Global

Peace **O**perations

Review

PEACE OPERATIONS 2019

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ABOUT THE CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The Center on International Cooperation is a non-profit research center housed at New York University. Our vision is to advance effective multilateral action to prevent crises and build peace, justice, and inclusion.

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Cover Photo: At the closing session of the December 2018 Sweden Consultation, the heads of the delegations representing the government of Yemen and the Houthi forces, Khaled Al-Yamani and Mohamed Abdel-Salam, shake hands in front of Secretary-General António Guterres. ©Office of the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General for Yemen/Ninni Andersson

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ABBREVIATIONS

A4P	Action for Peacekeeping
AFP	Agencies, Funds, and Programs
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
BINUH	United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti
CAR	Central African Republic
CPAS	Comprehensive Performance Assessment System
DPET	Division for Policy, Evaluation and Training
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
HIPPO	High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations
HRDDP	Human Rights Due Diligence Policy
MINUJUSTH	United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti
MINUSCA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MINUSTAH	United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
POC	Protection of Civilians
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SLF	State Liaison Functions
SPM	Special Political Mission
T/PCC	Troop and Police Contributing Countries
UNAMID	African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDOF	United Nations Disengagement Observer Force
UNMHA	United Nations Mission to support the Hudaydah Agreement
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNMOGIP	United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan
UNOCI	United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNTSO	United Nations Truce Supervision Organization

CLOSURE CEREMONY OF THE SENEGALESE FORMED POLICE UNIT AT MINUJUSTH HEADQUARTERS IN PORT-AU-PRINCE, SEPTEMBER 19, 2019. ©UN/MINUJUSTH/LEONORA BAUMANN.

A YEAR OF REFLECTION AND TRANSITION: PEACE OPERATIONS IN 2019
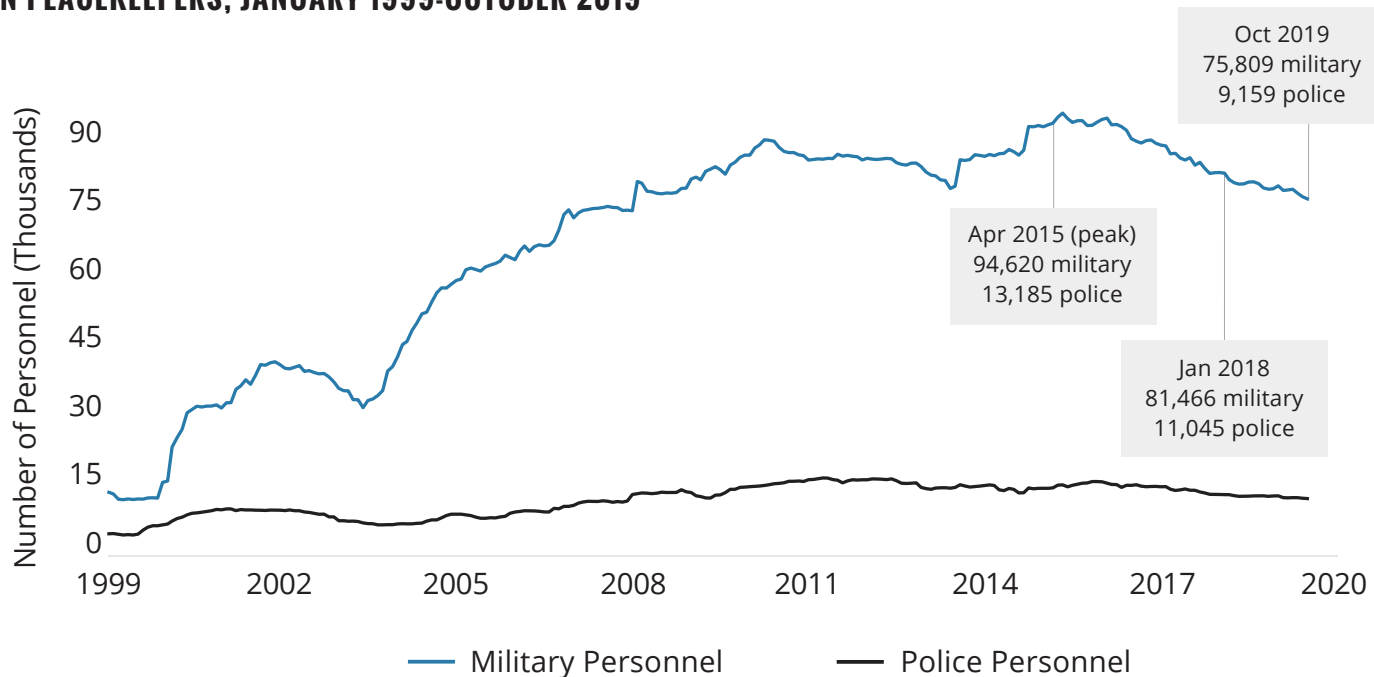
Alexandra Novosseloff

For a few years now, United Nations (UN) peace operations have stood at a crossroads, unable to choose which direction to take: to continue down the path of expensive missions with little peace to keep, but which provide much-needed confidence and security in the world's most difficult contexts; or to opt for less ambitious and more achievable objectives, which would place more responsibility on other actors (national, regional, parallel forces) to shore up basic security in trying to find a path to peace. In its multidimensional endeavors, peacekeeping has not always had the best reputation outside the UN (particularly since the 1990s), but now it also faces skeptics from within (indeed, a number of observers have said the current secretary-general is not a fan of multidimensional peace operations).

But in 2019, peace operations seem to have taken a firm direction, going down a path of reductions and shifting away from large, multidimensional, "conflict management" operations.[1] Factors including political and budgetary pressures, as well as structural reforms (which have not been so popular from within[2]) have created the conditions for this overall trend. The number of personnel deployed in UN peacekeeping has slowly been decreasing—in April 2015, the UN was responsible for

107,800 soldiers and police officers worldwide; now it is only deploying just under 84,000 uniformed personnel—and four missions have closed (Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, and two in Haiti).[3] Divisions within the Security Council have also impacted on the delivery of mandates, and have certainly weakened the relationships between various missions and their host states.

Nevertheless, the UN remains the second largest single deployer of troops in the world, and is deployed in parts of the world where nobody else is or wants to be, providing crucial aid and protection to populations in need.

UN PEACEKEEPERS, JANUARY 1999-OCTOBER 2019

Oct 2019
75,809 military
9,159 police

Apr 2015 (peak)
94,620 military
13,185 police

Jan 2018
81,466 military
11,045 police

Military Personnel — Police Personnel

SOURCE: UNITED NATIONS, IPI PEACEKEEPING DATABASE

APPROVED BUDGETS FOR PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS IN $US BILLIONS, 2006-7/2019-20
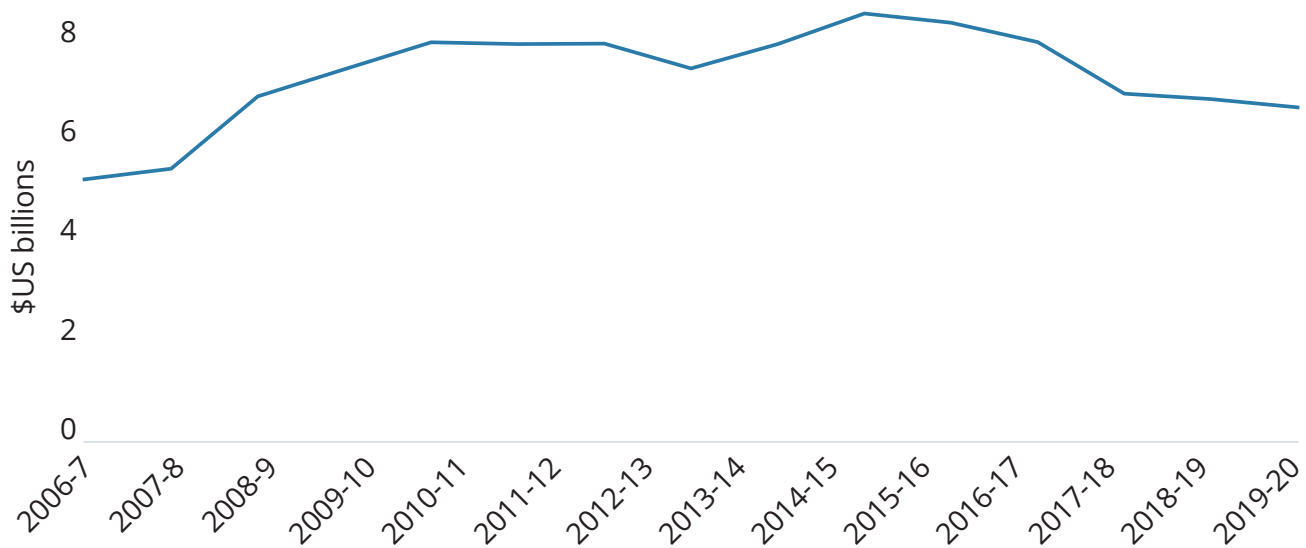
SOURCE: UNITED NATIONS

In fact, peace operations as a whole (i.e., including a spectrum of various types of missions, from special political missions and peacebuilding offices to multidimensional peace operations) are most probably undergoing a progressive change. Despite the critics who would say otherwise, the Security Council has always adapted to new forms of conflict and to new security environments, expanding the notion of security in its resolutions. As a consequence, peacekeeping has also adapted, in a non-linear way, because of the many voices and many stakeholders that are concerned and involved. But it has adapted nevertheless, changing to suit the purpose and methods of its time. Until the end of the 1980s, it was mainly, but not only, a tool to support the end of intrastate conflicts (with the exception of the Congo and Lebanon); since then, it has become mainly, but not only, an imperfect tool to help solve intrastate conflicts (with the exceptions of the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea and the situation in Haiti, which was more of a civil unrest than a civil war). As noted by Arthur Boutellis, "Two-thirds of UN peacekeepers are now deployed in high-risk environments and many of the smaller UN political missions are operating in countries where terrorism and violent extremism are part of the threat landscape."[4]

Peace operations are now becoming entangled in conflicts with regional and transnational dimensions, with a proliferation of armed groups (both rebel and criminal) to which host countries are not neutral. As a result, the relationship between peacekeepers and host states has been more complicated, as the latter do not always see an interest in complying with the mandate of those who come to assist them in reestablishing their state and the rule of law. In this context, the number of fatalities has increased since 2010, with a dramatic spike in 2017, as peacekeepers have been ill-prepared for those challenges.

