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UN Peacekeeping at 75: Achievements, Challenges, and Prospects

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ABSTRACT
This year marks the 75th anniversary of what the UN itself understands to be its first peacekeeping operation. It is therefore an appropriate time to reflect on the track record of UN peacekeeping in its efforts to try to maintain and realize peace and security. Moreover, this milestone invites us to ponder what lies ahead in the realm of peacekeeping. For this reason, this forum article brings together both academics and UN officials to assess the achievements and challenges of UN peacekeeping over the past 75 years. Through a dialogue among peacekeeping scholars and practitioners, we hope to identify current

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trends and developments in UN peacekeeping, as well as explore priorities for the future to improve the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations in terms of achieving their mandate objectives, such as maintaining peace, protecting civilians, promoting human rights, and facilitating reconciliation. This forum article is structured into six thematic sections, each shedding light on various aspects of UN peacekeeping: (1) foundational principles of UN peacekeeping - namely, consent, impartiality, and the (non-)use of force; (2) protection of civilians; (3) the primacy of politics; (4) early warning; (5) cooperation with regional organizations; and (6) the changing geopolitical landscape in which UN peacekeeping operates.

KEYWORDS United Nations; peacekeeping; consent; impartiality; use of force; protection of civilians; primacy of politics; mediation; early warning; partnership peacekeeping; geopolitical; future

Introduction

Allard Duursma, Corinne Bara & Nina Wilén

In May 1948, the United Nations Security Council appointed Swedish Count Folke Bernadotte as the United Nations (UN) mediator in Palestine. In response to a request by Bernadotte, United Nations Secretary-General Trygve Lie sent 50 members of the United Nations guard force to assist the mediator in supervising the truce.[1] This mission would become known as the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), which is recognized by the UN as the start of UN peacekeeping.[2]

This year therefore marks the 75th anniversary of what the UN itself understands to be its first peacekeeping operation. It is therefore an appropriate time to reflect on the track record of UN peacekeeping in its efforts to try to maintain and realize peace and security. Moreover, this milestone invites us to ponder what lies ahead in the realm of peacekeeping. For this reason, this forum article brings together both academics and UN officials to assess the achievements and challenges of UN peacekeeping over the

[1]United Nations, *Fifty U.N. Guards to go to Palestine*, 17 June 1948, UN Doc PAL/189.

[2]United Nations Peacekeeping. "*Our History*." https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/our-history. Of course, what constitutes a peacekeeping mission depends on the definition used. Fortna considers observer missions such as UNTSO as peacekeeping, along with what she refers to as traditional peacekeeping, multidimensional peacekeeping, and peace enforcement. Fortna, *Does Peacekeeping Keep Peace? International Intervention and the Duration of Peace after Civil War*, 2004, 270. Others dismiss purely observer missions as being peacekeeping and therefore often refer to the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF), deployed to secure an end to the Suez Crisis of 1956, as the first UN peacekeeping mission. And even among those that consider observer missions as peacekeeping, there is some disagreement about what is the first UN peacekeeping mission. Some point to earlier UN missions that also included military observers in the Balkans, Indonesia, and Kashmir. For instance, the United Nations Special Committee on the Balkans (UNSCOB) was established in November 1947 to perform good offices and to help settle disputes.

past 75 years.[3] Through a dialogue among peacekeeping scholars and practitioners, we hope to identify current trends and developments in UN peacekeeping, as well as explore priorities for the future to improve the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations in terms of achieving their mandate objectives, such as maintaining peace, protecting civilians, promoting human rights, and facilitating reconciliation.

According to Michael Pugh, the editor of *International Peacekeeping* between 1994 and 2013, UN peacekeeping originated largely as a 'visionless response to international crisis management'.[4] Nevertheless, it is clear that UN peacekeeping has matured into a frequently used instrument for the maintenance of international peace and security, incorporating a wide variety of strategies and tools to address the challenges of contemporary armed conflicts. Indeed, UN peacekeeping embodies the organization's commitment to international peace, security, and cooperation.

