

Global _____
Peace Operations

Review



PEACE OPERATIONS 2018

“PUT SIMPLY, PEACE OPERATIONS CANNOT SUCCEED IF THEY ARE DEPLOYED INSTEAD OF A POLITICAL SOLUTION, RATHER THAN IN SUPPORT OF ONE.”

—SECRETARY-GENERAL ANTÓNIO GUTERRES, MARCH 2018

Global _____
Peace Operations

Review

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Center on International Cooperation would like to acknowledge the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs for their support for this report.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Richard Gowan is a non-resident fellow at the NYU Center on International Cooperation, where he worked from 2005 to 2015. He teaches conflict resolution at Columbia University's School for International and Public Affairs. He is also a fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations and a columnist for World Politics Review.

Ryan Rappa is a researcher and data specialist at the NYU Center on International Cooperation, where he has worked since 2016 on issues including UN reform, international peacekeeping, and the post-2015 development agenda. He is also a contributor to the Huffington Post.

ABOUT THE CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The world faces evolving security challenges that are often more complex than our multilateral and national institutions are capable of managing. International cooperation is ever more necessary in meeting these challenges. The NYU Center on International Cooperation (CIC) works to enhance international responses to conflict and insecurity through applied research and direct engagement with multilateral institutions and the wider policy community.

CIC's programs and research activities span the spectrum of conflict insecurity issues. This allows us to see critical interconnections between politics, security, development, and human rights, highlight the coherence needed for effective solutions, and provide actionable analysis. We have a particular concentration on the UN and multilateral responses to conflict.

CIC has played a role disproportionate to its small size in incubating processes that have had significant influence on global policy, from peacebuilding at the UN to the international dialogue on fragile states, to regional approaches to challenges such as the Afghanistan conflict, and the post-2015 agenda.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Peace Operations in 2017-18: Balancing Conflict Management and Political Approaches as an Era Comes to a Close	7
Richard Gowan	
The Year in Data 2017-18: Less Peacekeeping, a Growing Role for China, and a Push for More Women Leaders	27
Ryan Rappa	

ABBREVIATIONS

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data
ASG	Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations
CAR	Central African Republic
DFS	Department of Field Support
DPA	Department of Political Affairs
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
GRULAC	Latin American and Caribbean Group (UN Regional Grouping)
HIPPO	High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations
HRuF	Human Rights up Front initiative
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
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
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PBF	Peacebuilding Fund
PBSO	Peacebuilding Support Office
PKO	Peacekeeping Operation
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SPM	Special Political Mission
TCC	Troop Contributing Country
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNAMI	United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq
UNAMID	African Union/United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon
UNISFA	United Nations Organization Interim Security Force for Abyei
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan
UNOCI	United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire
USG	Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations
WEOG	Western European and Others Group (UN Regional Grouping)



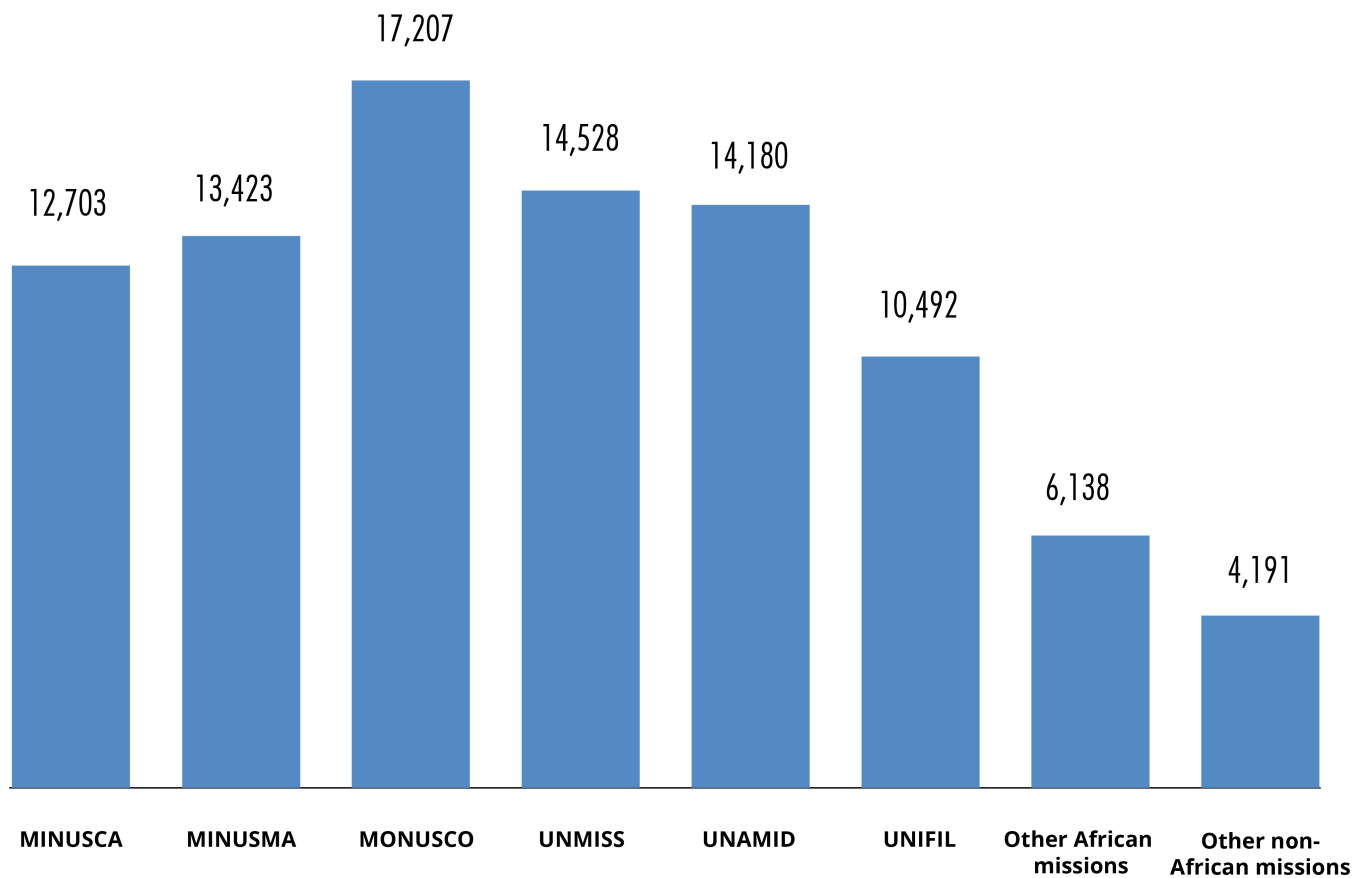
MEMBERS OF THE NIGERIAN FORMED POLICE UNIT DEPLOYED WITH UNMIL BOARD A PLANE AT ROBERTS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT IN HARBEL, LIBERIA. ©UN PHOTO/ALBERT GONZÁLEZ FARRAN

PEACE OPERATIONS IN 2017-18: BALANCING CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND POLITICAL APPROACHES AS AN ERA COMES TO A CLOSE

Richard Gowan

2017 and the first months of 2018 saw the end of an era at the UN. The organization wrapped up three of its missions: in Liberia (UNMIL), Haiti (MINUSTAH), and Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI). These missions, all dating back to 2003 or 2004, were the final examples of a relatively successful series of peace operations launched by the Security Council between 1999 and 2005 that were characterized by (i) fairly large military and police components relative to the territories and populations they served; and (ii) a long-term commitment to enabling peaceful politics in post-conflict states, including facilitating multiple electoral cycles. This generation of missions—which also included those in Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste—were neither inherently easy nor entirely successful. The Haitian operation has been overshadowed by the widely accepted allegation that peacekeepers brought cholera to the country.¹ The run-up to UNOCI's exit was marred by military mutinies over pay in 2017.

FIGURE 1: UN MILITARY AND POLICE PERSONNEL, DECEMBER 2017



SOURCE: DEPARTMENT OF PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

Nonetheless, this series of missions ultimately had the resources and political support to achieve their goals, albeit often at slower speeds than the Security Council hoped (the UN took initial steps to wind down UNMIL in 2006). UN officials have long distinguished between this group of missions and a parallel set of cases in which operations have lacked the resources and political leverage necessary to manage nationwide political processes.

This second set of missions includes those in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), Darfur (UNAMID), South Sudan (UNMISS), Mali (MINUSMA), and the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). Some of these, including those in the DRC and South Sudan, initially set out to facilitate political processes and settlements comparable to those in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, albeit in even more challenging contexts. However, recurrent violence has meant that these operations are all now examples of what the 2015 High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) defined as “conflict management” operations that do not support a strong political settlement but may help “(i) deter escalation; (ii) contain conflict; (iii) protect civilians; and (iv) attempt to start or revive a peace process.”² While UN officials have regularly raised their concerns about the purpose and sustainability of these missions with member states, they are now effectively the organization’s core business. With the closure of UNOCI, MINUSTAH, and UNMIL, four in five of all military personnel and police under UN command are now in one of these five missions, with the greatest number still based in the DRC and the Sudans. (See Figure 1 for the numbers by mission.)

If large-scale blue helmet missions are now largely engaged in conflict resolution rather than peace implementation, the same is true, although to a lesser degree, of some of the organization's envoys and special political missions (SPMs). In cases including Syria and Yemen, the UN faced insurmountable obstacles to peacemaking in 2017, and largely had to focus on diplomatic efforts at conflict mitigation. The organization's assistance missions in Afghanistan and Iraq have also had to contend with rising violence, with the mission in Iraq (UNAMI) closely involved in efforts to limit the suffering involved in the recapture of Mosul from the Islamic State. But the UN has not become entirely focused on conflict management. Indeed, the organization's representatives played significant roles advancing peace processes and initiating diplomatic openings in cases ranging from Colombia to the Korean peninsula during 2017.

Nonetheless, the pivot in recent years toward conflict management, in both the UN Secretariat and among member states, has been accompanied by a sense that it should be reversed. Following themes laid down in the HIPPO report, Secretary-General António Guterres has underlined the need to put politics back at the center of peace operations, in addition to promoting conflict prevention.

"A peacekeeping operation is not an army, or a counter-terrorist force, or a humanitarian agency," Guterres told the Security Council in March 2018. "It is a tool to create the space for a nationally owned political solution."³ Council members broadly agreed with him in principle. In practice, the burden of conflict management is reshaping UN peace operations in multiple ways. This review of UN missions highlights five dimensions of the process:

- At the operational level, UN operations are struggling with the logistical and security dimensions of functioning and protecting civilians in highly insecure environments, sometimes compounded by terrorist threats and parallel counter-terrorist forces;
- At the strategic level, the UN is increasingly relying on African forces to support its missions in cases including Mali and CAR, while forces from other regions are in decline, reflecting an overall increase in African peacekeeping capabilities but undermining the global nature of UN peacekeeping;
- At the financial level, concerns about the open-ended expenses of sustaining conflict management operations are creating tensions in the Security Council and other UN forums, in part but not only because of a US emphasis on cutting costs;
- At the level of values, UN member states are forcefully questioning some norms (such as support for human rights) that shaped UN policies after the Cold War;
- At a conceptual level, these largely negative trends are fostering an unusually open and robustly healthy debate about the future of peace operations—and although the overall direction of intellectual travel is unclear, this may yet revitalize UN missions.

This review gives a brief overview of each of these developments in turn, closing with comments on the persistence of conflict management as an unavoidable task for the UN. It must be noted that these debates do not take place in isolation from other arguments in and around the UN. Deepening geostrategic differences between the permanent members of the Security Council overshadow all UN actions on peace and security at present. But peace operations (or conflict management operations) remain a staple part of the UN's workload, and continue to be crucial to its overall credibility.

1. THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL

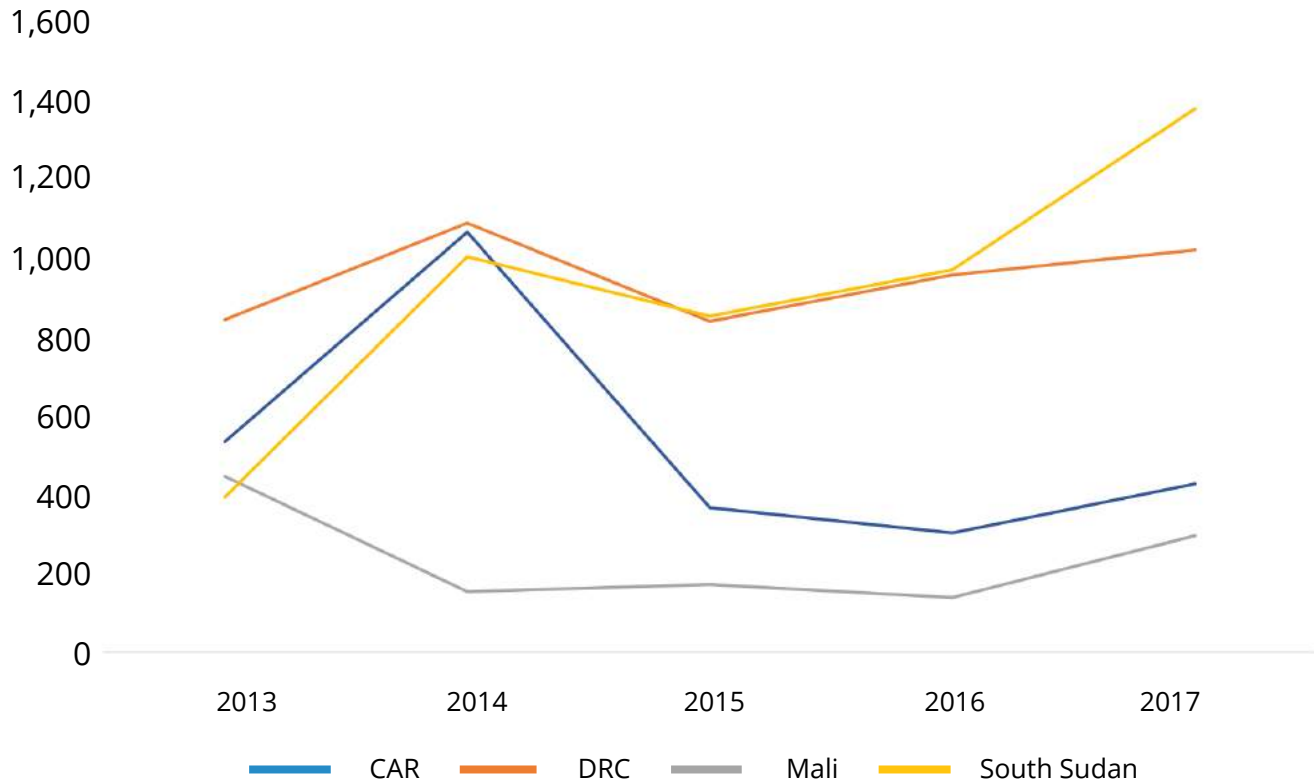
The UN's "Big 5" missions do not pursue identical goals or face identical threats. All are involved in mitigating or containing conflict in some way, but the details vary. UNMISS and UNAMID essentially provide frameworks for the protection of civilians and humanitarian assistance, for example, whereas MINUSMA's de facto task is to limit terrorist action in northern Mali. UNMISS and MONUSCO are working with recalcitrant national leaders who actively oppose UN interference in their affairs, but MINUSMA is trying to stabilize a country without any real national authority. Generalizations about the missions can thus mislead.