NUMBER OF FATALITIES DUE TO MALICIOUS ACTS AND ILLNESS, 2010-2019
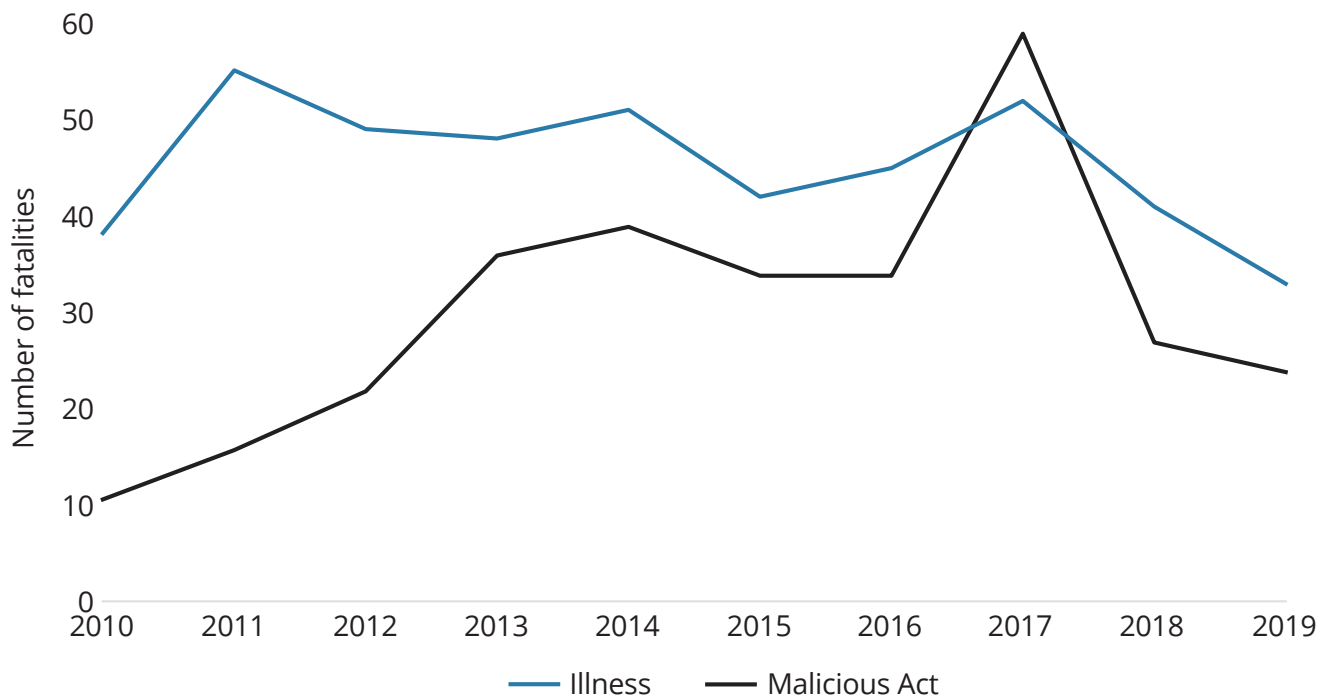

FIGURE 1. DATA FROM THE "FATALITIES" PAGE ON THE UN PEACEKEEPING WEB SITE AS OF NOVEMBER 15, 2019; FOCUSING ON THE CATEGORIES OF MALICIOUS ACTS AND ILLNESS TO SHOW THE DANGEROUS HEALTH AND SECURITY ENVIRONMENTS IN WHICH PEACE OPERATIONS HAVE BEEN DEPLOYED, AND THE DIFFICULTIES THE UN FACES IN TRYING TO PROTECT ITS PERSONNEL ON THOSE TWO FRONTS.

SOURCE: UNITED NATIONS.

This article starts by surveying the key trends over the past year, including the implementation of major reforms across the UN, the mixed support of the Security Council, and the downward pressure on peace operations resulting in greater attention to transitions as well as more creative approaches to a "spectrum" of peace operations. It then turns to the effects of the ongoing contradiction within peace operations between mandates and resources. It concludes with reflections on the steps the UN should take in order to deliver on peace operations—including signposts to look for as the reforms process continues to take root.

2018-19, A YEAR OF REFLECTING AND STREAMLINING

This evolving security environment is the reason why the UN has been engaged, since 2015, in an unprecedented process of introspection. The follow-up to and implementation of the 2000 Brahimi report lasted two years; by contrast, the current reflection and reform process is now finishing its fourth year.

Why such a lengthy process? First, there is the fact that the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) report, which initiated it, was released less than two years before the end of the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's term—leaving little time for implementation. His successor, António Guterres, had to take into account the conclusions and recommendations of the HIPPO panel, but for political reasons, he also wanted to set his own agenda and add his touch to the debate. He also took the opportunity to integrate the reform of peace operations into a much broader context, one that included the recommendations of other panels working on peacebuilding (the report of the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture), the women, peace, and security agenda (the Global Study on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325), and on prevention, which was the topic of his first speech to the Security Council. In addition, he launched a number of restructuring reforms that went beyond the peace and security pillar of the secretariat. Second, the HIPPO report did not initiate an implementation process triggered by a formal resolution (from the Security Council and/or the General Assembly) requesting the secretary-general to report on progress.[5] Third, the report was released at a time when member states did not want to open a Pandora's box by talking about peacekeeping in doctrinal terms. This was especially the case as the UN mission in Mali was facing increasing challenges—some member states, as well as some in the secretariat, were divided on its rationale, as it was deployed in a counter-terrorism environment with neither the adequate means of protection nor the adequate mindset (in taking risks and engaging with local communities) to be operating in such context.

These considerations constrained a process that would have required more in-depth thinking, and ended up in a very political and technical process named "Action for Peacekeeping" (A4P). In 2018, after receiving the conclusions of the Cruz report, the secretary-general concluded that he needed to take a major initiative to shake things up and require member states to face their responsibilities when engaging in peacekeeping operations.[6] But member states are deeply divided. An initiative that was

SO FAR, THE RESULT HAS BEEN A POLITICAL CONSENSUS (THE SIGNATURE BY 151 STATES OF THE A4P DECLARATION)—BUT NOT A REAL "CHANGE IN PRACTICE"

meant to make a "splash" transformed itself into what a number of observers have described as rather technical discussions.[7] Member states and the secretariat therefore avoided engaging in more difficult discussions on issues like budget, doctrine, the use of force, more equal burden-sharing, and how to adapt these operations not only to increasingly challenging environments, but also to the means (in terms of budget and capacities) member states are actually willing to put at the disposal of the UN.[8] Even if this process was valuable in its own right—given the numerous divisions in the Security Council, and a context in which multilateralism is facing a number of setbacks—it nevertheless misses a greater objective. So far, the result has been a political consensus (the signature by 151 states of the A4P Declaration)—but not a real "change in practice."[9]

AN UNHELPFUL SECURITY COUNCIL

This whole work of reflection has indeed been met with tepid support. As divisions in the council solidified, it inevitably had a spillover effect on peacekeeping issues: the apparent consensus transformed into an unspoken atmosphere of hostility in the council chamber. This has been even more apparent as peace operations have, more than ever, become playgrounds for the political interests of China, France, Russia, and the United States, whether allied with regional actors or not.[10] Such operations have become a base for creating new spheres of influence or strengthening existing ones—even if, as Richard Gowan writes, 'The P5 members' manipulation of the Council to protect partners and clients, and to keep the UN out of situations where they wish to have freedom of action, is not new."[11] This power struggle is not helping peace operations deliver on their various complex mandates.