As a testament to its significance, since its first peacekeeping mission in 1948, the UN has deployed more than two million peacekeepers from 125 countries to 71 missions to more than 40 states.[5] The UN has projected more military power - deployed more troops – globally than any other actor except the United States during the twenty-first century, making peacekeeping as a practice central for understanding past and current international security dynamics.[6]

Moreover, over the past 75 years, the UN has adapted peacekeeping to a changing external environment by modifying mandates, adapting its application of doctrine in a flexible and responsive manner, inventing new concepts and developing different processes to remain a relevant actor. Some of these changes have evolved into new trends, while others have encountered resistance and been further modified or even abandoned. The aim of this article is – in part – to explore these changes and continuities to better understand UN peacekeeping today. Partly, the aim is to reflect on the future of UN peacekeeping at a particularly difficult time for multilateralism, in the midst of renewed great power competition.[7]

This forum article is organized in six thematic sections followed by a conclusion. The first section focuses on the three core principles of UN peacekeeping – consent, impartiality and the (non-)use of force – reflecting on

[3]This forum article is based on a workshop organized by the Center for Security Studies (CSS) at ETH Zurich and *International Peacekeeping* in Zurich on 12–13 June 2023. Some workshop participants could not be listed as authors due work-related restrictions to publish.

[4]Pugh, Security Studies: An Introduction, 2008, 293.

[5]United Nations Peacekeeping, "*International Day Of Peacekeepers,*" https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/international-day-of-peacekeepers-2023

[6]Williams, *How Peacekeepers Fight: Assessing Combat Effectiveness in United Nations Peace Operations*, 2023, 32-65.

[7]See also: Lyon et al., *The 75th Anniversary of UN Peacekeeping: Introduction to a Special Issue of Global Governance*, 2023, 109-117.

how the application of these principles has changed over time in peacekeeping operations and on the implications of these changes.

The second section focuses on the rise of the 'protection of civilians' norm in contemporary UN peacekeeping operations. Following the early debates on this norm in the context of the operations in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, the UN mission in Sierra Leone in 1999 was mandated by the UN Security Council to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence within its capabilities and areas of deployment. This became the model for the language on protection of civilians in many subsequent mandates. This section discusses how successful UN peacekeeping operations have been in implementing their protection of civilians responsibilities, but also reflects on historical experiences and current challenges.

In the third section, we discuss activities associated with 'the primacy of politics' in peacekeeping operations, a phrase that was popularized by the 2015 High-level Independent Panel of Peace Operations (HIPPO). At the core of UN peacekeeping has always been the idea that peacekeeping operations are deployed to support political processes. We reflect on how the notion of 'the primacy of politics' shapes the activities of contemporary UN peacekeeping operations. We not only focus on national-level peace negotiations and political processes involving government actors and armed opposition groups, but also highlight peacekeepers' assistance to political processes at the local level, as for example evident in UN peacekeeping staff supporting the resolution of communal conflicts.

We zoom in on the early warning capacity of UN peacekeeping operations in the fourth section. Early warning has traditionally been lacking in UN peacekeeping operations, but this capacity has steadily improved since the early 2000s. This section is concerned with how successful UN peacekeeping operations are in establishing effective early warning systems, as well as how UN peacekeeping operations translate early warning into early action. We also reflect on how an early warning system of the future may look like.

The fifth section is devoted to cooperation between the UN, regional organizations and ad-hoc coalitions of states in the context of peace operations. We discuss the meaning and substance of partnership peacekeeping and how it may develop in the future. We also review evidence on whether UN peacekeeping operations are more effective when they work together with other other organizations and reflect on current challenges and opportunities for partnership peacekeeping, with a focus on the particularly important relationship of the UN with the European Union and the African Union.

Finally, we focus on the geopolitical context in which UN peacekeeping operations take place and discuss the future of UN peacekeeping in the sixth section. While the nature of UN peacekeeping has remained the same – essentially being about external actors helping to manage armed

conflict – the circumstances and character of UN peacekeeping changed considerably with the end of the Cold War. Recently, the geopolitical context in which peacekeeping takes place has drastically changed once more due to global power shifts. This makes it important to reflect on the implications for UN peacekeeping and on how the change in geopolitical context may again change the character of UN peacekeeping.