Nonetheless, these operations have all experienced three common factors for some or all of their deployments: (i) persistent violence, including threats to their personnel; (ii) large-scale conflict-induced humanitarian crises; and (iii) limits on their ability to pursue clear political conflict resolution strategies, whether due to a lack of credible national partners or poor relations with their host states. These political limits have sometimes pushed the UN to concentrate on tactical or localized stabilization actions. The Congo Research Group, an affiliate of the Center on International Cooperation, observes that MONUSCO "has been marginalized politically since 2007" and "increasingly confined to carry out military peacekeeping in the eastern Congo in the absence of a political process or framework."⁴

Data from 2017 suggests that four of these five missions face a worsening security and humanitarian situation. The exception is UNAMID in Darfur. UNAMID was long a byword for the limitations of blue helmet missions "where there is no peace to keep," as it has been constantly harassed by local militias and Sudanese armed forces. But its operating environment eased through 2017, largely because the government has suppressed most of the rebel groups in the region. In this context, the Security Council initiated a reconfiguration of UNAMID in 2017 that will lead to a shrinkage of the force this year. By contrast, most metrics suggest that peacekeepers in Central African Republic (CAR), Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mali, and South Sudan face worsening challenges.

THE ORGANIZATION'S REPRESENTATIVES PLAYED SIGNIFICANT ROLES ADVANCING PEACE PROCESSES AND INITIATING DIPLOMATIC OPENINGS IN CASES RANGING FROM COLOMBIA TO THE KOREAN PENINSULA DURING 2017

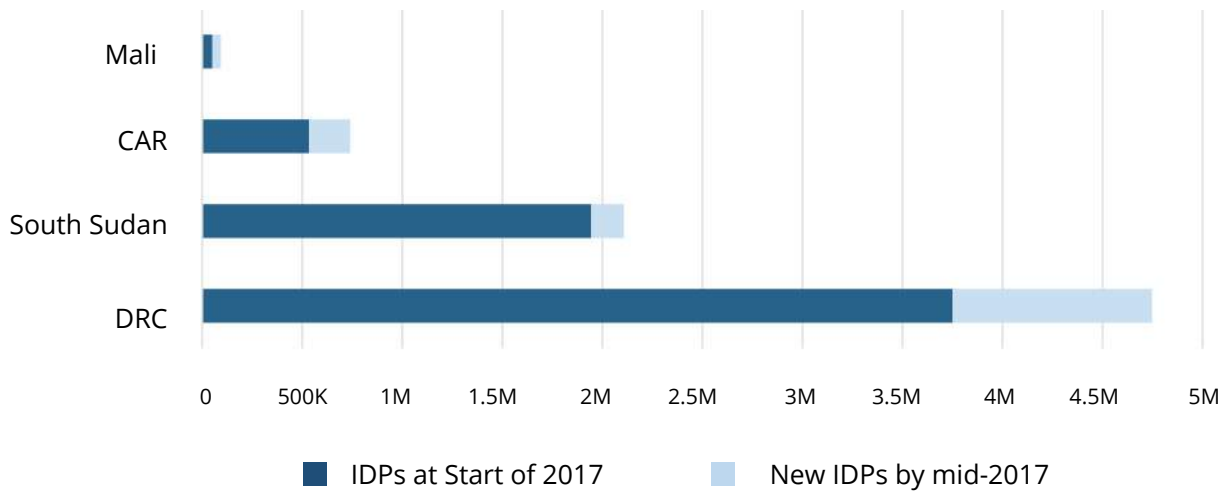
FIGURE 2: “CONFLICT EVENTS,” 2013-2017



SOURCE: ARMED CONFLICT LOCATION AND EVENT DATA

Two broad potential indicators are (i) the frequency of incidents of instability in these cases and (ii) related humanitarian data. The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) project tracks reports of “conflict events” including battles, attacks on civilians, riots, and protests. Its database shows an increase in the numbers of such events in four of the Big 5 countries in 2017 (Figure 2). In the meantime, in 2017, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center recorded a significant increase in the numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the DRC—reflecting mounting violence tied to the country’s delayed elections—plus smaller increases in displacement in the other cases (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3: NUMBER OF CONFLICT-INDUCED IDPS



SOURCE: THE INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT MANAGEMENT CENTER

A number of recent UN reports have emphasized the constraints peacekeepers face in such volatile environments. In December 2017, a militia group killed fifteen UN personnel at a poorly protected base in the eastern DRC. In January 2018, the organization released a critical study of peacekeepers' military performance that highlighted that "large footprints force some missions to dedicate about 90 percent of their operational capacity to escorting convoys and self-protection."⁵ This figure appears to be based on MINUSMA, where jihadist groups have waged an insurgent campaign against UN bases and convoys. In February 2018, the Secretary-General released a regular report on UNAMID covering its activities from mid-December to mid-February. This noted that the mission had undertaken 12,387 patrols, with 5,505 (44 percent) of these focused on protecting the population while 6,674 (54 percent) were "for the protection of UNAMID personnel and equipment."⁶

The UNAMID report also illustrates the extent to which peacekeeping duties and humanitarian relief have become intertwined, observing that UNAMID troops undertook roughly 3,000 visits to IDP camps and patrols to allow their occupants to collect firewood unmolested. Of the current "Big 5" UN missions, UNMISS in South Sudan has become most heavily invested in humanitarian support, following its decision in December 2013 to allow civilians to shelter on its bases at the outbreak of the country's civil war. Approximately 200,000 people continue to seek security in the camps. "By a conservative estimate," Secretary-General Guterres reported to the Security Council in early 2018, "50 percent of the mission's efforts, in time, money, staffing and energy, are devoted to managing and protecting those sites."⁷ Almost half of the mission's twelve infantry battalions focus on camp security.

While there is general agreement that UNMISS was right to open its gates to the suffering in 2013, many observers have worried that the burden of protecting these sites has prevented the mission from undertaking more flexible operations. Some contingents have been alleged to refuse to patrol outside their bases. This is indicative of a broader moral and reputational challenge for the UN when it engages in long-term conflict management in highly volatile environments—the near-certainty that its missions will face accusations of failing to protect vulnerable civilians.

Having faced repeated criticisms of protection failures by UNMISS in 2016, the UN came under fire for the performance of MINUSCA in the summer of 2017. In one case, peacekeepers were said to desert a group of civilians sheltering in a mosque in an incident that left over sixty (including six UN personnel) dead. The UN responded by launching a review that found, while MINUSCA had “a well-established protection of civilians strategy and functioning early warning mechanisms,” these “did not translate into preventive actions and there were deficiencies in civil-military-police planning.”⁸

These criticisms foreshadowed a more general critique of the UN in the January 2018 report released under the name of Lieutenant General Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz (former UN force commander in Haiti and the DRC) that observed that peacekeepers have failed to see that “nobody attacks a stronger opponent.”⁹ The Cruz report has proved controversial among UN officials, troop contributing countries, and peacekeeping analysts for advocating significantly more aggressive actions by peacekeepers. Nonetheless, as we will note in Section 5 on conceptual issues, it has helped enliven already increasingly substantive debates in New York about the goals and limitations of peace operations.

Another driver of these debates has been divisions over MINUSMA’s role in addressing terrorism in Mali. While the mission has repeatedly lost personnel to roadside bombs and attacks on its bases, the Council has not given it an explicit counterterrorism mandate, and the UN Secretariat remains opposed to any such mandate. In an effort to circumvent these obstacles, France and the G5 Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger) tabled proposals in spring 2017 for a distinct regional force to suppress Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb and other insurgent groups. The US opposed this plan, primarily on cost grounds, creating significant tensions in the Security Council. In December, France and the US finally agreed on a compromise proposal whereby MINUSMA will offer the G5 Sahel logistical support, which may be challenging given its own limits.

Mali was not the only case in which the UN’s position vis-à-vis non-state armed groups was controversial in 2017. In August, the US created further tensions with France by claiming that the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which includes French soldiers, turned a blind eye to Hezbollah’s activities in its area of operations. Although the UNIFIL force commander denied this accusation, analysts have made similar claims for many years. The broad question of how the UN should deal with non-state armed groups has also been at the forefront of recent Council debates over conflict management in Syria—with Russia insisting that many rebel groups have terrorist connections and are fair targets—and the UN’s role in managing these threats is likely to remain contentious. While Secretary-General Guterres established a new Office of Counter-Terrorism in 2017, this is largely concerned with technical work in non-mission settings, and has had little impact on peace operations.

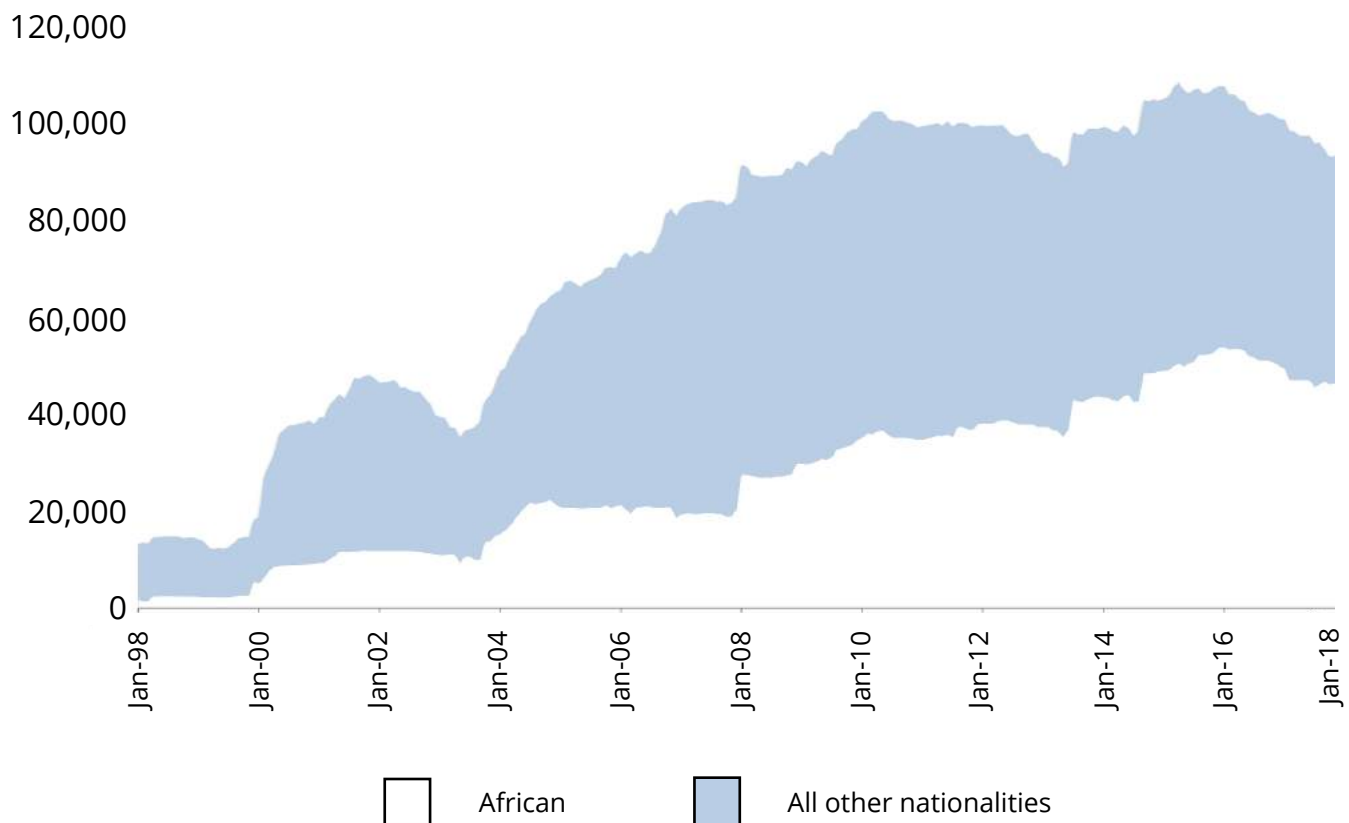
Humanitarian questions and the dilemmas posed by non-state armed groups have also overshadowed many SPMs. In Iraq, senior UNAMI officials were closely involved with other UN agencies in efforts to mitigate the suffering involved in the nine-month siege of Mosul and track fatalities at the hands of Islamic State and government forces. An independent strategic review transmitted by the Secretary-General to the Security Council in November 2017 argued that UNAMI was insufficiently focused on political priorities, and should hand off humanitarian duties to the UN Country Team.¹⁰ Reviews of UNAMA in Afghanistan and UNSMIL in Libya came to similar conclusions about the need to reorient these missions to focus on politics, rather than secondary tasks.¹¹ The UNAMA review urged the mission to shift from “a post-conflict peacebuilding agenda towards supporting an Afghan-owned peace process that must eventually include direct negotiations with the Taliban.”¹²

Across conflict management cases of all types, the UN faces heavy and contradictory demands on its operations, reducing its ability to focus on political issues. Through 2017, the UN envoys dealing with Syria and Yemen also often had to focus on immediate humanitarian issues (and in the Syrian case, limited de-escalation efforts) rather than overall political solutions. In those cases where the organization has a significant number of peacekeepers in remote regions, self-protection and supply can take up as much energy as actual mandate implementation. The risks inherent in the biggest blue helmet operations are also reshaping outside powers' willingness to participate in them.