The divisions within the council (which are "symptoms of a broader downward trend in international cooperation"[12]) are increasingly dangerous to peacekeeping operations, because the council's oversight of peace operations is difficult to achieve in divided times. In the past two years, a number of peacekeeping missions did not enjoy unanimously supported mandates, and cracks have started to occur within the P3 on budget and on the fate of some missions.[13] Fewer member states are willing to deviate from agreed-upon language and concepts, even if proposed changes are minimal. There is great reluctance to advance new ideas; there is also a lack of flexibility, a lack of inventiveness, and a lack of audacity. As Jake Sherman observes, "The greatest obstacle to policy change is member states' resistance to ideas, due to the extent to which they affect equity and interests."[14] There is also a certain passivity when dealing with host states that "are increasingly active supporters of, if not parties to, conflict."[15] Pressure comes too late (as in the case of the conflict in South Sudan) or with too little impact. Sanctions regimes and embargos are not utilized as they have been in the past, because member states are fighting for their own interests within the council before considering what impact such instruments could have on the ground to help solve the crisis. As a result, most missions cannot have the difficult conversations with their host governments that are necessary in order for peace operations to implement their mandates in an impartial way. They know that if they try to do so, they may receive little support within the council or in the region.

A YEAR OF TRANSITIONS

A4P took place during a time when the number of peacekeeping operations has been declining, since 2017, and peacekeeping has been entering in a transitional phase. 2019 has seen a continued trend of downsizing a number of missions. After the multidimensional missions in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), Liberia (UNMIL), and Haiti (MINUSTAH and MINUJUSTH), two other similar missions have begun their transition: the AU-UN mission in Darfur (UNAMID), as the Security Council observed that the Sudanese government had suppressed most rebel groups in the region,[16] and the UN mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (MONUSCO), after the holding of general elections in December 2018 and the coming to power of a new president, Felix Tshisekedi. In the case of MONUSCO, the Security Council still has to confirm the objective of transition after receiving the report of the strategic review led by former Special Representative of the Secretary-General Youssef Mahmoud, which recommends the departure of the 20-year mission after 2022.[17]

Those two missions may take the same slow path of transition as MINUSTAH (and previously, the UN mission in Sierra Leone), namely being succeeded by a smaller mission before closing down. In Haiti, the multidimensional peace operation was replaced first by a rule of law mission (MINUJUSTH), then by a UN Integrated Office (BINUH). In such situations, the UN needs to support the host government in stabilizing its country politically, socially, and economically. That help should not be limited to following a technical roadmap—it is a political project of supporting a fragile country that needs to consolidate its future. This work requires a constant dialogue in which UN authorities are able to stand by the mandate given by the Security Council.[18] Here, the UN is showing that when the moment is ripe, plans are made to wind missions down and eventually close them through a measured process. Transition is not a trend, but a moment in the lives of all missions: when the security environment and the political situation have transformed, and when the parties are ready to proceed in a meaningful way on the path of peace and state reform, missions are engaged in a process of closure and transition to other instruments of the UN system. The UN has never refused to embark on such a path.

NEW EMPHASIS ON THE "SPECTRUM" OF OPERATIONS

This growing focus on transitions also speaks to another trend. The political missions that are likely to take over from the multidimensional missions in Darfur and in the DRC, the rule of law mission in Haiti transitioning into an integrated office, and the small unarmed mission to observe the cease-fire in Hodeida in Yemen (UNMHA)[19] all demonstrate the wide array of tools the UN has at its disposal and the spectrum that UN conflict resolution and conflict management is covering. This breadth is an asset that makes the UN unique, giving it the ability to deploy a truly global approach in dealing with crises and conflicts—and the more the UN is able to use these tools and the systems attached to them, the more flexible and adaptive to evolving challenges it will become.

In addition to these changes to regular mission settings, UN reforms have involved the reinforcement of capacities in the resident coordinator system and UN country teams, with the aims of advancing prevention and sustaining peace in the spirit of the 2016 Security Council resolution.[20] In Burkina Faso, where the escalation of violence during 2019 has been of great concern for member states, the UN, and partners, a task force was established under the prerogative of the secretary-general. This task force has worked with the resident coordinator, the UN country team, and the UN Office in Western Africa and the

Sahel to establish five integrated field offices throughout the country, reinforcing prevention and peacebuilding capacities in key areas, with support from the Peacebuilding Fund. At the request of the government, the UN has mobilized multilateral partners to undertake a Prevention and Peacebuilding Assessment that will enable the alignment of development aid with nationally owned priorities. This process has occurred with the full consent and support of the host government, and without the visibility that going through the Security Council would have given to such a situation. The example of Burkina Faso shows another innovative way the UN can work across pillars to operate with full national ownership on prevention and sustaining peace. Such an approach is yet more proof of the adaptability of the UN system, along with efforts in Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia to deal with the Ebola pandemic in 2014–15 (the UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response, the first-ever UN emergency health mission),[21] and the strengthened coordination and support mechanism established in the Beni region of DRC with the World Health Organization in May 2019.

This recent trajectory toward smaller missions also suggests what kind of investments member states and the Security Council are willing to make in the years to come. And this is a trend: multidimensional peacekeeping seems to be behind us, for two reasons. The first is that these multidimensional endeavors (like the "transitional administrations" in Kosovo and Timor-Leste in the past) have become too much for the UN. As Adam Day rightly points out, "Countries like Mali, DRC, and South Sudan present a near-impossible terrain for peacekeeping. The massive scale of the land to cover, poor access, and limited state capacity means the UN is only able to reach a tiny fraction of the population."[22] The second is that the UN's inability to succeed at this impossible job has emboldened its critics, who have successfully pushed for dramatic financial cuts to make peacekeeping nimbler. This relentless critique misleadingly places too much blame on UN structures themselves, rather than on the mismatch of overreaching mandates and limited resources.

MANDATES VS. RESOURCES: THE ETERNAL CONTRADICTION OF PEACEKEEPING

For three decades, peace operations have consistently been falling into the same traps, because stakeholders do not want to tackle some of the key contradictions confronting peacekeeping—what Paul D. Williams recently called a "trilemma." Williams argued that this trilemma "has constrained the design of peacekeeping operations and set them up for failure" by expecting them to implement broad, multidimensional mandates while minimizing peacekeeper casualties and maximizing cost-

THE EXAMPLE OF BURKINA FASO SHOWS ANOTHER INNOVATIVE WAY THE UN CAN WORK ACROSS PILLARS TO OPERATE WITH FULL NATIONAL OWNERSHIP ON PREVENTION AND SUSTAINING PEACE

effectiveness.[23] Unless member states try to solve those contradictions, the UN will not be fit for purpose in the future. Even if the trend toward smaller missions and a spectrum of peace operations continues, it still has three to four big, multidimensional missions (UNMISS, MINUSMA, and MINUSCA, as well as UNAMID and MONUSCO for the next two to four years) to manage and successfully conclude. And we cannot rule out the prospect that a member state might ask the secretariat to prepare for another multidimensional deployment in West Africa or in the Middle East tomorrow. To move forward, therefore, the UN must solve some of the contradictions, in terms of capacities, ambitions, and finances, that tend to entangle peace operations.

As Jake Sherman explains, there is a "growing dissonance between the Security Council's expectations and what peacekeeping operations can realistically achieve" today.[24] The ambitions displayed by some resolutions are as disproportionate as the expectations placed upon operations, especially in comparison to the limited means provided. There is no correlation between ambitious mandates and the budget allocated to achieve them. On the contrary, as I have highlighted previously, peacekeeping has always been done on the cheap.[25] MINUSMA is deploying 13,000 troops in Mali, while NATO was deployed 130,000 in Afghanistan; the Secretary-General requested 8,000 troops to protect the safe areas of Bosnia, but the Security Council only provided 3,000; and the current peacekeeping budget represents just 0.3 percent of the world's military expenditures. The question of whether the resources given to peacekeeping are sufficient has never been seriously put on the table.

As a result, these operations are underfunded for their missions, and they accordingly face severe and continuous gaps in terms of capacity and materiel, such as armored or mine-resistant vehicles, helicopters of all kinds, effective enabling units (e.g., multi-role engineers, transport, signals, aviation, and medical), secure and interoperable information management and communications systems, and so forth. Such gaps would be intolerable to any other military deployment.[26] MINUSMA in particular, though not alone, has been facing numerous such gaps, and yet the Security Council has requested that it protect civilians in both the north and the center of the country, without significant increases to its budget and troop ceiling, therefore overstretching it even more.[27] This mismatch has created enormous expectations that will inevitably be disappointed if a massacre occurs near MINUSMA's base. And yet we judge the achievements of these missions as if they have the resources to implement their mandates.

This consistent lack of resources has an immediate impact on peacekeepers' ability to ensure both their own protection (especially in missions with a counter-terrorism element) and even more so that of local populations. It also contradicts the wish of member states (the same ones that want to reduce the peacekeeping budget and contribute sparingly to peace operations[28]) for UN operations to be more robust. Indeed, the push toward the "militarization" of peacekeeping, embodied in the 2018 report of General dos Santos Cruz, contradicts decisions to cut peacekeeping budgets, which in turn constrains the call to strengthen military structures and capacities. As Lise Howard underlines, "All current multidimensional missions are mandated to use force to protect civilians, but they are not designed or equipped to use force effectively."[29] The main difficulty peacekeeping operations face is not the use of force as such, but the ability to cope with the consequences of its use. And peacekeepers know that they are neither equipped, nor prepared, nor sufficiently politically supported to assume that responsibility. In such conditions, all troop-contributing countries logically tend to prioritize the safety of their soldiers.