The conclusion provides a summary and lists some of the most important future challenges for UN peacekeeping staff and some questions for future research. Indeed, it is our hope that this forum article will help shed light on the most pressing challenges for UN peacekeeping staff and pave the ground for future research on peacekeeping.

Consent, Impartiality and the (non-)use of Force

Emily Paddon Rhoads, John Karlsrud, Patryk I. Labuda, Salvator Cusimano[8] & Allard Duursma

The principles of consent, impartiality and the (non-)use of force formed the bedrock of peacekeeping operations,[9] but the application of these principles has evolved over time in response to changing political, normative, and security contexts. Impartiality has long been regarded as the 'lifeblood' of peacekeeping and the 'heart and soul' of the Secretariat.[10] As a core norm of peacekeeping, it prescribes that UN officials should be unbiased and informed when making decisions or acting. It is also 'a claim to authority, premised not only on a lack of bias, but, critically, on what UN officials are supposed to represent and further in the absence of particular interests'.[11]

Impartiality has become more challenging as conflicts have become more complex and multi-faceted and the mandates of peacekeeping operations expanded. While peacekeepers were traditionally limited to using force only in self-defense,[12] peacekeepers took on a more proactive role following the end of the Cold War, including through the use of force to defend the mandate and deter spoilers who seek to derail peace processes.[13] Following the early 1990s precedents and from 1999 onwards, UN peacekeeping missions were also

[8]The views expressed in this forum article do not necessarily reflect the views of all authors or the views of the United Nations.

[9]UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, "*United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines ("The Capstone Doctrine")*," https://doi.org/10.1080/13533310802396475.

[10]Paddon Rhoads, *Putting Human Rights up Front: Implications for Impartiality and the Politics of UN Peacekeeping*, 2019, 282.

[11]Paddon Rhoads, E. (2016). *Taking sides in peacekeeping: impartiality and the future of the United Nations,* 2016, 25.

[12]The United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC) was a notable exception.

[13]Fortna, *Does peacekeeping work? Shaping belligerents' choices after civil war*, 2008, 269-292.

consistently mandated to use force to protect civilians.[14] Beginning in 2000, there was a shift from a 'passive' to an 'assertive' conception of impartiality that attempted to ground peacekeepers' authority in a more expansive set of values that privileged the promotion and protection of human rights, seen in the protection of civilians (PoC) mandates.[15] As the Brahimi Report, published in 2000, explained:

> where one party to a peace agreement clearly and incontrovertibly is violating its terms, continued equal treatment of all parties by the United Nations can in the best case result in ineffectiveness and in the worst may amount to complicity with evil.[16]

Related to the more expansive set of values that privilege the promotion and protection of human rights in peacekeeping operations, there has been a growing emphasis on state-building and stabilization. This has resulted in ambitious mandates that lack the necessary means as well as the political will of the UN Security Council (UNSC), host governments and troop-contributing countries (TCCs), given rising geopolitical tensions, budget constraints, and contestation of underlying values.[17]

Taking sides is not without risks for UN peacekeeping. Mandates authorizing use of force against armed groups have in recent years led to concerns about blurring the lines between peacekeeping and peace enforcement, and the potential for peacekeepers to become parties to the conflict.[18] In short, traditional notions of impartiality have been challenged by goals of stabilization, support to state institutions, and PoC in contexts where both non-state actors and elements of the state pose a threat to civilians. At the same time, measures implemented to mitigate risks associated with such goals have *also* led to charges of bias or interference, such as from host states in response to the application of the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy.[19]

As missions have been deployed in more hostile environments, there has been an expansion in the use of offensive force.[20] Influenced by the evolving NATO doctrine on stabilization, and a general trend towards counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism, a number of multidimensional UN peacekeeping operations have, for the last two decades, been labeled as stabilization missions, although there has been little clarity on what this means in theory or practice, as