2. THE STRATEGIC LEVEL

At the strategic level, the predominance of conflict management operations on the UN agenda is associated with a growing *regionalization* of peace operations.¹³ One of the UN's traditional strengths has been its ability to facilitate cross-regional peacekeeping deployments, such as the large European presence in UNIFIL or South Asian troops in the DRC. This was particularly important during the expansion of UN missions in Africa in the early 2000s, when Asian and Latin American troops were able to compensate for a lack of local forces (although tensions between units from different regions were a recurrent problem). Non-African forces continue to play a significant role in cases including MONUSCO and UNMISS. But African countries—bolstered by foreign capacity-building and increasing defense budgets—have come to play a far larger role in UN missions, representing nearly half of UN military personnel and a majority of UN police (Figure 4).

FIGURE 4: ORIGINS OF UNIFORMED PERSONNEL IN UN MISSIONS: AFRICA AND THE REST, 1998-2018



SOURCE: IPI PEACEKEEPING DATABASE

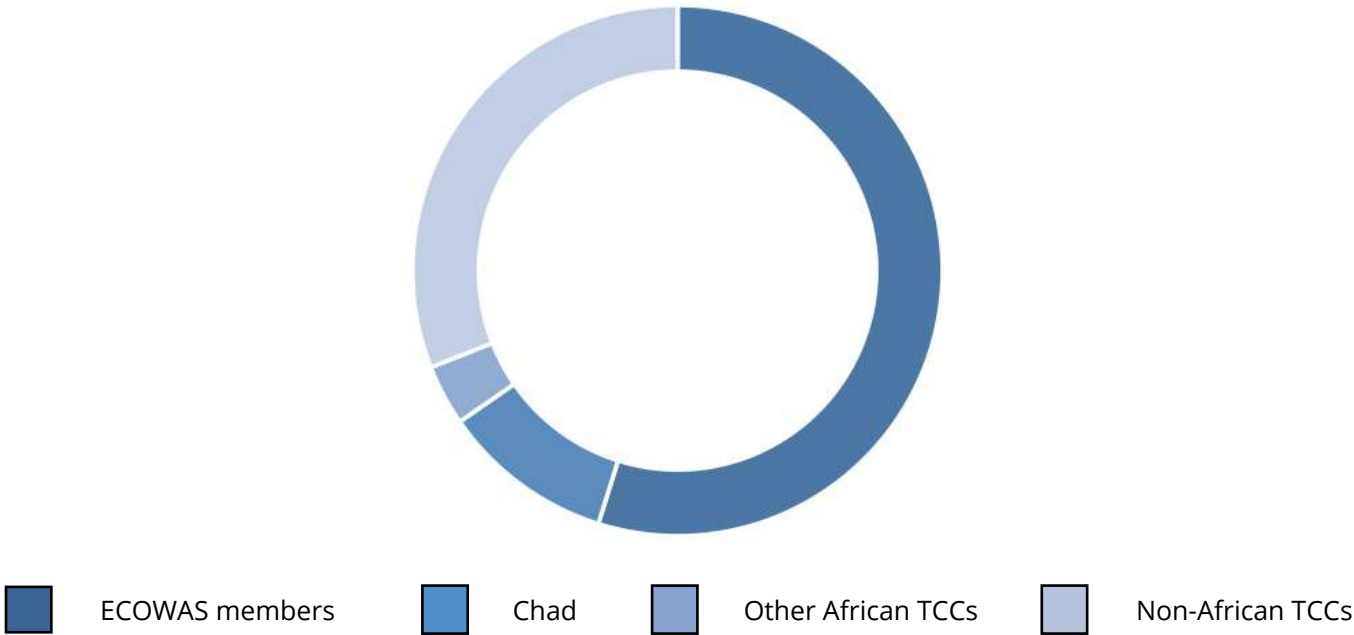
Within this trend, African troops have also taken up pivotal positions in sensitive contested regions. Ethiopian soldiers patrol Abyei, claimed by both Khartoum and Juba, on the inter-Sudanese border. Malawi, Tanzania, and South Africa staff the Force Intervention Brigade, a peace enforcement component of MONUSCO set up to fight militias in eastern DRC in 2013, although this effort has lost momentum in recent years. Regional actors play an even more extensive role in MINUSCA and especially MINUSMA (Figures 5 and 6). Roughly a quarter of uniformed personnel in the former mission are from the sub-regional Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and over half the latter come from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Chad, which has positioned itself as a security provider across the Sahel, also plays a significant role in MINUSMA, in addition to the new G5 Sahel.

Some observers worry that regionally driven missions undermine the integrity of UN forces. John Karlsrud warns of “a dramatic increase in regional and neighboring states’ contributions to peacekeeping operations with a strong self-interest in the outcome of the conflicts they engage in, [which is] moving UN peacekeeping away from the traditional principles of impartiality, consent of the main parties and the non-use of force except in self-defense or to protect civilians.”¹⁴ Last year’s debates over MINUSMA and the G5 Sahel point to the problems that can arise when regional actors aim to use the UN as part of broader military-led strategies. If states deploy their troops in parallel counter-terrorist and peacekeeping missions (and ask the UN to back both), insurgents are unlikely to distinguish between the two.

Nonetheless, UN missions with strong regional components may also offer a framework for neighbors and near neighbors of the host state to pool resources in ways that would otherwise be unsustainable. Both MINUSCA and MINUSMA replaced regional operations that suffered from limited resources. The pre-UN mission in CAR (African-led International Support Mission to CAR) faced accusations of serious indiscipline and a lack of impartiality. While MINUSCA has also struggled with cases of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by its personnel, in addition to the reports that it has failed to protect civilians cited above, it still provides a more robust security framework than its predecessor. In the case of Abyei, the contested region between the Sudans, the presence of Ethiopian troops under a UN banner allows Sudan and South Sudan to “maintain their slowly improving relations, by providing bilateral forums to mitigate potential conflict and prevent backsliding,” in addition to providing local security.¹⁵

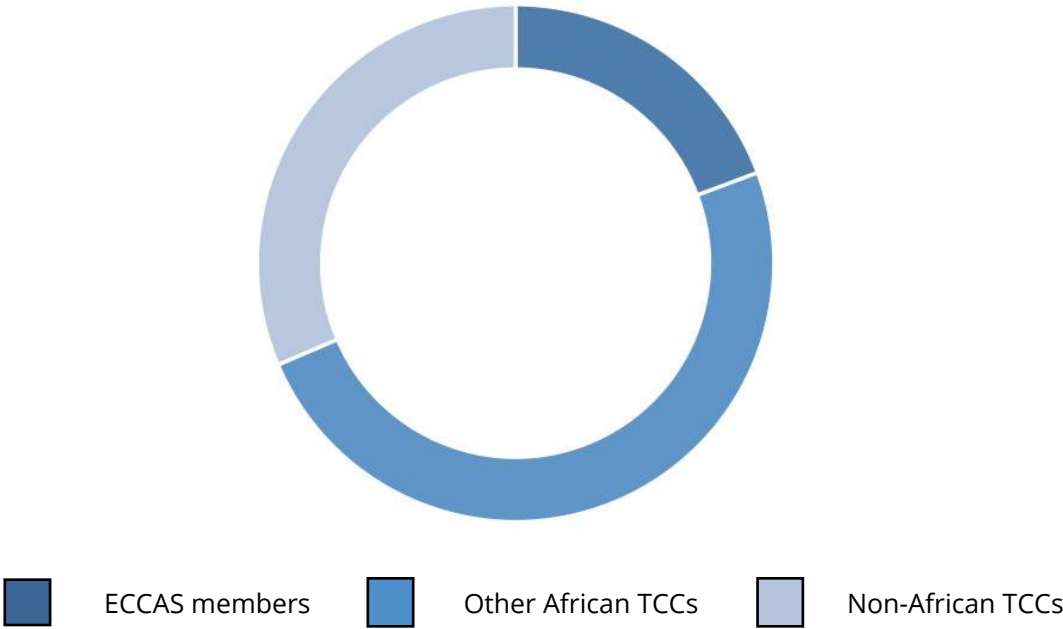
THIS IS INDICATIVE OF A BROADER MORAL AND REPUTATIONAL CHALLENGE FOR THE UN WHEN IT ENGAGES IN LONG-TERM CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN HIGHLY VOLATILE ENVIRONMENTS—THE NEAR-CERTAINTY THAT ITS MISSIONS WILL FACE ACCUSATIONS OF FAILING TO PROTECT VULNERABLE CIVILIANS

FIGURE 5: REGIONAL ORIGINS OF MINUSMA PERSONNEL, FEBRUARY 2018



SOURCE: DEPARTMENT OF PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

FIGURE 6: REGIONAL ORIGINS OF MINUSCA PERSONNEL, FEBRUARY 2018

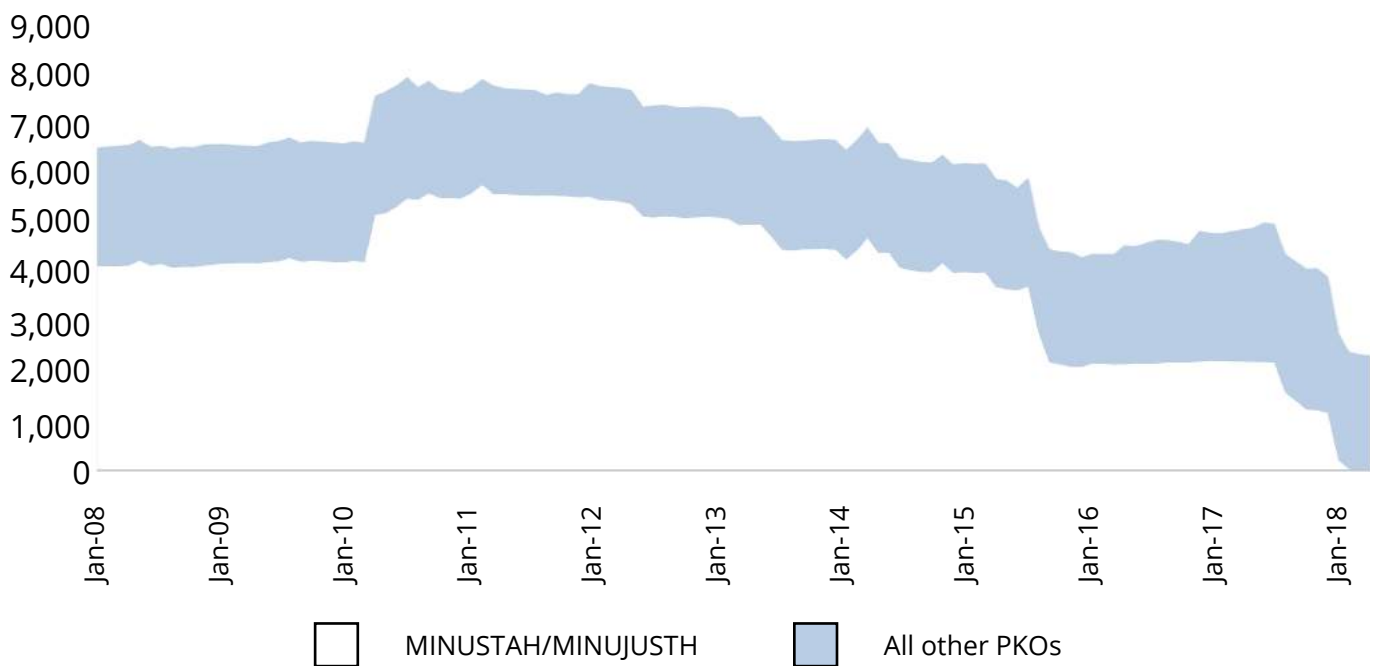


SOURCE: DEPARTMENT OF PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

The regionalization of peace operations has a further problematic consequence, which is to create excuses for non-regional powers to absent themselves from risky peace operations. The number of peacekeepers deploying to Africa from Asian countries—and especially the big South Asian troop contributors—has remained relatively steady, although India and Pakistan have avoided getting involved in Mali and CAR. This reflects their growing skepticism about the nature of “peacekeeping” in such environments, as well as the fact that both countries have domestic political reasons to avoid getting entangled in intercommunal religious tensions in CAR. The overall number of Latin American troops on UN missions has declined markedly in recent years as MINUSTAH drew down (Figure 7). While the number of Latin American troops in theaters other than Haiti has remained steady, relatively few have deployed to high-risk new environments such as CAR and Mali (although Peru has sent personnel to the former and El Salvador helicopters to the latter). In 2017, Brazil indicated that it could send a battalion to CAR, but pulled back from this offer in March 2018.

Brazil is not the only country to have had doubts about peace operations deployments in the last eighteen months. Having promised to send new blue helmets in 2016, Canada engaged in an extended internal debate on the issue through 2017, and only made a final pledge of helicopters and personnel to MINUSMA in March 2018. This long delay appears to have arisen from differences among politicians and military leaders over the level of risk involved in UN missions. In July 2017, the Japanese defense minister resigned over claims that he misled the public over dangers to peacekeepers in South Sudan (at the time of writing, Japan has just four personnel deployed in all UN missions). As the UN becomes more focused on a handful of large-scale but high-risk conflict management missions, the number of countries from outside the affected regions willing to deploy is liable to decrease.