These contradictions have an impact on the daily lives of peacekeepers. They have an impact on the level of fatalities, on the number of personnel suffering from post-traumatic disorders, on the management and coherence of a mission, on the way the mandate is interpreted, and on the morale of the personnel. When personnel lack proper care, adequate consideration, and sufficient motivation, it has an impact on the efficiency of their operations. These gaps also have an impact on the relationships between the various stakeholders of peace operations. As Namie di Razza points out, "Relationships between the Secretariat, the Security Council, and troop and police-contributing countries (T/PCCs) tend to be marked by mutual criticism, as POC [protection of civilians] failures can altogether be imputed to the lack of initiative and dedication by certain T/PCCs, the dysfunction of the UN's bureaucracy, or the insufficient political and financial support from the broader Security Council membership."[30]

The leadership of the secretariat should be more forceful in countering assumptions about peacekeeping (using arguments such as: no peace operation can succeed on its own, nor does it have the resources to bring an end to the conflict at stake or to protect civilians at scale), in explaining conditions for its success, and in communicating on gaps that will put severe constraints on achieving the mandate. Despite the many challenges, it should make an effort to deconstruct a narrative that is often too negative about the value of UN institutions, as opposed to the constraints placed on them. More than ever, the secretariat must tell the council what it needs to hear—but its current divisions have made the secretariat leadership too hesitant to do so.[31] This reluctance is not good for the balance of power within the organization, nor for the role of the UN as an international regulatory body. The secretariat has to relearn how to be more daring in face of big powers and be willing to open contentious debates. No one should be blamed for trying.
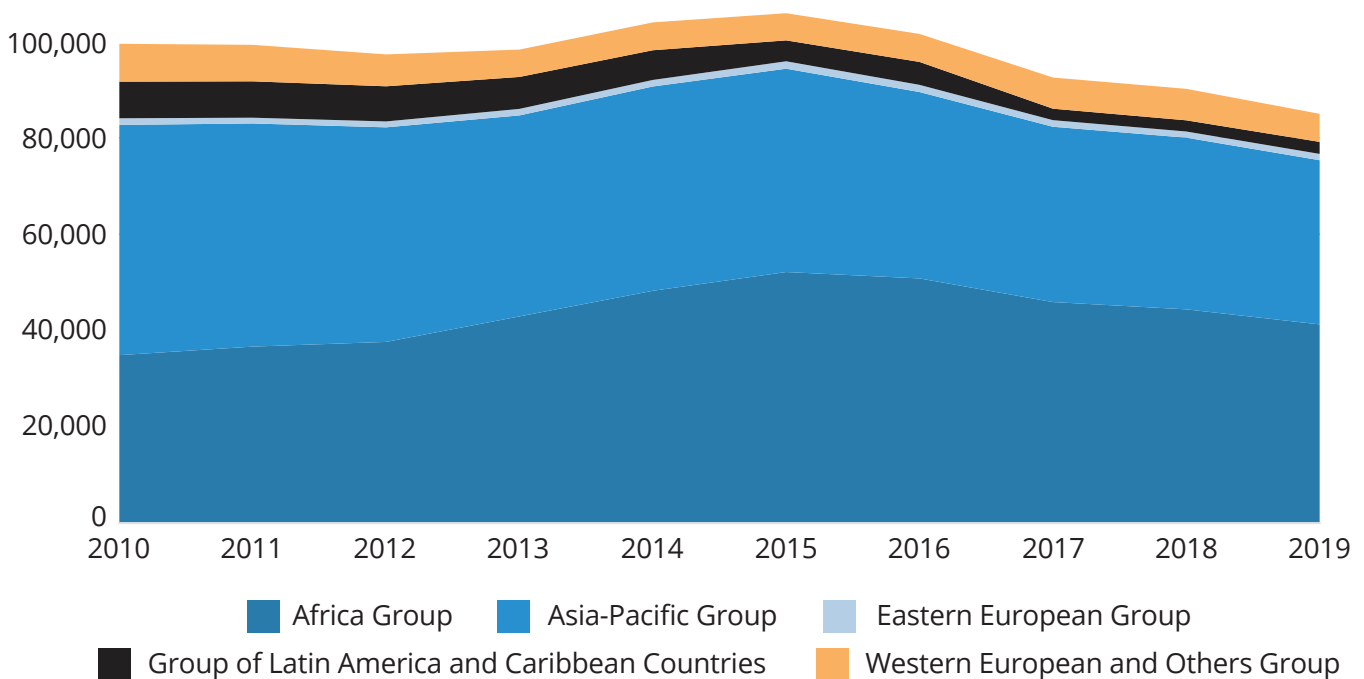
2020: A YEAR TO RECALIBRATE AMBITIONS

Will the UN ever solve those contradictions? What needs to be done to make the system deliver on its goals in a more efficient way? The year 2020 should offer ample opportunity to reflect on the state of peace operations, take stock of the various reforms undertaken in the past five years, assess the implementation of the secretariat's restructuring, and slowly proceed from making technical improvements to genuine doctrinal ones. We must hope this process will lead to something more comprehensive than just technical fixes.

ENHANCING PARTNERSHIPS IN PEACE OPERATIONS

Even if the UN continued to opt for lighter options for dealing with crises in the future, multidimensional operations will, as noted, remain—with their gaps and challenges. Moreover, peace operations of all types will increasingly be part of greater international endeavors, as no single peace operation can succeed on its own. As Cedric de Coning observes, "In this new era of networked peace operations, effectiveness will also depend on the degree to which a UN peacekeeping operation contributes to the strategic political coherence of the larger national and international effort to sustain the peace in a given country or region."[32] The problem is whether other partners will let the UN be the main coordinator, and give it the means to do so. Indeed, everybody calls for a coordinated approach to crisis or conflict management, but nobody wishes to be coordinated—leaving the UN little leverage in undertaking that challenging task.[33] A vision of partnership in which each actor understands its role in a larger political project is also more likely to facilitate more equal burden sharing.

UNIFORMED PERSONNEL CONTRIBUTIONS BY REGION OF ORIGIN, 2010-2019

Legend:
- Africa Group
- Asia-Pacific Group
- Eastern European Group
- Group of Latin America and Caribbean Countries
- Western European and Others Group

In this context—as UN operations in Darfur and DRC start their transitions to smaller special political missions (with, maybe for the first time in their history, supportive host governments)—operations in Mali, CAR, and South Sudan will remain challenging to conduct, particularly in their relations with host states, and with their peace process lingering either in stalemate, or in the hands of other partners. The future of these operations will likely play out alongside a continuing tense relationship between the UN and the African Union. In both New York and Addis Ababa, African countries will continue to ask for access to UN-assessed contributions to finance African-led operations like the G5 Sahel. At the same time, the council's reluctance will continue, owing to accountability issues and the desire to keep the UN budget at the current reduced level. This situation is likely to create friction at the political level, as Richard Gowan notes, with "African leaders and mediators increasingly liable to find ways to work around the Security Council in situations—like the political transition in Khartoum—where there is no need for peacekeepers to create stability."[34]

TAKING STOCK OF A4P TO RECALIBRATE PEACE OPERATIONS

The HIPPO report and A4P were used to tackle issues that should have been addressed 20 years ago, as they had already been identified in the Brahimi report. Even if A4P has not yet been able to reach some objectives, we should not overlook what has been achieved. First and foremost, the process has led to stronger awareness of the need to improve operational readiness through performance and training. Technology has become a standard tool, but not necessarily yet an enabler (because of a lack of training and financial constraints). There is also a new emphasis on efforts to measure the impact of peace operations, which has benefited from a network of independent researchers who have written a series of reports on how to measure effectiveness, mission by mission, taking into consideration "a range of factors, some of which are in a given operation's control, some of which are not."[35]

The four high-level ministerial meetings held each year since 2015 have raised the overall standard of forces and allowed the UN to be somewhat more selective about which troops to deploy.[36] A number of Western states have decided to deploy troops and capacities not only to MINUSMA, but also to UNMISS and MINUSCA. But their contributions have not allowed peacekeeping to take a major leap forward in quality, because they have often been limited in duration and sometimes ill-adapted to peacekeeping (one example is the intelligence unit—All Sources Information Fusion Unit—provided by Europeans to MINUSMA in 2015–17[37]), and because Western peacekeepers have had problems integrating with African and Asian contributors.[38]

During this time of reflection, UN bodies should recalibrate peacekeeping operations to better accord with the level of investment member states are willing to provide. In Secretary-General Guterres's words, there is a need "to refocus peacekeeping with realistic expectations."[39] And as Adam Day has pointed out, "With peacekeeping under pressure, it is more useful to recalibrate expectations, learn from what has worked over the past seven decades, and refocus the UN on the more limited—but achievable—tasks that peacekeeping can deliver."[40] The question is whether the Security Council will help the secretariat in this effort.

