of the evolution of both organizations’ approaches to crises and conflicts. Taking into account contexts and constraints, she shows the emergence of new understandings of security and operational concepts that progressively lead to a global approach, linking the prevention of violence expansion and violence recurrence. The

section on implementation raises two interesting issues: the effectiveness of the use of armed force and the combination of civil and military instruments. In her conclusion, Glume critically warns that interventions by both organizations in conflict situations may end up serving their own foreign and security policies rather than the cause of peacekeeping and the strengthening of the UN system. After an essentially descriptive contribution by de Swielande on the various sub-regional organizations that have emerged around the Black Sea and whose effectiveness is still hindered by traditional *realpolitik*, de Neve further develops the involvement of both the EU and NATO in “complex stabilization missions”. He concentrates however on the evolutions in terms of institutional settings, building capabilities, and inter-organizational cooperation, and observes that in spite of initial tensions the EU has managed to frame a distinctive role and develop autonomous assets, even though the latter tend to replicate those of NATO.

The third part of the volume is certainly the most original one. Two contributions deal with familiar issues – democracy as a guarantee of stability (by Van der Auwera) and the EU ambiguous policies regarding the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia (by Hubrecht) – but three tackle relatively uncharted areas. Massard-Piérard devotes her study to the cultural dimension of conflict management by European organizations, a dimension that remains modest at best. Before reviewing the normative and operational activities of the various European organizations in this field, the author identifies the factors and biases that limit a better and fuller integration of culture in conflict transformation processes. Among the valuable factors she brings to the fore, one should mention the indeterminacy of the very concept of culture, its ambivalence – as it can be both a source of conflict and a pacification instrument – and the fact that the prevalent understanding of culture in the realm of politics is the narrow concept of political culture. Another thought-provoking contribution is by Rosoux and Farhat on the management of the past in war-torn countries and the reconstruction of memories and histories by regional organizations. They start with a series of conceptual clarifications, allowing a better grasp of the stakes involved, and then they comparatively assess the strategies developed in this realm by the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the EU. After a discussion about the scope and limits of the various instruments, they suggest a few avenues for further research. Regrettably, the authors repeatedly use the concept of “reconciliation” without defining it. The final text by Vloeberghs tackles the role of urban heritage in pacification processes. Though very promising, this topic is not dealt with in a thorough manner; definitions are superficial, the stakes and challenges regarding the fate of urban heritage in post-war situations are just mentioned rather than analysed, and the section devoted to the study of the instruments and policies devised by the various organizations dissolves into a catalogue of what both regional and international institutions have ever done in the field of heritage, irrespective of the conflict management dimension.

The co-editors are left with a daunting mission at the end of the book: to derive general insights from contributions that are anything but homogenous. They actually do so rather successfully, highlighting first recurrent difficulties, then a few observable constants such as the capacity of regional organization to adapt through innovation. They even draw three avenues for future research in this realm: the development of indicators, the use of Social Network Analysis and comparison with the experiences of other regions. This final contribution does not however remove the impression that the book only partly meets the various ambitions set at its beginning. First of all, most chapters remain essentially descriptive and hardly bring theoretical insights regarding the role of regional organizations in the field of conflict management. Wherever conceptual insights are given, they rather relate to adjacent issues, such as the definition of culture or of memory. Consequently, we do not obviously find any analytical canvass that goes beyond the various case studies as wished for by Pellon in the Introduction. Second, the organization of the volume along three dimensions relating to the prevention of violence emergence, expansion and recurrence seems to be essentially formal as the authors often fail to highlight the connection between their own study and the relevant subtheme. For example, it is not clear why some issues, such as the EU and NATO Mediterranean policies, are considered as strategies for preventing the emergence of violence. In addition, several topics pertain to more than one subtheme, but no clarification is offered. Moreover, the axes set at the

beginning of the volume are often disregarded: for example, several contributions look beyond Greater Europe, some of them bring in non-regional organizations, while a few drift away from the conflict management core preoccupation. In addition, many contributions tackle operational rather than structural instruments, which suggest a lack of understanding about what exactly the latter are. Another promise that is not fully met in the volume relates to the organizations under scrutiny, fifteen according to Pellon in the Introduction. But it soon appears that most of the contributions focus on the bigger organizations: the EU, NATO, the OSCE and the Council of Europe, all of which have been extensively researched. Despite these limitations, the volume offers a handy collection of synthetic contributions about the involvement of various regional organizations in conflict management in the region, some of which really deserve to be read.

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