FIGURE 7: LATIN AMERICAN PEACEKEEPING DEPLOYMENTS, 2008-18

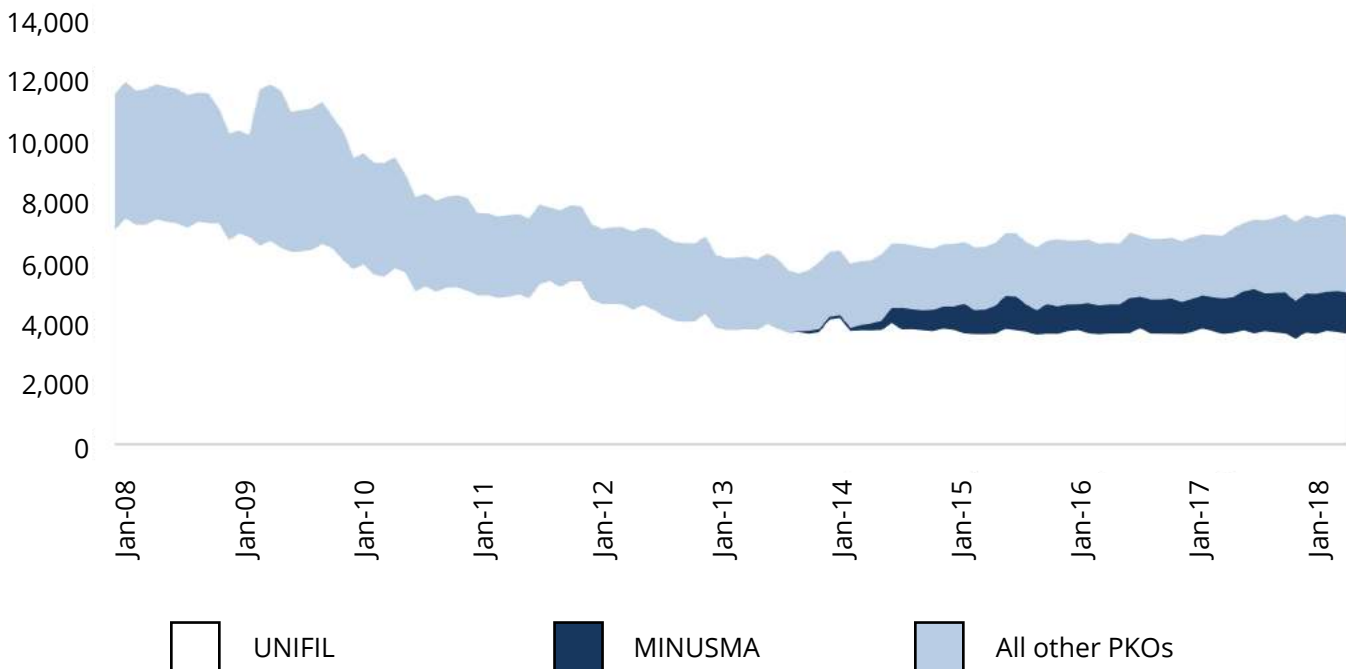


SOURCE: IPI PEACEKEEPING DATABASE

This represents a potential reversal for the UN, which has made strenuous efforts to expand the global pool of peacekeeping contributors in recent years. During the final years of the Obama administration, the US strongly supported these efforts, initiating a series of conferences on force generation. The most recent of these was in Vancouver in November 2017. This process, the future of which is in doubt under the Trump administration, succeeded in persuading a number of cautious states to stump up troops. In the course of 2018, for example, Portuguese special forces deployed to CAR and a British medical unit was based in South Sudan. As Ryan Rappa notes in his article for this report, China is making gradual progress towards fulfilling a 2015 pledge to deploy up to 8,000 troops on UN missions. UN officials note that these pledges, combined with an overall reduction in the number of UN personnel stemming from the drawdown of UNMIL and other missions, means that they can now be more selective in their approach to troop contributors. It has also made it easier to repatriate abusive and underperforming contingents. However, many non-African states are wary of getting involved in the continent’s hardest cases for safety reasons.

European nations represent a partial exception to this trend, having sent a range of high-end assets—including transport aircraft, helicopters, and special forces units—to MINUSMA. In total terms, the number of European troops on UN missions has been shrinking from a peak in the middle of the last decade, largely reflecting a gradual withdrawal from UNIFIL (Figure 8). Nonetheless, the European presence in MINUSMA alongside primarily regional African forces significantly enhances the capabilities of the force. Germany, which has traditionally been wary of both UN and African commitments, sent helicopters to Mali in 2017. This is a case of overlapping regional peacekeeping priorities, as European troop contributors prioritize the mission in order to help limit large movements of people and terrorist activities in the Sahel, while local peacekeepers want to stabilize their own neighborhood.

FIGURE 8: EUROPEAN PEACEKEEPING DEPLOYMENTS, 2008-18



SOURCE: IPI PEACEKEEPING DATABASE

The combination of these strategic priorities has not, however, always led to harmonious operational relations on the ground. European personnel have been accused of “NATO arrogance” towards their non-Western counterparts (a phenomenon that has long been familiar in Lebanon). A 2017 study by the Danish Institute of International Studies outlined how poorly equipped many African units in MINUSMA remain, some arriving with only half the equipment the UN requires, and yet they still bear the brunt of frontline risks.¹⁶

Not surprisingly, the Cruz report underlined that African members of MINUSMA have incurred a disproportionately high percentage of fatalities in recent missions, even considering their mounting numbers.¹⁷ This encapsulates the dangers of both conflict management missions in general, and the fact that often regional states are the only ones willing to tolerate and absorb the human costs of these missions. The facts that UN operations are growing riskier and more regionalized are interconnected: the long-term result may be a further diminution of non-regional states’ interest to engage seriously in missions in Africa.

3. THE FINANCIAL LEVEL

The operational and strategic issues associated with current UN missions were exacerbated through 2017 by debates over their cost. This was ironic, as the shutdown of UNOCI, MINUSTAH, and UNMIL resulted in a natural reduction of the peacekeeping budget, which has fallen to just under \$6.8 billion after hovering around \$8 billion for some years. A study by the US General Accounting Office published in February 2018 emphasized that UN missions remain a good value, calculating that a US deployment in CAR would cost twice as much as MINUSCA.¹⁸ Nonetheless, the Trump administration made peacekeeping cuts a political issue, leading to tensions in the Security Council and the (budgetary) Fifth Committee of the General Assembly in 2017.¹⁹ The ensuing diplomatic fights were at times more symbolic than substantive. In the first quarter of the year, incoming US Permanent Representative Nikki Haley reportedly threatened to boycott the renewal of the MONUSCO mandate unless there were severe force reductions, but she was ultimately willing to settle for a comparatively minor withdrawal of forces.

There was a similar pattern in the Fifth Committee in the second quarter of 2017, as the US initially demanded \$1 billion in savings, but eventually settled for half of that. The bulk of the eventual cuts came from MINUSTAH and UNMIL. Haley’s savings drive did, however, push Secretary-General Guterres to hasten steps towards shrinking UNAMID (a process the Fifth Committee encouraged by only approving half of the mission’s budget in the first instance while waiting for reform plans). As Ryan Rappa notes, an on-the-ground study of MONUSCO found that even relatively limited financial and force reductions had a significant effect on the UN’s work in the eastern DRC.²⁰ The operation moved towards a more flexible presence in the region, uprooting static bases with little time to prepare vulnerable local populations for the change or for humanitarian actors to establish non-military protection measures.

The Trump administration is likely to aim for more peacekeeping cuts in future, and has indicated that it intends to contribute no more than 25 percent of the peacekeeping budget, as opposed to 28 percent in the Obama era. The US is not, however, the only actor that wants to limit the costs of peace operations. The half-billion dollar cut in the UN peacekeeping budget was also close to EU preferences. While the last eighteen months do not suggest that funding for peace operations is about to collapse, it will tighten further.

This has constrained debates on one potential option for easing tensions over the balance between regional and UN forces in Africa: funding African missions from the UN budget. This long-standing idea, endorsed by the HIPPO report and backed by Secretary-General Guterres, made some progress in the final years of the Obama administration. The US appeared open to a formula by which the UN would cover 75 percent of African mission costs (subject to Security Council authorization) if African states covered the remaining 25 percent. The Trump administration has dampened these discussions, and one of its primary reasons for opposing the G5 Sahel concept was a concern that the UN would have to pay for the force.

These institutional and mission-specific disputes are liable to continue as long as the Big 5 UN operations continue to require indefinite funding. In the course of 2017, Secretary-General Guterres and his advisors tabled ideas to increase funds for conflict prevention and sustaining peace, for example by repurposing money from the peacekeeping budget to the UN Peacebuilding Fund.²¹ The Secretary-General sketched out these ideas in more detail in a report in the first quarter of 2018. But Guterres has emphasized that he is looking for “token” sums for prevention. The costs of large conflict management missions will still dwarf more focused spending on sustaining peace for some time to come.

4. THE LEVEL OF VALUES

The search for savings has also become entangled with debates about the values that underpin peace operations, dividing the permanent members of the Security Council. Over the last two years, there have been intense debates about the linkage between peace operations and human rights. This is particularly relevant to cases such as the DRC, where UN human rights monitors play an important role in tracking complex violence.

In May and June 2017, Chinese diplomats made a strong, though ultimately unsuccessful, push in the Fifth Committee to cut funding for the human rights components of UN peace operations.²² Beijing then joined Moscow in April 2018 to abstain on a Security Council resolution extending the mandate of MINUJUSTH, a small police and civilian mission that replaced MINUSTAH. One of their stated reasons for doing so was a push by the P3 to give human rights a more prominent role in the mandate, under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. These frictions were indicative of broader tensions among UN members over efforts by both the P3 and Secretariat to link security and human rights, such as former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s Human Rights up Front (HRuF) initiative on early warning. Skeptical powers including China and Russia succeeded in cutting funding for the top HRuF-related post in the Secretary-General’s office in the December 2017 session of the Fifth Committee, and have also resisted proposals to mainstream conflict prevention in UN development reform. As Ryan Rappa points out, such debates may intensify as China continues to expand its role in peace operations.

While non-Western powers linked questions over human rights to UN funding, the US tied its criticisms of the cost of peacekeeping to the *political* limits of peace operations in 2017. Reflecting wider concerns about the unclear goals of today’s conflict management missions, Ambassador Haley has repeatedly asked if certain missions—most notably MONUSCO—are pursuing credible political strategies, and if it is worth paying for them if they are not. “The goal of any peacekeeping mission should be to ensure political solutions to conflicts are actually realized,” she told the Council on Foreign Relations in May 2017.²³ As we have noted, Haley ultimately did not enforce drastic cuts on peacekeeping. But her criticism of the UN’s current approach to conflict management fueled an unusually frank debate inside the institution on how to overhaul peace operations that gained pace in 2017 and 2018.

5. THE CONCEPTUAL LEVEL

The pressures weighing on UN operations have had one positive consequence: an increase of self-reflection and fresh thinking within the organization. Failure has driven innovations in peacekeeping in the past. The disasters of Srebrenica and Rwanda forced the Secretariat to reflect on its weaknesses in the 1990s, paving the way for the Brahimi report. Doubts about the sustainability of the UN's current generation of conflict management missions appear to have had a similar effect. Former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon encouraged the institution to address its flaws through the HIPPO report, and Secretary-General Guterres has doubled down on this process. He warned on taking office that the UN has been “under-performing” in the field of peace and security.²⁴ The new chief's attitude, coupled with the budgetary threats by the US, has sparked fresh debate over the future of peace operations.

The Secretariat has established a new series of independent strategic reviews of its missions by non-UN officials, responding to criticisms of its in-house self-evaluation by the US and other member states. We have already noted that a series of reviews of large SPMs raised questions about their ability to focus on their main political tasks. The Secretariat has also initiated “red team” exercises, in which internal and external experts review mission plans. These innovations are not necessarily entirely radical—the majority of independent reviews to date have been conducted by individuals with recent UN experience—but signal a new level of openness. The same was true of the Secretariat's decision to publish and widely disseminate the Cruz report on peacekeeping fatalities (noted above), which broke with mainstream thinking on the use of force by UN troops, emphasizing the need to project and use strength.

Many UN officials, analysts, and troop contributing countries felt that Cruz went too far. Other critics of existing UN operations have come from very different angles. The Secretary-General himself has encouraged an emphasis the political dimension, following in the footsteps of the HIPPO report. This has been tied to a focus on prevention and efforts to help countries develop their own capacities for sustaining peace. A recent joint study by the World Bank and the UN, *Pathways for Peace*, summarized this approach, recognizing that peace operations play a role in preventing conflicts from escalating, as well as weaknesses of current international crisis response tools, including peacekeeping.²⁵ Even advocates of blue helmet missions have called for a retreat from unsustainable conflict management efforts, and a return to more limited and achievable missions. “UN peacekeeping needs to go back to basics rather than move beyond its fundamental principles,” as Alexandra Novosseloff argues, and this means concentrating on temporary, properly equipped and strategically focused efforts rather than large-scale and open-ended deployments.²⁶

Guterres has further signaled his sympathy for this point of view, by arguing (i) against overloading operational mandates, and (ii) proposing that African states and organizations may be better placed to run missions that require more robust forces on the continent.²⁷ This is one reason for his advocacy of more predictable funding for African missions, although as we have noted this is still controversial.

The Secretary-General's desire to streamline peace operations also resonates in his proposals for reforms to the UN Secretariat, rolled out through mid-2017. These include suggestions to rationalize management and budgetary processes (only accepted in part by the Fifth Committee) and give the Department of Field Support greater autonomy in running field operations. In addition, Guterres initiated a partial merger of Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations

(DPKO)—involving the pooling of their regional departments, although still under two Under-Secretaries-General—to improve their coherence.

It is still not clear where these diverse intellectual and institutional efforts will lead, although they have already had some concrete outcomes such as the launch of a new High-level Advisory Board on Mediation to support the Secretary-General. DPKO has launched a new Action for Peacekeeping initiative that is meant to weave together existing and new policy reforms. But other factors, including the real willingness of the Security Council to take a more parsimonious approach to designing peacekeeping mandates as well as the politics of the Fifth Committee, will shape the Secretariat's ability to deliver in these areas. The precise outcome of recent debates over peace operations is perhaps less important than the fact that these discussions are taking place with such intensity in the first place. They are indicative of a general perception that the current model of UN crisis management operations cannot last, and they may engender more creative thinking on alternatives.

6. CONCLUSION: THE PERSISTENT CASE FOR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

While there may be fresh thinking about peace and security at the UN, it has yet to reshape facts on the ground. Despite the mounting skepticism about the UN's conflict management operations, the Security Council and Secretariat spent much of 2017 and 2018 looking for ways to reinforce most of them. While cutting back MONUSCO and UNAMID, the Council agreed to an expansion of MINUSCA, and UN officials also negotiated with the South Sudanese government the much-delayed deployment of a Regional Protection Force to reinforce UNMISS in Juba. The Council originally mandated the force in mid-2016 after an upsurge in violence, but the first members of this new formation did not get on the ground until August 2017. The fact that the UN persisted so long in talks on this issue demonstrates how draining conflict management can be. But it is also indicative of the fact that the UN is not yet ready to walk away from overburdened missions, even if it lacks a political end-game.