ASSESSING CURRENT REFORMS AND EMBARKING ON ADDITIONAL ONES

To move forward, the UN must focus on the importance of the supporting elements of peace operations: the human resources system (which has failed these missions), the mental health problems of some personnel who have worked in war zones for too many years (which is an effect of the lack of flexibility and of a clear career path in the human resources system), the safety and security of all its personnel, and the living conditions of its personnel (medical, housing, etc.). An organization like the UN cannot overlook the issue of living and working conditions, which is a crucial (but often disregarded) factor of efficiency. Improving the management of human resources should be at the heart of the next phase of reform. As one interlocutor working for a multidimensional mission told me during a field visit: "To be people-centered externally, peacekeeping missions should be people-centered internally."[41] And even if all UN missions are temporary in essence, their design and their personnel cannot be treated as such.

Multidimensional missions are like huge container boats—each one managing its own container, often in rough waters, without being well accommodated or trained to perform the task. As I have already argued, "UN peacekeeping needs to go back to basics rather than move beyond its fundamental principles," and this means concentrating on temporary, properly equipped, and strategically focused efforts rather than on large-scale and open-ended deployments.[42] As Charlie Hunt suggests, "It may be that a Capstone 2.0 can be envisioned, offering new life to the current principles."[43] Even if the secretariat has been reluctant

HAVE THESE REFORMS BEEN MOVING IN A POSITIVE DIRECTION, ALLOWING FOR A MORE CONTINUOUS, STRATEGIC, AND EFFECTIVE SECRETARIAT APPROACH TO A SPECTRUM OF PEACE OPERATIONS?

to take that path, there is nevertheless a need to seek further consensus and clarity on what peacekeeping can achieve (and what it cannot), rather than shy away from the question. What is indeed lacking is a more strategic debate on what must be done in order for peacekeeping to gain the trust it deserves from its diverse stakeholders. But for that to happen, these stakeholders must also accept their part of the job, and take on the responsibilities needed to make peace operations a genuine partnership, and not just a tool by default.

In 2020, there will be an opportunity to start to evaluate the impact of the secretariat's restructuring on the delivery of missions in the field, as well as the effect on transitions in Haiti and elsewhere. Have these reforms been moving in a positive direction, allowing for a more continuous, strategic, and effective secretariat approach to a spectrum of peace operations? A successful outcome would include a reduction in the competition over the definitions of special political missions versus peacekeeping missions. It would also include more strategic political coordination and management across a range of missions. Have the reforms better prepared the secretariat to launch a complex operation tomorrow, if the council requests it to do so? After more than a year of implementation, 2020 will certainly be a year of assessment. Transitions in Haiti and Darfur, and the evolving situation in Burkina Faso, will serve as a reality check for the "new" secretariat's nimble approach to maintaining international peace and security.

ENDNOTES

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2 Sarah Cliffe and Karina Gerlach, "UN Reforms—A Major Step Forward January 1, but Some Challenges Still to Overcome" (New York: NYU Center on International Cooperation, January 2019); available at cic.nyu.edu/publications/UN-Reforms-A-Major-Step-Forward-January-1-but-Some-Challenges-Still-to-Overcome.

3 As of 31 October 2019, the total number of personnel deployed in 13 peacekeeping operations is 97,509. The number of personnel present in special political missions and peacebuilding offices is not available.

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5 See Arthur Boutellis and Alexandra Novosseloff, "Road to a Better UN? Peace Operations and the UN Reform Agenda" (New York: International Peace Institute, November 2017); available at https://www.ipinst.org/2017/11/peace-operations-and-the-reform-agenda.

6 See some of the debates triggered by the release of this report in the series of articles published by IPI's Global Observatory, available at theglobalobservatory.org/tag/cruz-report/

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8 Alexandra Novosseloff, "Improving the Military Effectiveness and Proficiency of Peacekeeping Operations: A New Goal for A4P?" Challenges Forum Policy Brief, 2019, p. 2; available at www.challengesforum.org/paper/policy-brief-20192-improving-the-military-effectiveness-and-proficiency-of-peacekeeping-operations-a-new-goal-for-a4p/.

9 The quotation follows the title of the study by Sherman, "Action for Peacekeeping."

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[13] Arthur Boutellis, "Rethinking UN Peacekeeping Burden-Sharing in a Time of Global Disorder," *op. cit.*

[14] Sherman, "Action for Peacekeeping."

[15] Ibid.

[16] See "Prioritizing and Sequencing Peacekeeping Mandates in 2019: The Case of UNAMID" (New York: International Peace Institute, June 2019); available at www.ipinst.org/2019/06/prioritizing-and-sequencing-peacekeeping-mandates-the-case-of-unamid.

[17] Letter dated October 24, 2019 from the secretary-general to the president of the Security Council, S/2019/842; available at undocs.org/en/S/2019/842.

[18] See the International Peace Institute's work on transitions, available at www.ipinst.org/category/peacekeeping-transitions.

[19] UNMHA is a military mission close to the earliest peacekeeping missions such as UNTSO, UNMOGIP, or UNDOF, but it is managed by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, and not by the Department of Peace Operations, which would seem to undermine the role of the latter in the design of future peacekeeping settings.

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[21] See "UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response," available at ebolaresponse.un.org/un-mission-ebola-emergency-response-unmeer. For lessons learned of this mission, see Adam Lupel and Michael Snyder, The Mission to Stop Ebola: Lessons for UN Crisis Response" (New York: International Peace Institute: New York, 2017); available at www.ipinst.org/2017/02/un-crisis-response-ebola

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[29] Lise Morjé Howard, "Give Peacekeeping a Chance," Oxford Research Group, May 29, 2019, available at www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/blog/give-peacekeeping-a-chance.

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UNAMID HANDS OVER VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT TO THE SUDANESE POLICE IN NOVEMBER 2018. ©UNAMID/AMIN ISMAIL.

INNOVATIONS IN TRANSITIONS: RECONFIGURING THE UN PRESENCE IN DARFUR AMID WIDER POLITICAL CHANGE IN SUDAN

Paige Arthur[1]

In July 2018, the Security Council decided to start preparations to close the African Union-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) by June 30, 2020, after having already reduced its forces significantly over the previous year. While the resolution was spurred by reduced hostilities in Darfur as well as by political and budgetary pressures in New York, some observers were concerned that the time was not yet ripe for transition, especially as the peace process in Darfur was still unsettled, the root causes of conflict remained unaddressed, and there are still large numbers (1.8 million) of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in IDP camps.

Nonetheless, the Security Council (following the recommendations of a 2018 strategic review) directed UNAMID to drawdown its operations in Darfur, against benchmarks, by June 2020 and as well as to work jointly with the UN country team (UNCT) to support a whole-of-system transition concept with the aim of providing sustainable solutions to the critical drivers of conflict in Darfur within a two-year timeframe.

Since July 2018, however, a political sea change has occurred in Sudan. Following large-scale protests that lasted for about six months, Sudan's long-term president, Omar al-Bashir, was removed from power by the military on April 11, 2019. This article surveys the innovative approaches that UNAMID has implemented to prepare for its exit—and how the mission has adapted to the rapidly shifting political context.

To enact the Security Council's resolution, UNAMID jointly with ten UN agencies, funds, and programs (AFPs) developed a transition concept. This concept focuses on programmatic activities known as the state liaison functions (SLFs) aimed at addressing critical drivers of conflict and prevention of a relapse in four Darfur States (North, South, East and West) where UNAMID is withdrawing.

The SLF projects center around four priority areas:[2]

- Rule of law (police, justice, corrections)
- Human rights
- Resilience and livelihoods/durable solutions for the displaced population and host communities
- Immediate service delivery for internally displaced persons, returnees and host communities for social cohesion

These priorities are not just ends in themselves, but are also recognized to be interlinked; for example, displaced persons will not return to insecure areas; service delivery will not be effective without strengthened state functions; etc. Hence, joint approaches are critically important. The priority areas were informed by joint situational analysis by UNAMID and the UNCT on the overall causes of conflict, which were identified as: land, and the need for enhanced dispute resolution mechanisms and awareness of tenure rights (particularly by women); scarcity of resources and intercommunal conflict including over livestock and water and; IDPs and refugee returns to areas with limited infrastructure, services, and livelihood opportunities.

To ensure delivery of programmatic activities under these priority areas, UNAMID has signed memoranda of understanding with ten AFPs[3] for the transfer of financial resources, for a total of US$15 million for phase I and US$17.2 (covering January–June 2019) for phase II (covering July–December 2019). In addition, UNAMID has provided 99 staff (a combination of substantive international and national staff, as well as police), to support the SLFs. Of these, 90 are co-located in nine out of the ten AFP offices across the four Darfur States to support implementation of activities. UNAMID staff bring expertise, relationships, and an understanding of context, having deep experience working in the four states.

The SLFs allow the transfer of activities aimed at preventing a relapse into conflict and contribute to stabilization, thereby enabling the government of Sudan, the AFPs, civil society groups, as well as other international actors to prepare for UNAMID's eventual exit. The collaboration is quidded by the principle of national ownership for sustainability of peacebuilding efforts in Darfur.

Guided by the secretary-general's planning directives on UNAMID drawdown, a joint transition cell has been created to support UNAMID, specifically the Deputy Joint Special Representative, and the UNCT, under the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator, in providing strategic oversight over transition planning and management. This cell supports management by coordinating and monitoring transition planning and implementation. A Joint Transition Action Plan—a living management tool—has been developed, which outlines in detail all the specific actions that will need to be carried out, the expected timelines, and the critical partners to take forward peacebuilding activities.