[14]Hultman, *UN peace operations and protection of civilians: Cheap talk or norm implementation?,* 2013, 59–73; Bourgeois and Labuda, *When May UN Peacekeepers Use Lethal Force to Protect Civilians? Reconciling Threats to Civilians, Imminence, and the Right to Life*, 2023, 1-65.
[15]Paddon Rhoads 2016.
[16]United Nations, *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, A/55/305. S/2000/809.
[17]Williams 2020; Paddon Rhoads and Welsh 2019.
[18]Russo 2022.
[19]Hirschmann, *Cooperating with evil? Accountability in peace operations and the evolution of the United Nations Human Rights Due Diligence Policy*, 2020, 22–40.
[20]Howard and Dayal, *The Use of Force in UN Peacekeeping*, 2018, 71–103; Williams, *How Peacekeepers Fight: Assessing Combat Effectiveness in United Nations Peace Operations,* 2023, 32-65.

the 2015 Independent High-level Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) noted in its report.[21] The UN has yet to define the concept of stabilization.

While there has been a trend towards stabilization and robustness in some missions in the past two decades,[22] it is important to highlight that in practice, the use of deadly force, particularly in a proactive or preventive manner, remains a relatively rare occurrence.[23] In fact, peacekeeping operations seem more regularly subjected to scrutiny for failing to use force, by civilians, host states, conflict parties, and the UNSC, which often call upon peacekeepers to deploy force more readily.

Furthermore, no additional multidimensional UN peacekeeping operations have been deployed since 2014, and a growing number of observers argue that the future of peacekeeping may lie in lighter, non-coercive operations, such as Special Political Missions (SPMs). By the same token, the current Secretary-General's vision articulated in the *New Agenda for Peace* places more emphasis on robust regional operations and UN support to these rather than deploying UN peacekeeping operations as such.[24] Yet, as the example of SPMs or ad hoc coalitions have shown,[25] either eliminating the use of force as in SPMs or unleashing supposed constraints on it as in regional operations have done little to resolve the dilemmas facing international interventions in these contexts.

According to peacekeeping doctrine, the main parties to a conflict should consent to peacekeeping. However, we can observe a long-term shift from the consent of all the main parties in Cold War missions deployed to inter-state wars to a focus on consent of the host state within post-1990s missions deployed in intra-state wars. Peacekeeping operations should obtain initial consent from the main relevant parties, but as in intra-state conflicts only the host state's consent is legally required, the UN is typically mainly concerned with the consent of the host state. The main parties to the conflict should demonstrate a willingness to resolve their differences through political processes rather than through armed confrontation, as well as acceptance of the role and functions of peacekeepers in facilitating this process.[26] As a crucial partner in peacekeeping, it is widely recognized that obtaining and retaining host state consent can significantly impact

[21] United Nations, *Uniting Our Strengths for Peace, Politics, Partnerships and the People*, 2015; see also Karlsrud, *United Nations Stabilization Operations: Chapter Seven and a Half*, 2019, 494-508.

[22] Karlsrud, *The UN at War: Examining the Consequences of Peace Enforcement Mandates for the UN Peacekeeping Operations in the CAR, the DRC and Mali*, 2015, 40-54; Karlsrud, From Liberal Peacebuilding to Stabilization and Counterterrorism, 2019, 1-21.

[23] Bode and Karlsrud, *Implementation in practice: The use of force to protect civilians in United Nations peacekeeping*, 2018, 458-485.

[24] United Nations, *Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace*. 2023.

[25] Reykers et al., *Ad hoc coalitions in global governance: short-notice, task- and time-specific cooperation*m 2023, 727-745.

[26] Duursma et al., *The Impact of Host-State Consent on the Protection of Civilians in UN Peacekeeping*, *Civil Wars,* 2023.

whether peacekeepers successfully carry out their core duties.[27] Indeed, the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative of the UN Secretary-General in 2018 emerged in part from the recognition that large, multidimensional operations faced waning host state consent, explaining the emphasis on political processes and host country and community relations in the subsequent Declaration of Shared Commitments and A4P + .[28]

The UN's dependence on host state consent for the deployment and continued presence of peacekeepers creates a number of dilemmas.[29] In particular, UN officials have often been reluctant to call out government abuses and status of forces agreement (SoFA) violations for fear of straining relations and further limiting access.[30] These dynamics have constrained the UN operationally and negatively impacted the mission's perceived legitimacy and ability to act as an impartial political arbiter.[31] Some argue that the UN's uncritical support to the state undercuts long-term efforts to build peace and potentially implicates the UN in the permanency of illiberal regimes,[32] essentially becoming regime-support operations.[33]