Even with the talk of prevention and sustaining peace at UN headquarters and the Secretary-General's determined efforts to support mediation, the fact remains that the organization remains deeply invested in conflict management operations on the ground. While these operations may only do limited good, the Council remains unlikely to cut them short if this risks large-scale atrocities and killing. UNAMID can be drawn down precisely because the conflict it attempted to halt has largely burned out. While the ACLED data cited above suggests that violence is rising round the other Big 5 missions, they may at least keep it in check or facilitate humanitarian efforts to mitigate it. For all their flaws, UN conflict management missions still have some utility.

There are three basic defenses for these missions. The first is that they provide **humanitarian safety nets** in countries which would otherwise face even more rampant violence. Studies of data from earlier peace operations suggest that blue helmet deployments successfully suppress battle deaths in post-conflict countries.²⁸ It is not clear that the Big 5 missions are playing this role as successfully. In South Sudan, the UN offers protection to a vast number of IDPs on its bases, but these represent less than 20 percent of all displaced people in the country. At best, conflict management missions are imperfect safety nets for the vulnerable in areas of ongoing violence. Nonetheless, they provide a basic political and security infrastructure for humanitarian actors and direct protection to some at-risk populations. In a case such as Iraq, an SPM has also found itself playing a safety net role by default.

As we have noted, a second defense of conflict management operations is to emphasize their **regional security** dimensions outlined above. If the UN did not offer a basic security framework in cases like CAR or the DRC, there would be a greater risk that (i) regional stabilization missions would prove unsustainable; and (ii) regional political actors would be sucked into conflict in the resulting political vacuums. MONUSCO's presence in the eastern DRC has not stopped the country's neighbors supporting proxies in the resource-rich region. But it acts as a tripwire against direct outside interventions comparable to those of the 1990s, when countries from across southern and central Africa engaged in its civil war. Many of South Sudan's neighbors have been involved directly or indirectly in its internal war, but the UN presence raises the potential costs of heavier interventions

This points to a third and final defense of the UN's conflict management efforts: while they often underperform at a tactical level, they still make a strategic contribution to **conflict containment**. MINUSMA has, for example, often failed to counter jihadist attacks in northern Mali, but Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb and its allies have not been able to seize territory on the same scale as they did in 2012–13, precipitating the French intervention. As Figure 2 above shows, the number of conflict events in Mali have not gone back to the level they reached in 2013—while violent incidents in CAR remain significantly below the peak they reached in 2014, when the country appeared at risk of genocide.

It is hard to prove that the presence of a specific peace operation prevents counterfactual spikes in violence (alternative factors, such as the French counter-terrorism operation in Mali, may be more influential). It is worth asking whether there are more cost-effective means to provide protection and humanitarian assistance. Nonetheless, it is probable that the Security Council will keep on rolling over these missions, largely as a form of political and humanitarian risk management.

There is thus a need for a hefty dose of realism in debates about the reform of peace operations as the previous era of peace operations comes to a close. Should the Council be more frank in directing conflict management missions to focus on purely humanitarian and protection matters and cut back the political elements of their mandates? Can the UN identify alternative civilian protection strategies to peacekeeping in some areas that would reduce its long-term blue commitments? Over time, the current focus on prevention and sustaining peace through long-term support to institutions and societies may help ease these situations. But in the short term, it is necessary to recognize that realizing the “primacy of politics” will not happen overnight, and that conflict management tasks of peace operations are therefore here to stay as an essential feature of the UN's current toolbox.

ENDNOTES

- ¹It should be noted that MINUSTAH faced a different set of conflict dynamics to UNMIL and UNOCI, involving the collapse of rule of law and institutions rather than a civil war.
- ²United Nations, General Assembly, Security Council, “Uniting Our Strengths for Peace—Politics, Partnership and People: Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations,” A/70/95–S/2015/446, June 17, 2015, p. 44.
- ³António Guterres, “Remarks to Security Council High-level Debate on Collective Action to Improve Peacekeeping Operations,” March 28, 2018.
- ⁴*The Art of the Possible: MONUSCO’s New Mandate*, Congo Research Group Consultation Report No. 1 (March 2018), p. 10.
- ⁵Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz et al., *Improving Security of United Nations Peacekeepers: We Need to Change the Way We are Doing Business*, United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, December 19, 2017, p. 7.
- ⁶United Nations, Security Council, “Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union–United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur,” S/2018/154, February 22, 2018, p. 8.
- ⁷United Nations, Security Council, “Special report of the Secretary-General on the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan,” S/2018/143, February 20, 2018, p. 4.
- ⁸Office of the UN Secretary-General, “Note to Correspondents on the Findings of the Central African Republic Investigation,” January 24, 2018; <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/note-correspondents/2018-01-24/note-correspondents-findings-central-african-republic>.
- ⁹Santos Cruz et al., *Improving Security of United Nations Peacekeepers*, p. i.
- ¹⁰United Nations, Security Council, “Letter dated 15 November 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council,” S/2017/966, November 20, 2017.
- ¹¹On Libya, see United Nations, Security Council, “Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Support Mission in Libya,” S/2017/726, August 22, 2017, paras. 81–83.
- ¹²United Nations, General Assembly, Security Council, “Special report on the strategic review of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan,” A/72/312–S/2017/696, August 10, 2017, p. 5.
- ¹³See also Paul D. Williams and Thong Nguyen, *Neighborhood Dynamics in UN Peacekeeping Operations* (New York: International Peace Institute, 2018).
- ¹⁴John Karlsrud, “Are UN Missions Moving Towards ‘Chapter Seven and a Half’ Operations?” IPI Global Observatory, February 12, 2018; <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2018/02/peacekeeping-chapter-seven-half/>.
- ¹⁵Ashish Pradhan and Casie Copeland, “Keeping the Hotline Open Between Sudan and South Sudan,” Crisis Group Commentary, April 13, 2018; <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/sudan/keeping-hotline-open-between-sudan-and-south-sudan>.
- ¹⁶Peter Albrect, Signe-Marie Cold Ravnkilde, and Rikke Haugaard, *Friction on the Frontline* (Copenhagen: Danish Institute of International Studies, 2017).
- ¹⁷Santos Cruz et al., *Improving Security of United Nations Peacekeepers*, p. 8.
- ¹⁸US General Accounting Office, *UN Peacekeeping: Cost Estimate for Hypothetical US Operation Exceeds Actual Costs for Comparable UN Operation*, GAO-18-243, February 2018.
- ¹⁹See Ryan Rappa’s contribution to this publication.
- ²⁰Lauren Spink, *Protection with Less Presence: How the Peacekeeping Operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo is Attempting to Deliver Protection with Fewer Resources* (Washington, DC: CIVIC, 2017).
- ²¹Paige Arthur, “The Secretary-General’s Sustaining Peace Report—The Peacebuilding Fund Gets a Boost” (New York: Center on International Cooperation, 2018).
- ²²Louis Charbonneau, “China Pushes to Cut UN Human Rights Posts,” Human Rights Watch, June 7, 2017; <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/06/07/china-pushes-cut-un-human-rights-posts>.
- ²³“A Conversation with Nikki Haley,” transcript from event at the Council on Foreign Relations, New York, March 29, 2017.
- ²⁴Internal UN document, January 4, 2017, on file with the author.
- ²⁵United Nations and World Bank, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2018).
- ²⁶Alexandra Novosseloff, “UN Peacekeeping: Back to Basics is Not Backwards,” IPI Global Observatory, April 13, 2018; <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2018/04/peacekeeping-basics-is-not-backwards>.

²⁷Arthur Boutellis, "Hostile Forces: Cruz Report Risks Distracting from the Strategic Context," IPI Global Observatory, February 5, 2018; <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2018/02/cruz-report-strategic-context>.

²⁸Lisa Hultman, Jacob Kathman, and Megan Shannon, "United Nations Peacekeeping and Civilian Protection in Civil War," *American Journal of Political Science* 57, no. 4 (2013), pp. 875-91.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ANTÓNIO GUTERRES, UN SECRETARY-GENERAL; DONALD J. TRUMP, US PRESIDENT; ROSEMARY A. DICARLO, INCOMING USG FOR DPA; XI JINPING, PRESIDENT OF CHINA; ©UN PHOTO/ALBERT GONZÁLEZ FARRAN

THE YEAR IN DATA 2017-18: LESS PEACEKEEPING, A GROWING ROLE FOR CHINA, AND A PUSH FOR MORE WOMEN LEADERS

Ryan Rappa

2017 was a pivotal year for the international system, including momentous leadership changes in the United States (US) and at the United Nations (UN) itself. While the new US administration took an increasingly inward-looking approach, including scaling back its commitments to UN peacekeeping, China's leadership continued to consolidate its power and expand its global influence, including through its contributions to the UN. Peacekeeping continued to contract, while political missions stayed relatively constant, albeit in the context of a growing policy focus on peacebuilding and prevention. The incoming Secretary-General renewed the UN's focus on conflict prevention, and also made progress on appointing more women to senior leadership roles—although at a higher rate at headquarters than in the field. Diversifying field leadership in terms of national origin was also an area for improvement in 2017 and beyond. We explore these developments, among others, through our datasets on peace operations.

TRENDS IN UN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

The recent trend towards a gradual scaling back of UN peacekeeping continued in 2017 and early 2018, driven largely by the closure of three long-standing peacekeeping operations: MINUSTAH (Haiti), UNOCI (Côte d'Ivoire), and, in March 2018, UNMIL (Liberia). Of the remaining 14 peacekeeping operations, reductions to authorized troop levels in UNAMID (Darfur), UNISFA (Abyei), and MONUSCO (Democratic Republic of Congo) brought the total number of uniformed personnel deployed in UN peacekeeping operations down to 91,000 by March 2018, at the close of UNMIL. This represents a notable drop from the all-time peak of around 107,000 in 2015, but is still above the previous low of 90,500 in 2013.

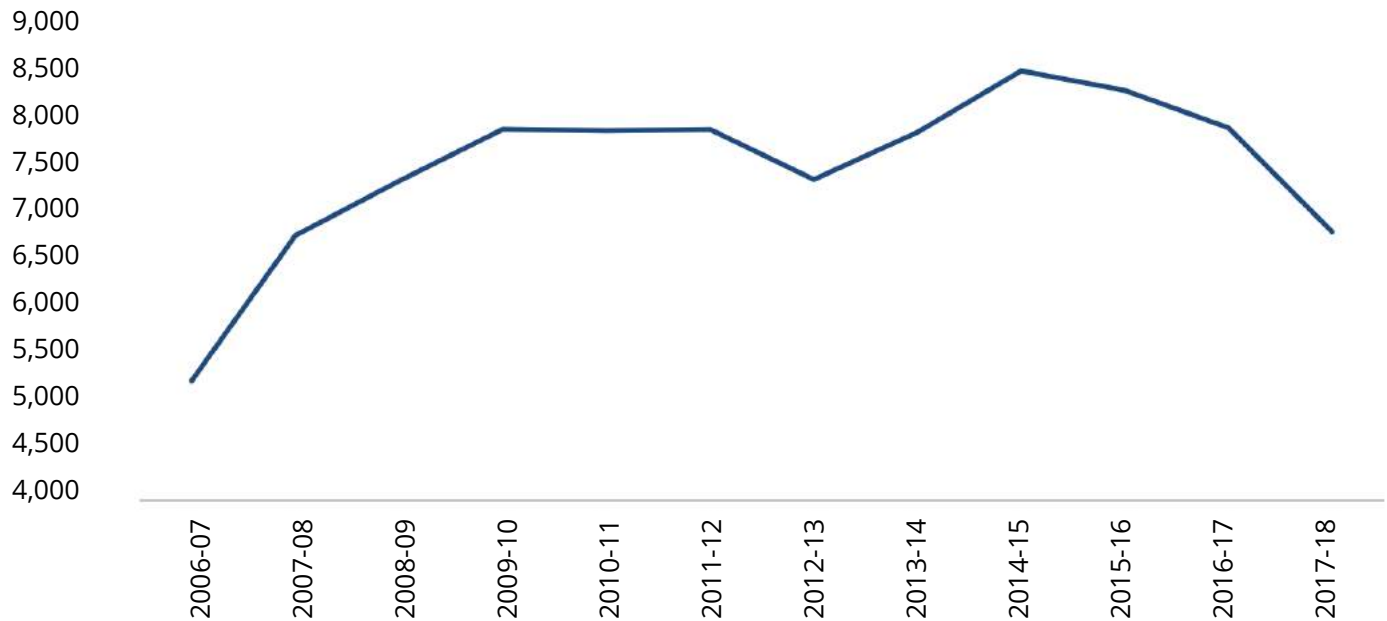
FIGURE 1: UN PEACEKEEPERS, JANUARY 1999-JANUARY 2018



SOURCES: UNITED NATIONS, IPI PEACEKEEPING DATABASE, CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The downward trend was clearly reflected in a reduction in costs of military and police personnel, civilian personnel, and operations across all DPKO-led peacekeeping operations. Budgets for peacekeeping for 2017–18 hit a ten-year low. This will have been a source of satisfaction in some member state capitals, following years of pressure to reduce the peacekeeping budget from its 2014–15 peak.