A key advantage to this approach concerns ensuring transition management in an integrated manner with UN AFPs in a non-integrated mission context, as well as strengthening the relationship and ownership of the Sudanese government.

Indeed, a rapidly opening political space has dramatically transformed the context for the transition, in particular the relationship with the government. One element of this change is to ensure that the transition does not do anything to disrupt the unfolding political process in Sudan; another is to give the new government the opportunity to reflect on the timing of the transition and the structure of the UN presence to follow. That presence—with a clear peacebuilding remit—will be required to deal with the residual challenges, because many of the root causes of the conflict (especially marginalization) remain largely unaddressed.

Due to the events of April 11, there were new challenges to the implementation of phase one of the SLFs, including cash shortages, high inflation, shortage of fuel, etc. In Darfur in particular, there were 76 cases of civil unrest, 34 fatalities, and 180 injuries in the April–May 2019 period. Violence was observed in 8 out of 13 team sites, as well as in 3 former team sites. This violence was attributable to intercommunal and political tensions that were exacerbated by the political developments, as well as weak state and local authority and, in some cases, frustrations towards UNAMID.

The situation necessitated not a "business as usual" approach, but rather flexibility and some adjustments to programming. As such, the mission modified SLF programs by increasing the focus on community-based support—since, for some time, the governance structures were uncertain and there was an absence of national consensus on the way forward. There was also closer coordination with local authorities, communities, and partners—rather than engagement at the national level—through capacity support to address the situation on the ground.

On August 17, 2019, a power sharing agreement was reached between the military and a coalition of opposition forces, beginning a 39-month period of transitioning to democracy. Against this backdrop, UNAMID's drawdown faces both old and new challenges and opportunities.

Indeed, there is now a new positive political dispensation and readiness of government to work with the mission and to support the implementation of the mission mandate. Operationally, this political context has contributed to improved access, including into areas controlled by the Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid, where assessment can be made for the potential expansion of SLF activities especially in the greater Jebel Marra area where is there are pockets of low-level conflict.

Additionally, following a letter from the Sudanese prime minister to the secretary-general, in October 2019, the Security Council has recognized that there is value in giving the new government additional time to engage on the transition and also to consider the best structure for the UN's reconfiguration and follow-on mission to UNAMID. The council therefore extended the mandate of UNAMID until October 31, 2020.

In sum, the transition in Darfur is shaping up to be one of the most politically and operationally complex in history—particularly given the evolving national situation and its impact in Darfur. The innovative approaches put in place will surely be tested as the UN comes closer to the date of reconfiguring its presence. Building in flexibility and enhancing partnerships at an earlier date has positioned the UN to be more sensitive to changing needs. The creation of the SLFs, the joint transition cell, the sharing of expertise and knowledge, and the ramped-up use of programmatic funding to support areas critical to smoothing the path toward peacebuilding all have the potential to provide models from which future transitions can draw helpful lessons.

ENDNOTES

1 CIC is grateful for the collaboration of UNAMID, in particular the office of the Deputy Joint Special Representative, for drafting this article.

2 These priorities are linked to UNAMID's mandate, as set by the Security Council, which focuses on protection of civilians; mediation between the government and non-armed groups; and mediation of intercommunal and other local conflicts.

3 The ten AFPs are: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Organization on Migration (IOM), UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Habitat, UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Women, World Food Programme (WFP), and World Health Organization (WHO).

ZAMBIAN PEACEKEEPERS FROM MINUSCA ESCORT CIVILIANS IN BANGUI, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, IN OCTOBER 2018. ©UN PHOTO/HERVE SEREFIO.

PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS: CHALLENGES AND NEW FRONTIERS FOR PEACE OPERATIONS AT THE TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Marc Jacquand

In the peace and security world, 2019 seems to have been the year of protection of civilians (POC). To mark twenty years since the first POC mandate was authorized by the UN Security Council (UNSC) in Sierra Leone, a number of initiatives, meetings, and events took place. However, the impetus for this flurry of activity extends beyond normal anniversary practices, and the mood has not necessarily been only a festive one.

Today, at a time when the fundamentals of multilateralism are being reexamined, few issues trigger more debates, reveal more vested interests, or generate more soul searching than that of POC. This is partly due, tragically, to recent atrocities in places such as Mali and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and the essential human dimension at stake. It is also because the issue stands at the crossroads of various pressure points within the peacekeeping world and the broader aid community.

In particular, the POC doctrine and the practice both bring into sharp focus competing views on the responsibilities of host governments versus those of the international community; the balance between military responses and civilian interventions; the benefits and drawbacks of UN integration; the tensions and trade-offs between human rights, humanitarian, and peacekeeping mandates; and the gaps between mandates, expectations, strategies, and resources.

Pervasive throughout these debates is the sense that POC speaks to the essence and limits of peacekeeping. Should the UN actually be officially tasked with protecting civilians? To what extent can it be held responsible for the lives of civilians in places where it is deployed? More broadly, and more significantly, the issue is also used to question the UN's role and relevance in today's world. If attacks on civilians continue to occur in contexts where peace operations are deployed, and do so with impunity, then is it not fair to argue that the UN, even if all agree that it was "not created to bring us to heaven," is not even "saving us from hell"?[1]

This may explain why, in the lead-up to the 2018 Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) declaration, a few voices even arose to suggest that both the UN's reputation and POC objectives would in fact be better served if POC were no longer a formal mandate. Beyond their provocative dimension, these sentiments reflect impatience and frustration with the current state of affairs, and highlight the need for discussions around the twentieth anniversary to recognize core POC stakes and address uncomfortable truths.

To this end, this short brief takes stock of ongoing initiatives and developments related to POC. It then highlights current and potential challenges and outlines what the next frontiers for POC could look like. It argues that—in addition to operational improvements, and amidst the noise, the tensions, anxieties, and the competing agendas in which the POC issue is ensnared— it is essential for the UN's POC actors to strengthen their individual and collective risk management capabilities and systems. This shift would enable them to maintain an evidence-based, rational context for POC discussions, with a clear eye on the difficulties, a recognition of the trade-offs, and a continuous, dispassionate focus on professionalization, reform, and improvements to POC practice that are within its sphere of control. Operational improvements, buttressed by sound risk management approaches, will enable these actors to strengthen a POC voice based on the UN Charter and principles, a voice that both speaks to the choices the UN makes, and reflects the expectations of the civilians it is meant to protect.

STOCKTAKING

The first formal POC mandate, for the UN peacekeeping mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) in 1999,[2] emerged from tragedy, and from international failures to respond to atrocities in places such as Rwanda and Bosnia. Its twentieth anniversary has been commemorated over the past year with a flurry of activity. Following the 2018 adoption of the Action for Peacekeeping

PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS IN SOUTH SUDAN, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, MALI AND THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO ARE NOW DEVELOPING RESULTS FRAMEWORKS WITH POC PERFORMANCE INDICATORS.

(A4P) Declaration, which includes specific language on POC, an open debate on the issue was held in the UNSC on 23 May. This was followed by a specific focus on POC as the theme of the international peacekeeping day on 29 May.[3] Meanwhile, the research community has generated a wide-ranging set of reflections to assess the importance and trajectory of POC over the last twenty years.[4]

Within the UN, the Division for Policy, Evaluation and Training (DPET) has led the revision of the POC policy, which was last updated in 2015. That policy described the operational concept for POC in relation to three tiers: 1) protection through dialogue and engagement, 2) provision of physical protection, and 3) establishment of a protective environment.[5] The new policy places more corporate emphasis on the first "tier" of the POC strategic toolbox, focusing on engagement, dialogue, and prevention activities carried out in the field by UN actors, including the military component. This greater attention to field-level engagement, including mediation, stems both from the need to align POC doctrine and practice with the organization's broader prevention agenda, and the recognition of both the risks and inadequacies involved in relying exclusively on military responses.

Along with a revised policy, and as standard procedure, the department has also been developing a new handbook geared toward practice and designed to inform the work of POC peacekeeping practitioners in the field, who are tasked with implementing POC responses on a daily basis. This emphasis on doing, with its recognition of all the inherent practical challenges associated with POC, is welcome—especially if the guidance also provides support on how difficult choices can be managed.

In support of this more practical emphasis, the organization's training unit has initiated the revision of a dedicated Comprehensive POC (or CPOC) training, following a needs assessment carried out in 2017. The revision places more emphasis on strengthening the links between protection mandated units (such as Child Protection) and other mission mandates, notably Civil Affairs, as part of a reinvigorated whole-of-mission approach. POC context-specific trainings will be given in three missions this year, with the content adapted to reflect these new areas of focus.

Finally, the secretariat is following up on its own commitments deriving from the A4P Declaration with a long list of headquarters and field-level priority measures, including strategic planning and the integration of POC responses in mission-wide plans and with the UN country teams, context-specific in-mission training, assessments of military units, strategic communications, state-focused capacity building, zonal policing and patrolling approaches, and early warning. Of particular significance for POC responses is the newly revised policy on Authority, Command and Control in UN Peacekeeping Operations (2019), which attempts to provide a better understanding of the different authorities and responsibilities within a mission, both on the respective military and civilian sides, and between the them. These priority areas also form the POC focus of the new Comprehensive Performance Assessment System (CPAS) being established to improve results tracking, measurement, and reporting. As this effort indicates, the UN Secretariat is increasingly aware of both the operational challenges and of the stakes with regards to the UN's reputation and the broader significance of POC.