The importance attached to host state consent does not mean that the consent of non-state armed groups and other stakeholders are irrelevant. The acceptance of the presence of peacekeepers on the ground by all parties to a conflict helps peacekeepers to implement the mandate and it helps the peacekeeping leadership to fulfill its political role.[34] Without enjoying consent by armed groups, peacekeepers are likely to be obstructed from implementing their mandate in areas controlled by non-state actors.[35] While

[27] Johnstone, *Managing consent in contemporary peacekeeping operations*, 2011, 168–182; Sebastián and Gorur, *U.N. peacekeeping & host-state consent: how missions navigate relationships with governments.* Washington, 2018; Stimson Center and Duursma, *Pinioning the peacekeepers: sovereignty, host-state resistance against peacekeeping operations, and violence against civilians*, 2021, 670–695; Passmore et al., Consent in peacekeeping, 2022, 46–59.

[28] United Nations Peacekeeping, *Action for Peacekeeping+*, https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/action-peacekeeping.

[29] Labuda, *With or Against the State? Reconciling the Protection of Civilians and Host State Support in UN Peacekeeping*, 2020.

[30] On the risks inherent in confronting host governments, see Oksamytna et al., *Theorizing Decision-Making in International Bureaucracies: UN Peacekeeping Operations and Responses to Norm Violations*, 2023.

[31] Paddon Rhoads 2016; Russo, The Protection of Civilians and the Primacy of Politics: Complementarities and Friction in South Sudan*, Journal of International Peacekeeping*, 2022, 1-32; Day and Hunt 2022; Duursma, Pinioning the peacekeepers: sovereignty, host-state resistance against peacekeeping operations, and violence against civilians, 2021.

[32] Von Billerbeck and Tansey, *Enabling autocracy? Peacebuilding and post-conflict authoritarianism in the Democratic Republic of Congo*, 2019, 698–722; Day et al., *Assessing the Effectiveness of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)*; De Coning, *How Not to Do UN Peacekeeping: Avoid the Stabilization Dilemma with Principled and Adaptive Mandating and Leadership*, 2023, 152-167.

[33] Bellamy and Williams, *Trends in Peace Operations, 1947-2013*, 2015; In Koops et al., *The Oxford Handbook of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*; 14; See also Attree and Street, *Redefining a UN peace doctrine to avoid regime protection operations*, 2020.

[34] Duursma et al. 2023.

[35] Duursma, *Obstruction and intimidation of peacekeepers: How armed actors undermine civilian protection efforts*, 2019, 234–248.

consent may be established formally at national level, peacekeepers are still confronted with obstructions at the local level, including the violations on the freedom of movement of UN personnel.

In addition to the different actors who give consent to peacekeeping, one can identify a spectrum of acquiescence to the UN's presence and mandate. Although consent is often viewed in binary terms and is seen as a static given – either it exists or it does not – it is actually dynamic and evolving over time, and should be understood as a spectrum of possibilities within a single mission, and according to the different actors involved. For instance, Sebastián and Gorur propose a tri-partite model of strong, weak, and compromised consent, that goes beyond a binary understanding of consent, and recognize that the same peacekeeping mission may fall under each of the three ideal types at different times.[36]

It becomes challenging for peacekeeping staff to conduct their activities in a context in which consent is lacking.[37] Duursma et al. show, however, that some protection of civilians activities, such as local peacebuilding efforts, might still be possible in a context of compromised host-state consent.[38] Recognizing that peacekeeping missions cannot function without meaningful consent, there is also growing attention within the UN on 'UN transitions'[39], suggesting a recognition that the mitigation of risks associated with mission closures may be the most viable option in the face of contemporary consent challenges.

Peacekeeping missions face growing challenges relating to the global and regional geopolitical landscape. In some missions, bilateral partners, regional operations and even private military companies have displaced the UN as the primary security provider, raising new challenges for the three core peacekeeping principles. Growing disagreement among the UN Security Council permanent members, as well as increased assertiveness from host governments – illustrated by Mali's withdrawal of consent in June 2023 – have placed great strain on the UN.