FIGURE 2: UN PEACEKEEPING BUDGETS, 2006/07-2017/18 (NOMINAL USD MILLIONS)

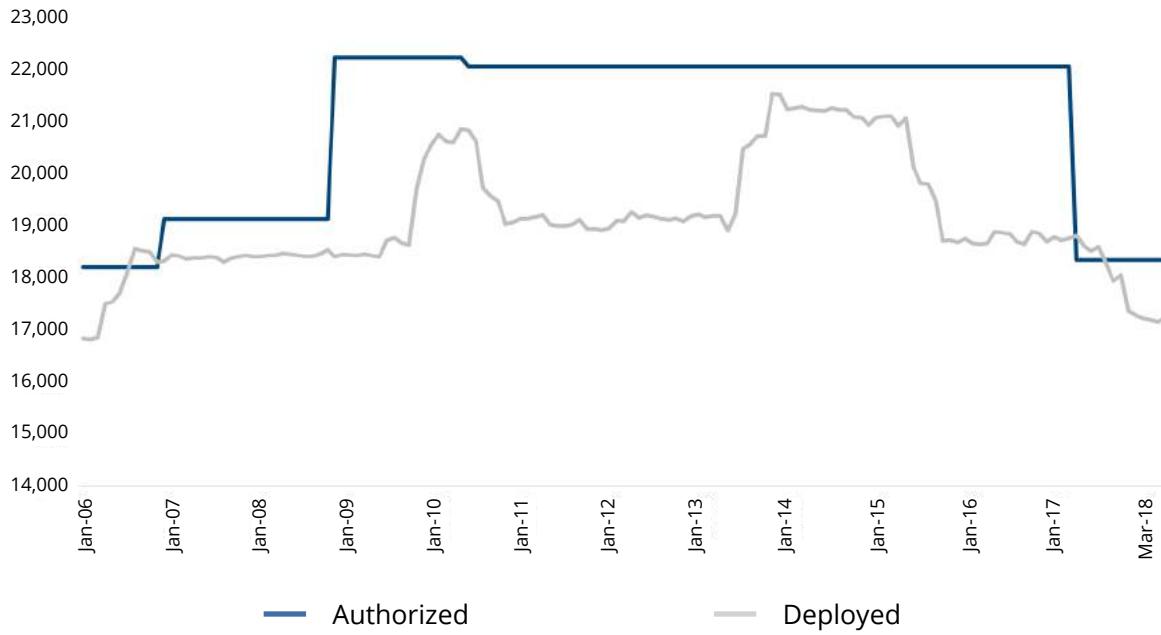


SOURCES: UNITED NATIONS, CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

However, the data show a fuller underlying picture (see graphs below): the Security Council's 2017 cuts to authorized force levels in MONUSCO and UNAMID largely reflected longstanding gaps in actual deployment (Figures 3 and 4).¹ Large gaps between authorized and deployed troop levels remained in the cases of South Sudan (UNMISS) and Mali (MINUSMA), where troop surges previously authorized by the Council have not yet been realized (Figures 5 and 6). The average gap between authorized and deployed numbers of uniformed personnel in multidimensional missions widened to almost 1,500 by the end of 2017, up from about 1,000 in 2015. In short, Council members continued to exert downward pressure on peacekeeping overall, and in some high-priority cases they remained unable to persuade sufficient troop contributors to deploy.

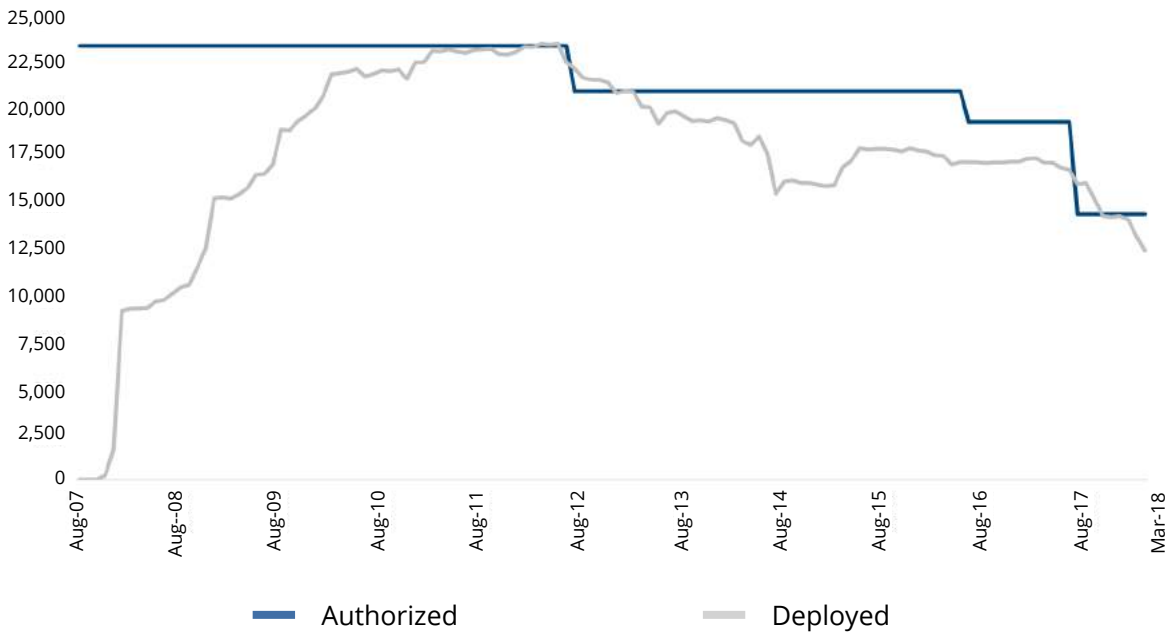
In his essay for this publication, Richard Gowan explores factors underlying these trends, especially how the changing character of peace operations contributes to a reluctance among traditional troop contributors to increase their commitments, especially for more challenging contexts. Another factor may be financial. Despite increases to the longstanding troop reimbursement rate in 2014, a 2017 Department of Field Support (DFS) survey found that average per capita costs to troop contributors in peacekeeping operations still outweighed the reimbursements received from the UN²; the impact of this on deployment rates bears further scrutiny.

FIGURE 3: UNIFORMED PERSONNEL IN MONUSCO, SEPTEMBER 1999-MARCH 2018



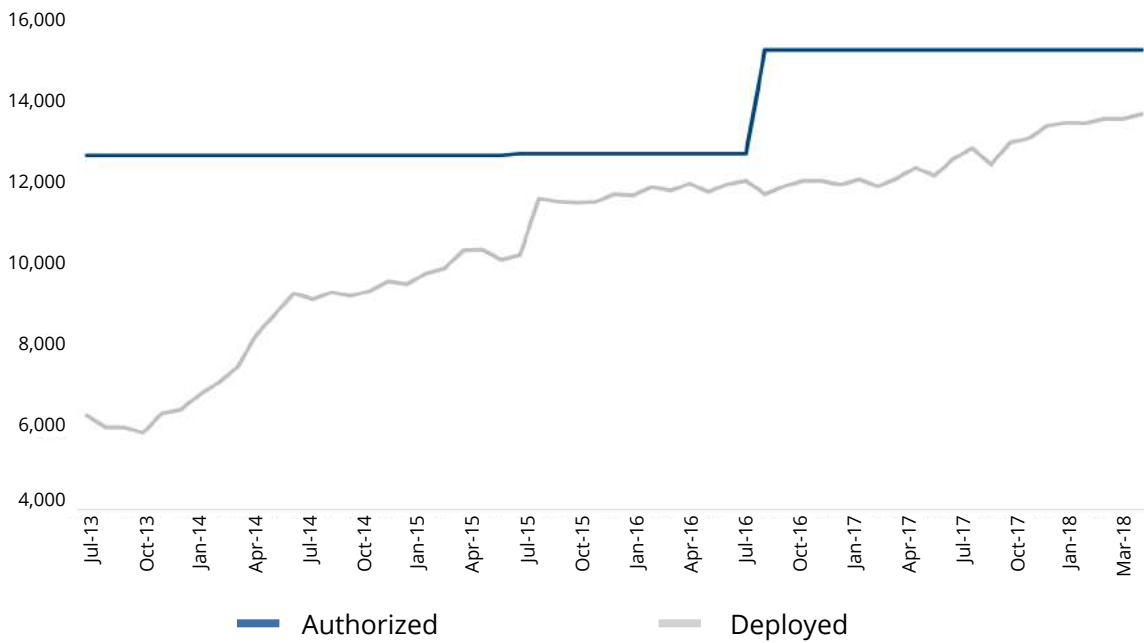
SOURCES: UNITED NATIONS, CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

FIGURE 4: UNIFORMED PERSONNEL IN UNAMID, AUGUST 2007-MARCH 2018



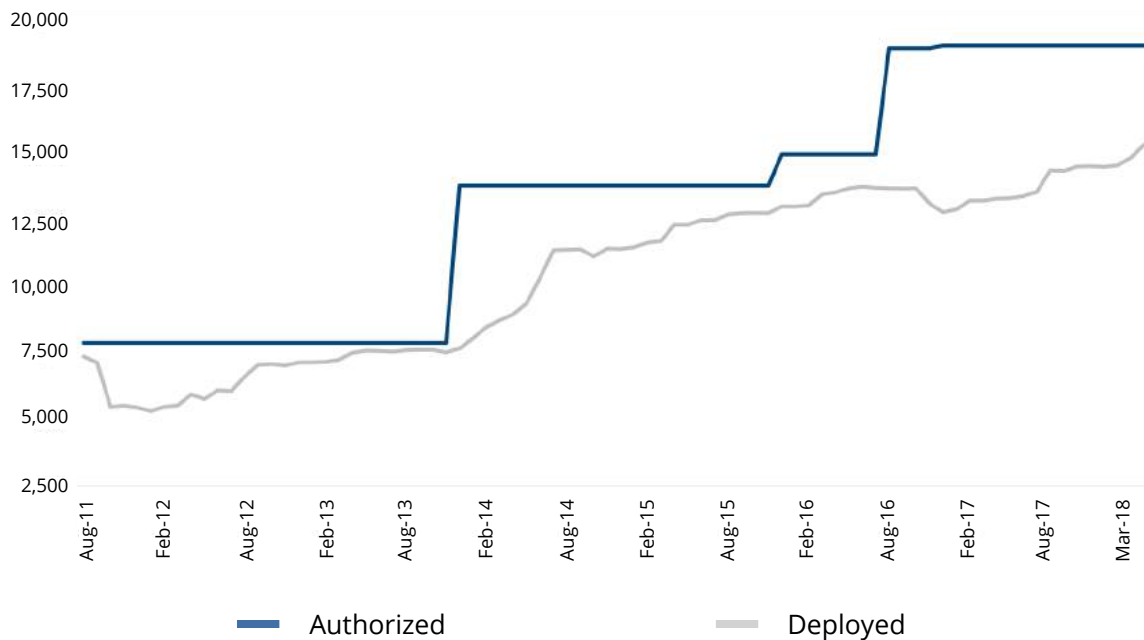
SOURCES: UNITED NATIONS, CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

FIGURE 5: UNIFORMED PERSONNEL IN MINUSMA, JULY 2013-MARCH 2018



SOURCES: UNITED NATIONS, CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

FIGURE 6: UNIFORMED PERSONNEL IN UNMISS, AUGUST 2011-MARCH 2018



SOURCES: UNITED NATIONS, CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

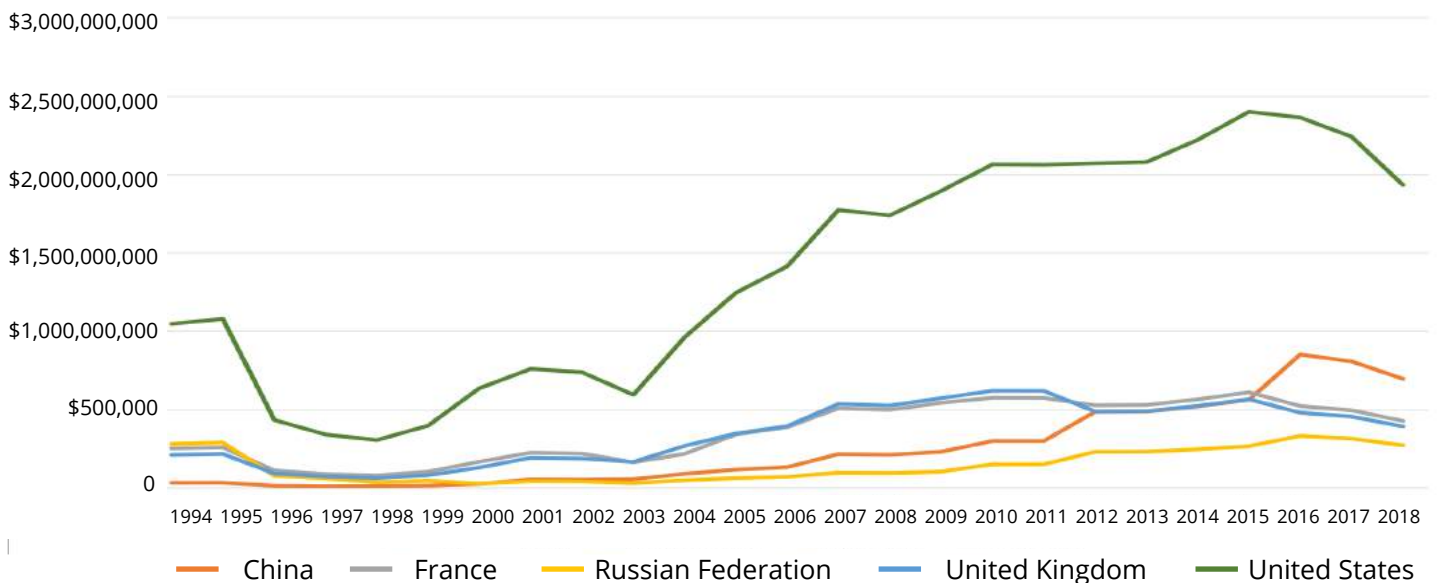
THE US STEPS BACK, CHINA STEPS FORWARD

While the US remained by far the largest financial contributor, peacekeeping data for 2017 offers an interesting lens on the shifting roles of the US and China in multilateral fora. The trend towards deepening Chinese engagement continued, thrown into sharper relief by signals from the US of its declining appetite to fund UN peacekeeping at the same level it has been.

China continued to fulfill its 2015 pledge of ever-larger contributions to the UN.⁴ As of 2017, China contributed 10.25 percent of the peacekeeping budget (about \$800 million) and 7.92 percent of the regular budget (about \$428 million). Although still less than half the US contribution, these numbers have been on an upward trajectory for more than a decade. For the peacekeeping budget, China's contributions saw a sharp increase as its effective rate jumped in 2016, although recent cuts to the peacekeeping budget mean that its contributions have also ticked down slightly.