THE BALANCE BETWEEN PRESENCE AND MOBILITY IS NOW BEING REVISITED IN SEVERAL MISSIONS.

These efforts target several of the thorniest issues that have plagued POC mandates. For example, UN mission command and control practices have featured prominently in the literature on POC failures for many years. A joint 2009 report from the Department of Peacekeeping and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) spoke of a "broken POC chain," referring specifically to gaps in military responses. A 2014 Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) evaluation highlighted the persistence of these gaps, listing various instances where UN forces refused or failed to obey orders to intervene to protect civilians who were in harm's way. The subsequent 2017 review of that evaluation and measures taken in response to it acknowledged great progress in the organization's approach to the military dimension of POC, but also reiterated the need to further strengthen command and control (C2) processes and procedures, noting in particular the lingering tension between refusal and failure to obey.

These initiatives also build on 20 years of efforts to create an effective POC ecosystem of which peace operations are one constituent part, as described in OCHA's May 2019 report "Building a Culture of Protection: 20 Years of Security Council Engagement on the Protection of Civilians."[6] The report argues that this process includes the construction of a robust and comprehensive normative and policy framework by the UNSC (including sanctions regimes, measures for the protection of children in armed combat and facilitation of humanitarian access, and so forth), the development of a genuine POC culture, and the elaboration of POC policies, tools, and instruments. Real progress is also noted in terms of increased POC-related collaboration within UN missions, between UN missions and UN Country Teams (UNCTs), and between the UN and other partners, as well as greater acceptance of the respective contributions of the military, civilian mission personnel, humanitarian actors, and the human rights community. Twenty years after the first POC resolution and mandate, the body of work and effort at all levels is therefore significant. Yet many challenges remain, pointing to new frontiers for POC actors to pursue.

POC CHALLENGES

The first challenge relates **to communication and the need for evidence to support a positive story** about the undeniable progress that the POC community has made in recent years, as summarized above and as documented in various reports. Despite all the challenges and constraints, few would argue that the range of measures, tools, and systems developed and implemented by the UN and other partners has not made a positive impact on the ground.

Yet the gap between achievements and expectations remains. As emphasized in the 2014 OIOS report, it has plagued the UN almost since its inception and the first deployments of peacekeepers in Sinai, Egypt and Katanga, Republic of the Congo. As one UN official remarked, "The blue flag creates expectations. No matter what, if and when civilians die near a blue flag, the UN will bear some responsibility."[7] The UN has made attempts to clearly state what it can and cannot do, notably in DRC following the 2017 strategic review, but this messaging has more often than not fallen onto deaf ears.

Demonstrating a positive relationship between a mission's actions and a successful protection result can be difficult, except for cases in which a mission reacts to clear and immediate physical threats. POC is multifaceted, integrating immediate protection as well as the creation of protective "environments," which makes it hard to communicate its impact in a singular way. Additionally, in a context where it can be hard to signify or quantify success, or where success often goes unnoticed, it only takes one failure with tragic consequences to contradict any success story. Efforts to gather evidence that tells a "convincing

story of saving lives"[8] are underway in several missions, and as a recent United Nations University (UNU) publication argues,[9] it would not take much in terms of technological investments to collect data (e.g., on patrols, reaction to alerts, and so on) that can help make the case for the UN's POC work.

Measuring results is one of the objectives of the CPAS, and four peacekeeping missions in South Sudan, Central African Republic (CAR), Mali, and the DRC are now developing results frameworks with POC performance indicators.[10] However, POC success is often subjective, particularly when it comes to the existence of a genuinely protective environment, and is always case specific, because it depends on UN mandates and capacities, the roles of other actors, and a myriad of other local factors. Aggregating country level measurements into one global narrative on UN POC results also presents difficulties. Moreover, many would take issue with claims of success if any civilians are harmed. Finally, the drive to link mission activities to POC impact may further reinforce the convenient reflex to make POC primarily a mission and UN responsibility.

There is also the ethical dimension. For example, what targets should the UN set when it comes to POC achievements, especially at the level of outcomes, above and beyond measurements of process, institutional, and capacity building improvements? Can the UN be satisfied with, say, a 30 percent reduction in the harm caused to civilians? Some have framed this as a "no-win situation," emphasizing the ease with which results can be manipulated for political purposes. If measurements focus only on the output or activity levels (e.g., training of national forces on POC standards), the UN may be criticized for ignoring what truly matters. If measurements include outcome-level results, then the organization may inevitably be accused of mission failure.

The same challenge arises if and when one attempts to draw comparisons between POC results today and the situation twenty or thirty years ago, during the tragedies in Bosnia and Rwanda, or even a decade ago, in Darfur. Few would argue that the international community, and UN peace operations in particular, are not now better equipped to deal with violations at scale. Few would dispute that early warning systems, operational capacities, strategic coordination, and the political will to respond have improved. But these achievements will always ring hollow for victims facing violence now.

This conundrum explains why several actors, including some within the UN, argue that the costs and challenges of measuring performance outweigh the benefits, especially if these benefits will then be subject to methodological disputes and political interpretations. For these actors, an emphasis on robust accountability procedures, to ensure adherence to agreed principles and established policies, seems more useful than specific measurement of results.

A second set of challenges pertains to **how POC is enacted within a UN operation**. With Resolution 1894 and many country-specific UNSC resolutions, the marching orders have become more emphatic: POC mandates must be prioritized. But the issue of how these orders are interpreted and implemented in practice has not benefited from the same level of clarity. Different parts of the UN system have different answers to questions such as what it means to do POC in

AT A GLOBAL LEVEL, POC MANDATES ARE INEVITABLY PUTTING STRESS ON A NUMBER OF CORE UN AGENDAS

the context of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, political affairs, or any other relevant mission mandate not explicitly focused on protection. Across the UN, mindsets, systems, accountabilities, and practices seem to lag behind the principles and the instructions.

A related challenge stems from the structural configuration of POC, and the resulting distribution of responsibilities. A recent event in New York discussed the trade-offs and tensions between a centralized approach, with one unit and/or staff tasked with implementation and mainstreaming POC, and a distributed approach, where every relevant unit is responsible for embedding POC in the delivery of their mandates.[11]

At the operational level, the trend toward "protection by projection," initiated by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), is also reaching its limits and facing resistance. This approach was originally conceived of as a more cost-effective means to protect civilians in the context of limited and overstretched military capabilities, but some are now questioning whether it is actually less expensive and more effective than the alternatives. The balance between presence and mobility is now being revisited in several missions.

POC actors also point to lingering weaknesses in the community's early warning systems and practices, citing in particular insufficient coordination, a dearth of requisite analytical skills, and the absence of "whole of situation" instruments. Beyond these limitations, many also stress that the larger challenges reside in the task of moving from early warning to early action. The pivot from analysis to response remains challenging, and not just because of information or coordination weaknesses. It is also made particularly difficult by outstanding command and control issues, capability gaps, and a host of other operational impediments.

A third set of challenges relates to the **capacity for POC actors to adequately and collectively manage the range of trade-offs and risks** involved in carrying out POC mandates. These include direct risks, such as staff safety risks or reputational damage when UN support actors commit POC violations, as well as indirect risks, which derive from inherent trade-offs and contradictions in POC practices. While the UN has strengthened its ability to mitigate direct risks through policies and tools such as the Programme Criticality Framework or the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP), its capacity to manage such trade-offs and contradictions needs to be improved, most notably through more mature risk management capabilities.

One particularly salient risk that remains inadequately addressed relates to offensive mandates, which can produce contradictions with and vulnerabilities for the mission's POC mandate. This problem has been recognized, notably with MINUSMA's mandate, in which the UNSC requested the mission take into account the threats to civilians that might be generated by its presence in the vicinity of civilian-populated areas. In these cases, risk management systems are needed to test assumptions—such as the notion that support to national armed forces will reduce their own POC violations—and to highlight the trade-offs between the military response and other mission and UN system-wide mandates.

At a global level, POC mandates are inevitably putting stress on a number of core UN agendas. Despite productive collaboration between the peace and security pillar and humanitarian actors, the nature of POC interventions is testing the integration policy, especially when the drive for comprehensive POC approaches reveals operational, programmatic, and principled divergences. These tensions are inevitable, and managing them requires that they be properly recognized and accepted.

More fundamentally, POC challenges and obstacles in the field highlight a risk to peacekeeping itself, with the repeated surfacing of deep differences in doctrine, notably with respect to the use of force, Troop Contributing Countries (TCC) responsibilities and

risk tolerance, and the POC remit. Accountability, as a key POC principle and instrument, is increasingly contested or ignored. These fault lines feature prominently in the minds and engagement strategies of UN senior leadership, and they will not easily be bridged.