As UN peacekeeping operations have been deployed to increasingly fraught situations, the principles of peacekeeping have come under pressure,

[36]Sebastián and Gorur, *U.N. peacekeeping & host-state consent: how missions navigate relationships with governments*, 2019. Similarly, several studies have reflected on how host-state consent can be "devious" in the sense that government actors on paper consent to a mission, but in practice undermine it. See: Piccolino and Karlsrud, *Withering consent, but mutual dependency: UN peace operations and African assertiveness*, 2019, 447–471; Duursma 2021.

[37]Sebastián and Gorur, *U.N. peacekeeping & host-state consent: how missions navigate relationships with governments*, 2018; Labuda, *With or Against the State? Reconciling the Protection of Civilians and Host State Support in UN Peacekeeping*, 2020; Duursma et al. 2023.

[38]Duursma et al. 2023.

[39]UN Security Council, *Transitions in United Nations peace operations: Report of the Secretary-General, New York, S/2022/522*; Kissling and Smidt, *(UN-)protected Elections – Left for Good? Withdrawal of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and its Effects on Violence during Electoral Periods in War-Affected Countries*, 2023, 165-197.

and frequently been broken. The three peacekeeping principles are clearly interconnected in that (non-)adherence to one impacts respect for the other principles. As host state consent has increased in importance, the other two principles have been put under pressure, as witnessed with MINUSMA in Mali.

Future Research

An important avenue for future research is how the deployment of parallel regional operations, ad hoc coalitions and/or private security actors influence perceptions of the impartiality of UN peacekeeping missions. For instance, some regional operations have been deployed to engage in counter-terrorism activities, and the UN is increasingly asked to provide logistical and other types of support to such operations. Such regional missions raise the question of whether UN peacekeeping operations can truly maintain their impartiality – or the perception of it required to continue operating credibly – in theaters where parallel regional operations are deployed, given the need to coordinate or meet demands to support such operations. For instance, UN peacekeeping staff in Mali have shared information on the locations of Jihadist armed groups with the French military, which some argued made the UN a party to the conflict.[40] More generally, some have argued that a growing 'regionalization' of peace operations, ad hoc coalitions, and closer host state relations with non-western states and private military actors such as the Wagner Group further marginalizes existing UN missions because it reduces the UN's political leverage, increases opportunities for institutional exploitation, and invests legitimacy in a comparative advantages assumption without following up about the intended and unintended consequences from 'delegation' for the actors involved.[41]

Over time, a more nuanced conceptualization of consent has emerged within academia and the UN, encompassing not only formal legal authorization by the host state for deployment of a peacekeeping operation but also the consent of communities and conflict parties. Future research should study differing levels of consent through time and in different peacekeeping missions and vis-à-vis different mandated tasks. This type of research can contribute to a better understanding of how to forestall or confront obstacles

[40] Duursma, *Information Processing Challenges in Peacekeeping Operations: A Case Study on Peacekeeping Information Collection Efforts in Mali*, *2018,* 446-468.

[41] Gelot, *Legitimacy, peace operations and global-regional security: The African Union-United Nations partnership in Darfur*, 2012; Spandler, *UNAMID and the Legitimation of Global-Regional Peacekeeping Cooperation: Partnership and Friction in UN-AU Relations*, *2020*, 187-203; Karlsrud and Reykers. *Ad hoc coalitions and institutional exploitation in international security: towards a typology*, 2020*,* 1518-1536; Karlsrud, *'Pragmatic Peacekeeping' in Practice: Exit Liberal Peacekeeping, Enter UN Support Missions?*, 2023*,* 258-272; Karlsrud, *'UN Peacekeeping Operations in a Multipolar Era'*, 2023, 219-229.

to mandate implementation and possibly how to be effective in navigating the political landscape.