The US meanwhile unveiled a plan to erase \$285 million from its contribution to the UN regular budget for 2018–19 (a 23 percent reduction from its 2016–17 contribution of \$1.2 billion).⁵ Having pushed hard for the \$600 million reduction to the peacekeeping budget approved by the General Assembly in 2017, it further announced its intention to drop annual contributions to UN peacekeeping by 3 percent of the overall peacekeeping budget (about \$240 million) going forward.⁶ Commentators signaled the likelihood of further cuts ahead, given the political climate in the US administration.⁷

FIGURE 7: UN PEACEKEEPING ASSESSED FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS BY THE P5 (NOMINAL USD), 1994-2017⁸



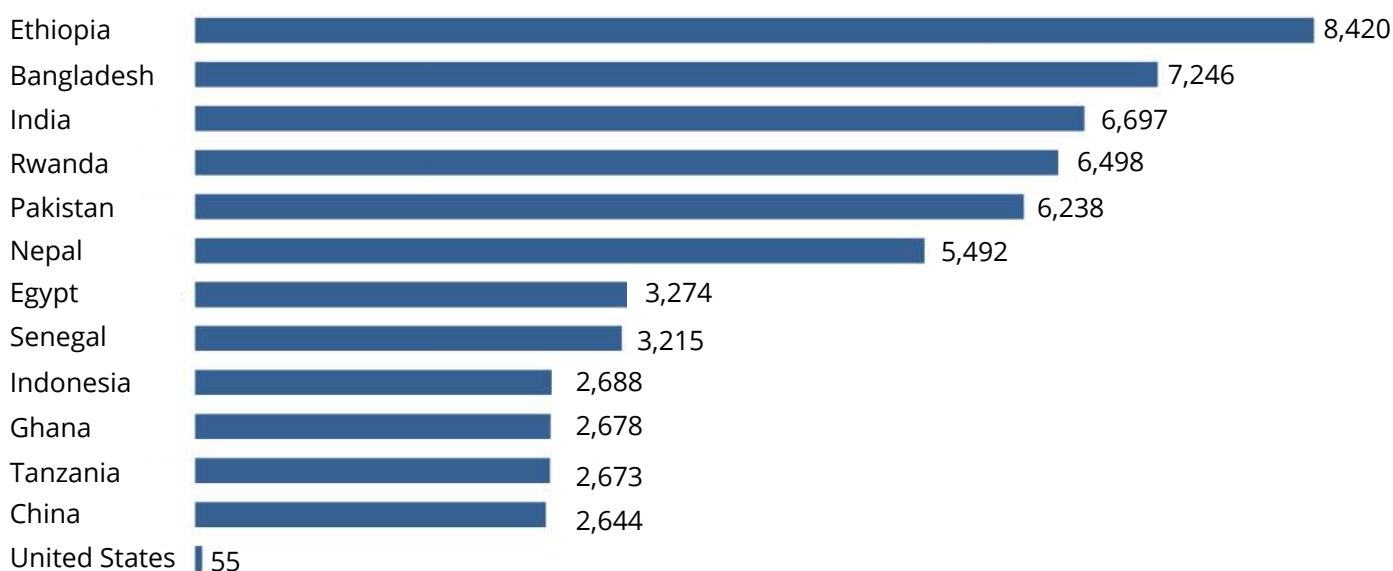
SOURCES: IPI PEACEKEEPING DATABASE, UNITED NATIONS, CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

In addition to financial contributions, China's contributions of peacekeepers continued to increase. Whereas the vast majority of peacekeepers still come from Africa and South Asia (see Richard Gowan's article in this publication for a fuller discussion), China increased its troop contributions from a few dozen at the turn of the century to almost 2,500 by the end of 2017. This represents almost twice the combined personnel contributions of the four other permanent members of the UN Security Council.

In September 2017, China reiterated its willingness to further raise its personnel contributions up to 8,000 troops and police, and completed the UN registration process to make them available.⁹ If implemented, the contribution of 8,000 Chinese peacekeepers would transform the face of UN peacekeeping, making China one of the two or three leading contributors. (Not coincidentally, it would also neatly meet the current gap between authorized and deployed forces.)

FIGURE 8: UNIFORMED PERSONNEL CONTRIBUTIONS BY COUNTRY, DECEMBER 2017

The top 12 troop contributing countries (TCCs)... and the United States, which ranked 73rd



SOURCE: UNITED NATIONS

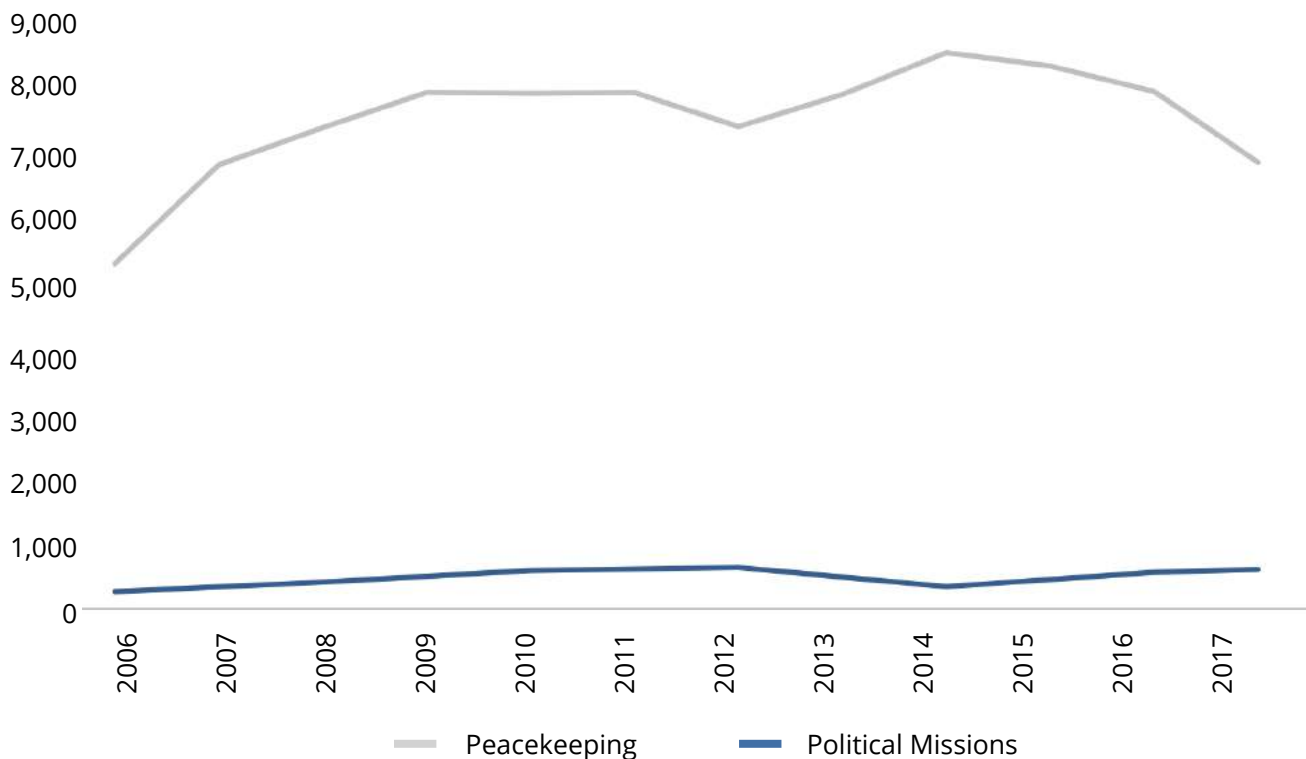
Despite these developments, there could still be obstacles to China's expansion. Positive feedback on Chinese troops' performance in MINUSMA in 2017 has helped to counterbalance negative perceptions after Chinese peacekeepers "abandoned their positions" during the 2016 hotel attack in Juba, South Sudan.¹⁰ But China's experience with peacekeeping is still relatively recent and there may still be questions, including in Beijing, about its appetite to extend its exposure in such volatile settings. Further, China could receive pushback from other member states if it continues behind-the-scenes efforts to curtail peacekeeping missions' involvement in human rights monitoring. But the trend towards growing Chinese influence seems set to continue.

SPECIAL POLITICAL MISSIONS

In the face of changing conflict patterns, and in parallel with the decline in peacekeeping operations, UN member states and officials have been wrestling for several years with how best to pursue conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Proposals to carry forward this agenda were a central part of the platform presented in 2017 by incoming Secretary-General António Guterres, including in his report in January 2018 on sustaining peace.

The 2017 data for special political missions does not, so far, indicate that the decline in investment for peacekeeping has translated to increased resources for peacebuilding or prevention operations. The number of special political missions engaged in prevention or peacebuilding remained constant again in 2017 at thirteen missions (the new UN Verification Mission in Colombia replaced the previous UN mission supporting the peace process), and ten special envoys. There was some incremental growth in the overall budget envelope for special political missions—including an expansion of, for example, the office of the Special Envoy in Yemen—but part of the increase is also accounted for by growth in monitoring and investigative work related to sanctions regimes and arms control, which is covered under the same funding envelope. Overall, the budget for special political missions stands at around 8 percent of that for peacekeeping.

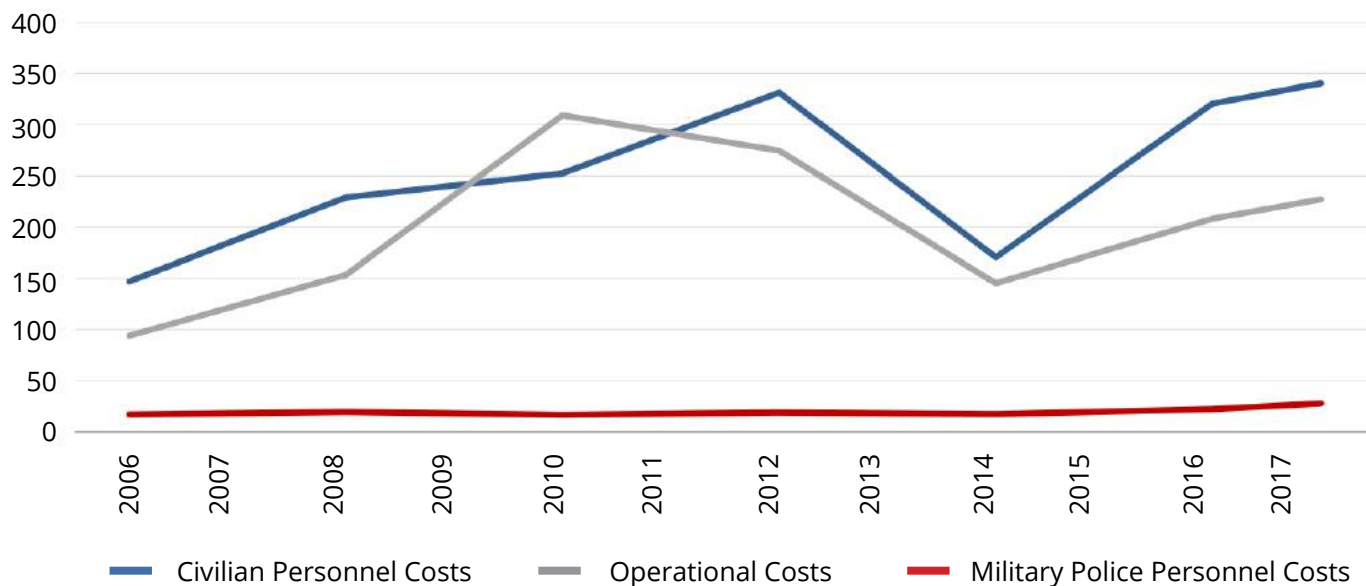
FIGURE 9: RESOURCES FOR UN PEACEKEEPING VS. SPECIAL POLITICAL MISSIONS, 2006-17 (NOMINAL USD MILLIONS)



SOURCES: UNITED NATIONS; CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION¹¹

Special political missions are of course not a good proxy for member states' investment in conflict prevention and peacebuilding more generally, which includes a wide range of tools such as the Peacebuilding Fund, work by UN agencies, and support to non-UN actors including regional organizations and NGOs. Multidimensional peacekeeping operations, through their police and civilian components, also undertake many of the same peacebuilding and conflict prevention activities as those in "political" missions. Nonetheless, there remains a striking discrepancy between expenditures on military operations versus civilian peacebuilding.

FIGURE 10: UN SPECIAL POLITICAL MISSION EXPENDITURES, 2006-2017 (NOMINAL USD MILLIONS)



SOURCES: UNITED NATIONS; CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

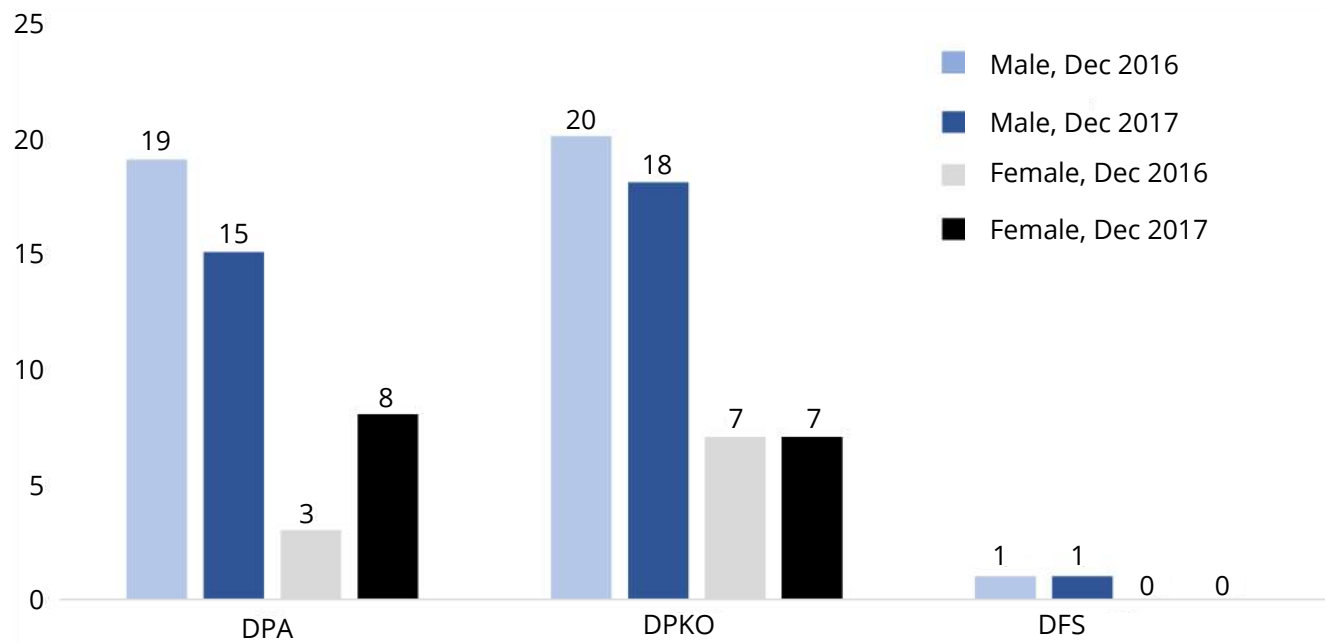
Within special political missions, the available data for 2017 is preliminary, however the post-2014 trend appears to have continued. Along with apparently steady expenditures, the number of civilian staff—both local and international—working in DPA-led offices and missions has been slowly but steadily increasing from late 2015 through mid-2017. Our analysis also suggests that there has been a trend toward increased spending per capita on civilian staff, which could be driven by labor cost inflation, by a higher proportion of high-paid (expert or highly skilled) personnel being employed in peacebuilding offices and political missions, or other factors.

