Click to read: NATO-EU co-operation in post-conflict reconstruction - NATO Defence College Occasional Paper No 15, May 2006.

This publication comprises the twelve papers presented at a seminar on NATO and EU postconflictreconstruction operations in November 2005. Three of the papers were commentaries on specific operations in the Western Balkans and Afghanistan whilst the remainder provide perspectives on such operations generally by NATO, the EU and the US. The main point that comes across from these papers is the lack of planned co-operation between NATO and the EU. This is not particularly surprising when one considers that NATO's efforts in support of reconstruction are primarily concerned with restoring security whereas the EU has the European Agency for Reconstruction. Comparing the papers where NATO describes NATO/EU relations and the EU describes EU/NATO relations highlights the difference in perspective. It is evident that some NATO allies do not regard NATO involvement in stabilisation and reconstruction operations as legitimate and see it as a EU task. The EU looks at the wider context of post-conflict stabilisation and development efforts in social, economic and political terms. It is concerned with coordinating the efforts of European agencies and the contributions of member states although the mechanisms require improvement. Experience of operations would suggest that it is probably more accurate to describe NATO and the EU as operating in parallel with close consultation.
One aspect of reconstruction operations that is recognised by NATO but perhaps not so well by the EU, is the difficulty in defining an 'end-state' when faced with extensive nation building that might take generations. Indeed, in the Balkans and Afghanistan both NATO and the EU have declined to set artificial exit dates and are committed to an indefinite presence. However, the papers provide evidence of contradictions between NATO and EU objectives in reconstruction operations and it would appear that each organisation pursues its own initiatives. The important question of legitimacy versus effectiveness was addressed only as a constraint whereas the issue ought to have been raised as part of the NATO and EU perspectives.
The papers provide an informative overview of reconstruction operations by both organisations that are of value in understanding the guidelines for action in specific cases. In most cases NATO will be on the ground first to provide the post-conflict security and shape the theatre for social, economic and political reconstruction. Consequently, it is most
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likely that NATO and EU objectives will be complementary (although this is only acknowledged once in the papers) and that more inter-organisational effort should be put into coordination and consultation than in direct co-operation.
Three of the papers address constraints in respect of legal, political, military, institutional and practical aspects and these provide a good insight for those interested in the more purist approach to these matters. However, the paper on US perspectives shows how far behind the US is on this topic and what actions they have in hand.