Several studies have now examined how insufficient consent can undermine mandate implementation, but there is still little research on the factors contributing to weak or deteriorating consent. Traditionally, consent can be seen as deteriorating around contested political events like elections and if peacekeepers implement protection of civilian activities and human rights reporting. More recently, however, populations have become critical of mission effectiveness, often arguing – alongside their host governments – for more robust action against non-state actors. Some UN peacekeeping missions struggle with perceptions of ineffectiveness, which may be linked to the rise of the protection of civilians as a peacekeeping objective and unmet expectations from civilians as to how much the UN should do to protect them from threats. Given these new challenges, more granular research would be needed on what causes problems with host governments, how consent is distributed among the general population,[42] variations in consent at the local level reflecting the A4P + call for '[c]lear and open dialogue with host countries, both government and communities',[43] as well as policy recommendations on how to maintain consent and enhance peacekeeping effectiveness. What kinds of mandates and peacekeeping activities increase or decrease consent? What strategies can be used to reach local populations and manage host-state perceptions of peacekeeping? How does the use of force, short of deadly force (e.g. simple presence, observation posts, escorts, patrols, etc.) contribute to the impact of PKOs identified in the literature? How do present challenges to the principles of peacekeeping differ from those facing past PKOs? What is the impact of regional participation in political processes where PKOs are deployed on the extent of challenges related to consent, impartiality, and use of force? How does the co-deployment of regional and ad hoc coalitions with a counterterrorism mandate affect UN peacekeepers?

Going forward it is likely that we see less multidimensional peacekeeping and more SPMs and UN support missions to counter-terrorism operations and multinational forces.[44] Will the principles of peacekeeping be applicable to these missions, or is there a need to develop new doctrinal guidance? What are the operational, doctrinal and moral consequences of UN support to e.g. the Somali National Army or a multinational force in Haiti? How will such operations impact on the rest of the Whole-of-UN system, both in-country as well as a more long-term in terms of the legitimacy of the UN? These are

[42]Dayal, *A Crisis of Consent in UN Peace Operations*, https://theglobalobservatory.org/2022/08/a-crisis-of-consent-in-un-peace-operations/.
[43]United Nations, *A4P+: Priorities for 2021-23*, 2023, 7.
[44]Karlsrud, UN Peacekeeping Operations in a Multipolar Era, 2023.

just some of the pressing questions that need further exploration, and which will impact on the future of UN peacekeeping.

Protection of Civilians

Kseniya Oksamytna, Lisa Hultman, Charlie Hunt, Dennis Gyllensporre[45], Marco Donati[46] & Allard Duursma

During the Cold War, UN peacekeeping operations rarely took direct action to protect civilians. An exception was the UN Operation in the Congo (ONUC, 1960–1964). ONUC Force Commander communicated to his troops that 'where feasible, every protection was to be afforded to unarmed groups subjected by any armed party to acts of violence likely to lead to loss of life'.[47] The UN Security Council gave the first explicit mandate to protect civilians to the UN mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR, 1993–1996), but only after UNAMIR was almost withdrawn amid the genocide. When the Council belatedly reinforced the mission, UNAMIR was instructed to '[c]ontribute to the security and protection of displaced persons, refugees and civilians at risk in Rwanda'.[48] However, few capable and rapidly deployable troops were provided by member states, and the reinforced mandate made little difference in reality. A year before those events, the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR, 1992–1995) received an ambiguous mandate to 'deter attacks against the safe areas' – a designation the UN had given to besieged Bosnian Muslim towns. Yet the lack of clarity on whether 'safe areas' were to be defended by force contributed to the Srebrenica tragedy. After those failures, the moral imperative for the UN to protect civilians was stressed in a series of lessons-learned reports, such as the *Independent Inquiry into the Actions of the United Nations During the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda* (1999) and the Secretary-General's report *The Fall of Srebrenica* (1999),[49] even though the UN Secretariat initially harbored doubts about the feasibility of the PoC task for peacekeepers.[50]

The first mission to receive the now-familiar instruction to protect, without prejudice to the host government's primary responsibility, civilians

[45]The views expressed in this forum article do not necessarily reflect the views of all authors or the views of the United Nations.
[46]The views expressed in this forum article do not necessarily reflect the views of all authors or the views of the United Nations.
[47]ONUC, *Operations Directive no. 8*, February 1961, reproduced in: Findlay, *The Use of Force in UN Peace Operations*, 414.
[48]UN Security Council, *Resolution 965* (1994), 2.
[49]Oksamytna, *Advocacy and Change in International Organizations: Communication, Protection, and Reconstruction in UN Peacekeeping*, 2023.
[50]Paddon Rhoads et al., *Decorating the "Christmas Tree: The UN Security Council and the Secretariat's Recommendations on Peacekeeping Operations*, 2021, 226–50.