NEW UN CHIEF, NEW PRIORITIES

Since taking office in January 2017, Secretary-General Guterres has faced funding challenges, friction in the Security Council, and more. Yet in one area where he is less impeded—senior appointments—the Secretary-General has taken steps to realign the institution toward gender parity. In a key move, he appointed the first female head of DPA, Rosemary DiCarlo, in March 2018.

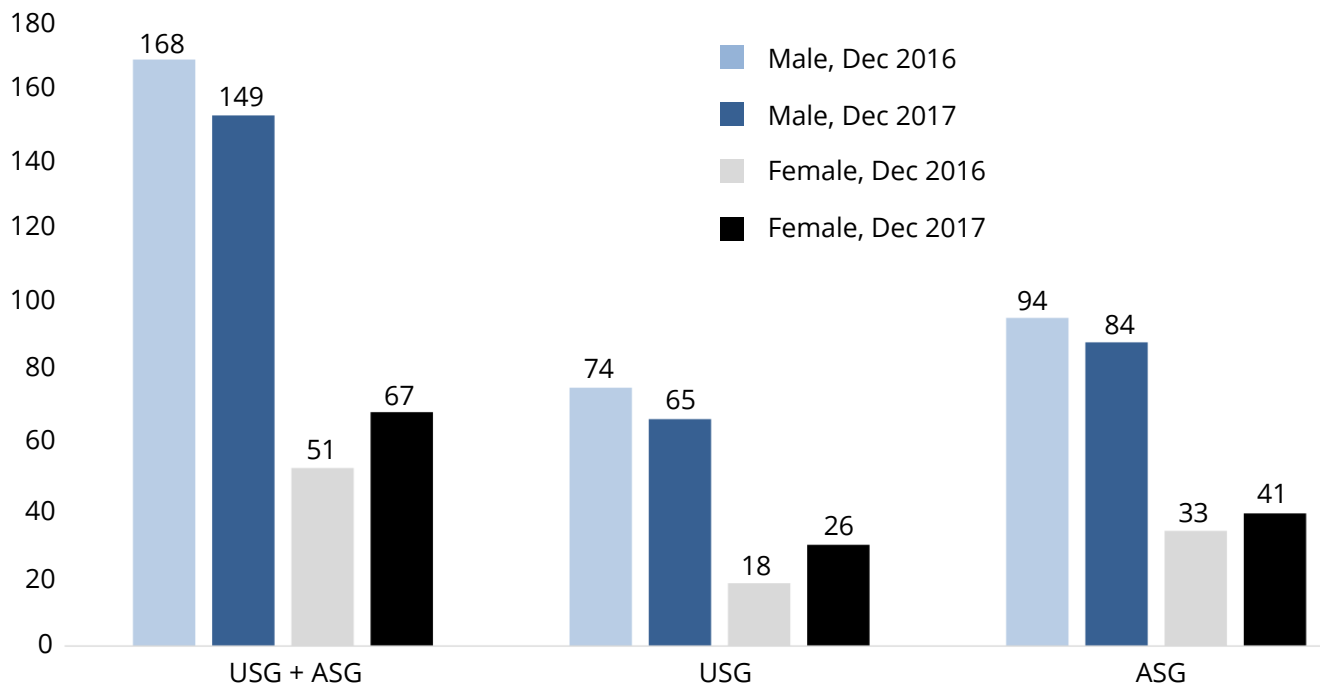
In the case of the overall number of senior officials in the field (which include heads and deputy heads of DPA-, DPKO-, and DFS-led missions), the Secretary-General has not yet had quite the same impact as he has had at HQ-level. In 2017, the number of women in senior roles in DPA-led missions increased, but the numbers were flat for DPKO and DFS. Indeed, among this group, women as of May 2018 account for 17 out of 49 leaders in office, or 35 percent.

FIGURE 11: FIELD-BASED SENIOR OFFICIALS IN OFFICE BY GENDER, 2016-2017



SOURCES: UNITED NATIONS, CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

FIGURE 12: ALL UN SENIOR OFFICIALS IN OFFICE BY GENDER, 2016-2017



SOURCES: UNITED NATIONS, CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

In terms of senior leaders who were newly appointed or re-appointed in 2017, we see that more progress has been made toward gender parity with HQ-level appointments. Unlike his appointments at HQ, the Secretary-General appointed an even number of men and women to senior leadership in peace operations in the field. At HQ, 19 women and 13 men were appointed in 2017, whereas in the field 10 women and 10 men were appointed (in peace operations). Looking at every appointment in 2017, including non-HQ but not “in the field” (e.g., Director of the World Food Programme, UN-Habitat, etc.), the Secretary-General did take the opportunity to appoint more women (36) than men (31) overall.

FIGURE 13: FIELD-BASED SENIOR OFFICIALS IN OFFICE BY UN REGIONAL GROUP, 2016-2017

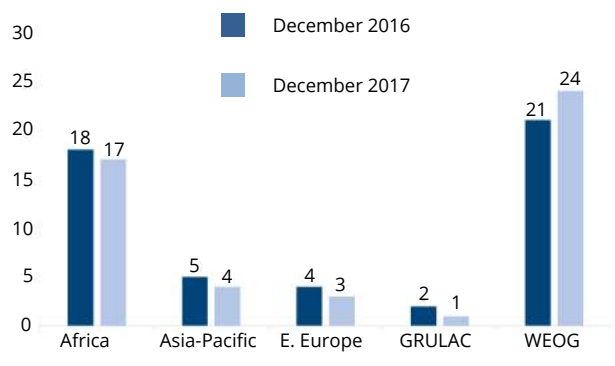
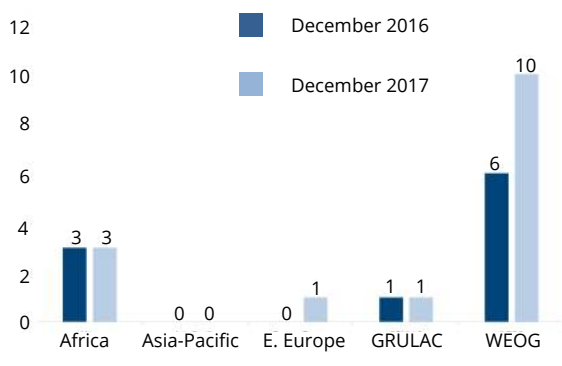


FIGURE 14: FEMALE FIELD-BASED SENIOR OFFICIALS IN OFFICE BY UN REGIONAL GROUP, 2016-2017



These refer to officials in peace operations. The numbers for each group are determined by the nationality of each field-based senior official. “GRULAC” refers to Latin America and the Caribbean. “WEOG” covers “Western” countries including Australia, New Zealand, and Israel. “Asia-Pacific” also includes the Middle East ex-Israel.¹²

SOURCES: UNITED NATIONS, CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

In contrast to the initial progress made toward gender parity, diversification of the regional origins of leadership in peace operations in the field was less successful in 2017. The data shows a continuation of a longtime trend: most senior officials in the field coming from Western and African countries. Interestingly, the number of Western officials in the field jumped upward from 2016 to 2017, while every other region lost ground.

In percentage terms, Westerners went from holding 42 percent of field-based senior official roles in 2016, to 49 percent by December 2017. All other regions saw 1 percent to 4 percent declines in their relative representation.

The picture on diversity is even more stark for women leaders in peace operations in the field. There are relatively few to begin with: in 2016, there were 10 women out of 50 field-based senior officials. But by December 2017, although the number had increased to 15 out of 49, among these few, the skew toward Western women was pronounced.

Although the number of African and Latin American women in field leadership stayed the same, their proportional representation declined as newly created positions went to Western women, upping their representation among all women leaders in the field from 60 percent in 2016 to 67 percent by December 2017. Eastern European women also gained ground, but only via one appointment.

LOOKING FORWARD

So far, the foregoing trends seem likely to continue through 2018. Peacekeeping is likely to continue its gradual contraction: there are no new missions on the horizon, and those that exist are either holding steady or drawing down. The coming year will shed more light on how conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities are to be developed, including through the proposed “quantum leap” expansion of the UN Peacebuilding Fund. Of particular interest may be the role of UN regional offices, whose role in prevention has been lauded so far.¹³ But the scale of special political mission operations seems set to remain modest.

With the US focused on “America First,” China’s growing boldness in multilateral fora could shape the dynamics of peacekeeping in new ways. One likely focus for Beijing in 2018 will be bolstering the number of Chinese nationals holding senior UN positions—including at the USG level. Upcoming structural and leadership changes in the UN will create new openings, including in peace and security, human rights, and the agencies, funds, and programs. In this context, it will be interesting to see whether the Secretary-General continues to influence the demographics of senior leadership, by keeping up the relatively fast pace of female appointments at HQ that he set in 2017, and potentially increasing appointments of women and non-Westerners to leadership roles in the field. Whomever he selects, they will have to chart a course in fast-changing waters.

ENDNOTES

¹I am grateful to Paige Arthur to the invaluable guidance making this report possible, as well as to Sarah Cliffe, Antonie Evans, Richard Gowan, Sarah Groves, Ben Oppenheim, and Gillian Sheehan for their helpful comments throughout the drafting process.

²Some observers still feared the MONUSCO cuts could have a major impact on operations. Katharina Coleman, "The Dynamics Of Peacekeeping Budget Cuts: The Case Of MONUSCO," IPI Global Observatory, July 10, 2017; <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2017/07/monusco-drc-peacekeeping-budget-cuts/>.

³United Nations, "Reimbursement Rates Must Account for Costs Associated with Female Peacekeepers, Post-deployment, Speakers Say as Budget Committee Discusses Troop Costs," Media release, GA/AB/4274, March 27, 2018; <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/gaab4274.doc.htm>.

⁴Wang Mengzhen "China To Become Second-Largest Contributor To UN Peacekeeping Budget," *The Telegraph*, June 6, 2016; <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/sponsored/china-watch/politics/12210677/china-contributions-un-peacekeeping-budget.html>.

⁵"China Likely To Surpass Japan As Second-Largest Contributor To U.N. Budget In 2019," *The Japan Times*, August 5, 2017; <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/08/05/national/china-likely-surpass-japan-second-largest-contributor-u-n-budget-2019/#.WqAoB5Pwai4>.

⁶Alexi Lardieri, "United States Announces \$285M Cut In U.N. 2018 Operating Budget." *US News & World Report*; December 26, 2017; <https://www.usnews.com/news/politics/articles/2017-12-26/united-states-announces-285m-cut-in-un-2018-operating-budget>.

⁷Ellen Mitchell, "Pentagon Official: US To Cut Contributions To UN Peacekeeping Missions," *The Hill*, November 17, 2017; <http://thehill.com/policy/defense/360505-top-pentagon-official-us-to-cut-contributions-to-un-peacekeeping-missions>.

⁸Richard Gowan, "Trump Went Easy On The U.N. Last Year. Now The Gloves Could Be Coming Off," *World Politics Review*, March 19, 2018; <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/24387/trump-went-easy-on-the-u-n-last-year-now-the-gloves-could-be-coming-off>.

⁹Note: the methodology used to produce the data in this graph is as follows. For each P5 member, their peacekeeping rate of assessment for each year was multiplied by the total peacekeeping budget ending in that year (as the peacekeeping budgets straddle years, beginning each July and ending each June). For example, the United States' 2015 assessed financial contribution to peacekeeping was calculated by multiplying its rate of assessment (i.e., the percentage of the peacekeeping budget it was asked to pay for by the UN) in 2015 (28.3626 percent) by the total peacekeeping budget for July 2014 through June 2015 (\$8,466,777,380).

¹⁰Sarah Zheng, "China Registers 8,000 Troops for UN Peacekeeping Missions," *South China Morning Post*, September 29, 2017, <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2113436/china-completes-registration-8000-strong-un>; and Zhang Zhihao, "UN Affirms Peacekeeping Force," *China Daily*, September 29, 2017, http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/epaper/2017-09/29/content_32645232.htm.

¹¹Michelle Nichols, "U.N. Peacekeepers Failed to Respond To South Sudan Hotel Attack: Inquiry," *Reuters*, November 1, 2016; <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southsudan-security-un/u-n-peacekeepers-failed-to-respond-to-south-sudan-hotel-attack-inquiry-idUSKBN12W4K1>.

¹²This graph is comparing our data sets on annual peacekeeping budgets (i.e., approved resources) to political mission expenditures (i.e., money actually spent, not just approved). While not exactly an apples to apples comparison, it is for analytical purposes very close, as overall peacekeeping expenditures generally do not deviate significantly from approved resources.

¹³For a full list of countries and their corresponding UN regional groups, see United Nations, "United Nations Regional Groups of Member States," May 9, 2014; <http://www.un.org/depts/DGACM/RegionalGroups.shtml>.

¹⁴See, e.g., Youssef Mahmoud and Delphine Mechoulan, "UN Regional Political Offices and Prevention for Sustaining Peace" (New York: IPI, 2017).

Published in the United States of America in 2018 by the Center on International Cooperation

726 Broadway, Suite 543

New York, New York 10003

<http://cic.nyu.edu>

Suggested citation: Center on International Cooperation, "Peace Operations Review 2018" (New York: Center on International Cooperation, 2018).

©2018 Center on International Cooperation

Global _____
Peace Operations
_____ *Review*

NYU | CENTER ON
_____| INTERNATIONAL
C I C | COOPERATION

Center on International Cooperation
726 Broadway, Suite 543
New York, NY 10003
cic.nyu.edu

 @PeaceOpsCIC

peaceoperationsreview.org

Cover Photo: A member of a Chinese Formed Police Unit deployed with UNMIL interacts with a girl of the Steward Camp in Tubmanburg, Liberia.

UN Photo/Albert González Farran©