At both field and global levels, these challenges require sustained collective attention, with difficult decisions that should be supported by comprehensive risk management exercises. As such, a stronger risk management lens should be included in POC training modules, which are currently severely lacking in that regard. Comprehensive, system-wide risk analysis, based on inputs from a wide range of actors, should be included in all POC strategies. And POC considerations should, in turn, inform risk registers across all UN mission and system-wide planning.

RISK MANAGEMENT FOR POC: DEFINING AN APPROACH

Navigating the complexities of POC mandates requires a more systematic and more robust incorporation of risk management practices into the design, implementation, and monitoring of POC responses. The benefits would include deeper understanding of the trade-offs involved, clearer articulation of roles and responsibilities, more effective communication with partners, and enhanced adherence to do-no-harm principles.

As part of the mission and component planning process, POC interventions could be risk assessed according to the following elements:

- *Principles:* To what extent will POC interventions, as designed, conform with or potentially contradict UN principles?

- *Coherence:* To what extent do other mission mandates (e.g., good offices, support to other armed forces, and so forth) enhance or potentially undermine POC principles? Conversely, what potential risk does the implementation of the POC mandate carry for other mission/UN mandates?

- *Realism:* To what extent are the POC mandate, plans, and objectives, and the expectations they generate aligned with capacities and resources?

- *Accountability:* To what extent are POC responsibilities aligned with mandates and capacities, within the UN, between the UN and partners?

- *Assumptions:* How robust are the data and evidence used to formulate POC responses, including operational considerations?

The assessment and evaluation of risks should be a mission/UN-wide exercise—not the sole remit of POC actors or units—with inputs from other POC actors. The results should inform operational planning, communication approaches, and political engagement both in-country and with member states more broadly.

POC FRONTIERS

While significant efforts are underway to address some of the gaps identified in the previous section, there are also a number of emerging challenges or frontiers that should gain more attention in the coming years.

For example, the responsibilities and capacities for POC work in special political missions (SPM) have so far received less attention. Yet in environments such as Libya, Afghanistan, or Somalia, where the UN is not in a position to make use of POC's tier 2 (military response), instances of harm to civilians inevitably carry repercussions for the UN's reputation and its ability to implement its mandates. The body of doctrine, policies, and training material remains heavily geared towards peacekeeping operations, not peace operations. Are the features of an SPM sufficiently leveraged for tier 1 and tier 3 interventions? In other words, can the absence of a tier 2 response in its arsenal be exploited by an SPM, and the UN more broadly, as an advantage? There is an urgent need to examine how SPMs, and their unique features, can and should support POC imperatives.

Likewise, more consideration is needed to clarify POC responsibilities in phases of transition, when a mission is planning and carrying out its exit. Such transitions nominally take place in environments with fewer POC concerns, allowing the mission's departure. However, exits are not always driven by such considerations. Post-mission contexts remain volatile, and UNCTs may not always have the resources to provide the requisite POC responses. Among the tools available to the UN system to address POC concerns, one option might have been Human Rights up Front, whose demise at the UN has been well-documented and widely lamented—although it was an uncomfortable tool for many. Could the SDG framework provide a less controversial, yet still effective means for the UN to ensure adequate POC-related coverage in non-mission settings? Some argue that better development around targeted SDG priorities, especially SDG16+, can be a key prevention measure. Others respond that development tools, systems, and principles are insufficient or even inappropriate for POC responses, notably because they yield too much decision-making to governments that are often party to POC violations. In the discussions on the UN development system's reform, the nature of the UN's development work, and the role and profile of the Resident Coordinator, the POC dimension lurks just beneath the surface, especially in transition contexts.

A similar discomfort pervades the thorny question of POC in relation to the roles, capabilities, and responsibilities of regional organizations. UN management has invested substantial capital in building strong relationships with these organizations (the African Union first and foremost) and in mobilizing political and financial support for their role. At the ground level, the relationship is often strained, partially due to POC matters. In Somalia, the tension arises from the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)'s direct POC violations. In DRC or CAR, POC concerns derive from disagreements over political approaches, at least until recently. Finding consistency and convergence between the UN and regional organizations in POC matters will be difficult. Political, doctrinal, and operational obstacles stand in the way, especially if and when regional organizations are implementing more offensive operations. But if the drive towards ever closer partnerships is to be sustained and result in increasingly positive repercussions on the ground, these obstacles will need to be tackled, with political support from the highest echelons of the respective hierarchies.

CONCLUSION

Because of its multifaceted nature and the complex environments in which it is implemented, POC does not lend itself to easy solutions. Instead, it is beset by operational impediments, arguments over strategy, and debates over remit, roles, and responsibility. Often, the answers to these questions, including existential ones about what POC is and is not, reflect and reveal vested political interests in the future (and financing) of peacekeeping. These questions, debates, and interests have only intensified during this year's anniversary activities.

However, the litany of challenges, present and future, that this paper highlights should not make us forget the remarkable evolution of POC over the last two decades. Beyond the resolutions, policies, and tools, there has been a genuine and collective recognition that responses to POC violations are a shared responsibility. And as indicated above, the UN and its partners are engaged in an intensive dialogue about how to remedy identified and emerging gaps.

Moving forward, ongoing efforts could be enhanced by infusing a more robust risk management approach into POC practices. This innovation will help manage, though not dispel, the current challenges, allowing actors to better identify trade-offs and reach informed decisions. The UN is often buffeted by centrifugal pressures at the operational, strategic, and political level. Given the range of current POC crises it is asked to respond to, these pressures should not turn into distractions. Rather, strengthened risk management approaches should help POC actors maintain a rational space for POC activities, one that features a clear regard for difficulties, an acceptance of challenges, and a continuous, dispassionate focus on professionalizing, reforming, and improving POC practices that are within its sphere of control.

As the UN progresses along the path to better early warning systems, more effective comprehensive approaches, better training of troops, changes in mindset, and the many other well-documented areas for improvement, a clearer articulation of trade-offs would ultimately strengthen its ability to position POC challenges and imperatives as central to the letter and intent of the UN Charter. Such a shift would place the fundamental human dimension and obligation over the set of technical, operational, and even political dimensions that tend to dominate discussion. It would enable the UN to both articulate the difficult POC choices that it often has to make, and reflect the expectations of the civilians it is meant to protect.

Ongoing atrocities, from the outskirts of Tripoli to central Mali and northern Syria, to name just a few current examples, highlight the Sisyphean nature of the POC mandate. In fact, the variety and depth of the challenges associated with POC mandates, in peace operations and beyond, calls for certain degree of humility. It is much easier to critically talk and write about protecting civilians in New York than to put it into practice in the forgotten fields of countries torn by war.

ENDNOTES

1 Dag Hammarskjöld, "Address by Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld at University of California Convocation, Berkeley, California, Thursday, May 13, 1954," (UN Press Release SG/382).

2 There are now eight operations formally mandated with POC (out of 13 peacekeeping operations).

3 The A4P language is: "We recognize that host states bear the primary responsibility to protect civilians and stress the contribution that peacekeeping operations, where mandated, can make to international efforts to protect civilians and to promote and protect human rights. We collectively commit to support tailored, context specific peacekeeping approaches to protecting civilians, in relevant peacekeeping operations, emphasizing the protection of women and children in those contexts. We commit to implement protection of civilians mandates of peacekeeping missions, including through using all necessary means when required, in accordance with the UN Charter, mission mandates, and applicable international law. We further commit to improving strategic communications and engagement with local populations to strengthen the understanding of the peacekeeping missions and their mandates." See the Action for Peacekeeping: Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations, 2018, paras. 9 and 10, available at peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/a4p-declaration-en.pdf.

4 E.g., the Center for Civilians in Conflict's series, "#POC20: Twenty Years of Prioritizing the Protection of Civilians: Marking the 20th Anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1265," available at civiliansinconflict.org/blog/20th-anniversary-resolution-1265/; and the International Peace Institute (IPI) Global Observatory series on POC, available at theglobalobservatory.org/tag/protection-of-civilians/.

5 UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Services, "The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping," Ref. 2015.07, para. 30.

6 Leonie Arendt, "Building a Culture of Protection: 20 Years of Security Council Engagement on the Protection of Civilians" (New York: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, May 2019).

7 Interview with a UN official, May 2019.

8 Adam Day, "Can Data Save UN Peacekeeping?" United Nations University, Centre for Policy Research, March 28, 2019, available at cpr.unu.edu/can-data-save-un-peacekeeping.html.

9 Ibid.

10 Recent commentaries have also focused on the issues of performance and accountability. See Namie di Razza, "Twenty Years On, Time for an Accountability System for the Protection of Civilians," IPI Global Observatory, September 17, 2019, available at theglobalobservatory.org/2019/09/twenty-years-on-time-for-accountability-system-protection-civilians/; and Evan Cinq-Mars, "Special Investigations into Peacekeeping Performance in Protecting Civilians: Enhancing Transparency and Accountability," IPI Global Observatory, September 19, 2019, available at theglobalobservatory.org/2019/09/investigations-peacekeeping-performance-poc-transparency-accountability/.

11 "Twenty Years of Protecting Civilians through UN Peacekeeping Operations: Successes, Challenges, and New Frontiers," International Peace Institute, May 22, 2019, available at www.ipinst.org/2019/05/twenty-years-of-poc-successes-challenges.

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