under imminent threat of physical violence in its area of deployment was the UN mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL).[51] The UNSC also explicitly mentioned that it was acting under Chapter VII of the Charter when granting this authorization.[52] This mandate was preceded by the first thematic resolution on protection of civilians, Resolution 1265 (1999), which expressed the Council's readiness to address the negative impact of war on civilians. Hence, the key distinction between UNAMSIL and its predecessors like ONUC, which protected civilians through a creative interpretation of the permission to use force in self-defense, and UNAMIR, which was mandated merely to *contribute* to protection of civilians, was that UNAMSIL had the first mandate to allow explicitly the proactive use of force to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence. This, however, did not mean that the mission was effective at providing protection immediately as it interpreted the phrase 'within its capabilities' conservatively, and it also took months for it to deploy throughout the entire country.[53] Yet, it was a crucial step in establishing this task as an integral element of peacekeeping practice.

The application of PoC has evolved and the ambitions have been calibrated.[54] Today, nearly all major UN peacekeeping missions have a mandate to protect civilians.[55] This highlights how important civilian protection is to the UN. Indeed, former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon described it as the 'defining purpose of the UN in the twenty-first century'.[56] And while such cases are still rare, the UN Secretariat has sought to hold peacekeeping leaders to account if peacekeepers under their command fail to protect civilians, as demonstrated by the dismissal of UNMISS Force Commander, Johnson Mogoa Kimani Ondieki over ineffective response to the 2016 violence in South Sudan's capital, Juba.[57]

While the protection of civilians is an incredibly challenging task – using force to protect civilians from armed actors while maintaining impartiality – UN peacekeeping has been successful in protecting civilians under certain conditions. Multiple studies, using different methodological approaches and focusing on different qualities of peacekeeping, have found that

[51]On imminent threats, see Bourgeois et al., When May UN Peacekeepers Use Lethal Force to Protect Civilians? Reconciling Threats to Civilians, Imminence, and the Right to Life, 2023, 1-65.

[52]On Chapter VII authorization as a signal of UNSC's political resolve, see *Myths and Realities: Research Report : Security Council Report*, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/research-reports/lookup-c-glkwlemtisg-b-4202671.php.

[53]Oksamytna (2023).

[54]For example, in 2008, the UNSC called for MONUSCO to *ensure* POC (UNSCR 1856).

[55]Hultman, *UN peace operations and protection of civilians: Cheap talk or norm implementation?*, 2013, 59–73; Bellamy and Hunt, 2015; United Nations, The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping: Handbook, 2020.

[56]United Nations, Responsibility to Protect: Ban urges action to make UN-backed tool 'a living reality', January 18, 2012.

[57]Lundgren et al., '*Politics or Performance? Leadership Accountability in UN Peacekeeping*', 2022, 32–60.

peacekeeping is effective in reducing violence against civilians. Some of the positive findings concern the number,[58] diversity,[59] and quality of military and police personnel.[60] Theoretically, this suggests that a greater capacity to patrol and demonstrate presence and resolve, as well as the training and tasks of the personnel, are important for the successful protection of civilians.[61] While we have learned that larger deployments of peacekeepers contribute to protecting civilians, we know less about the mechanisms behind this.[62] One of the reasons is that most of the studies referred to above tend to focus on the presence – and to a lesser extent the activities – of armed military peacekeepers in particular, although there is a growing interest in the contribution of other components to PoC.

For example, UN police (UNPOL) components have played important roles in implementing PoC mandates. The first report of the UN Secretary-General on PoC in 1999 recognized this, stating that protecting vulnerable populations required 'civilian police activities' as well as those of the military.[63] Indeed, the famous passage in the 2000 Brahimi Report on PoC obligations of peacekeepers explicitly emphasized that police as well as military peacekeepers are expected to act, noting: '[United Nations] peacekeepers – troops or police – who witness violence against civilians should be presumed to be authorized to stop it, within their means, in support of basic United Nations principles'.[64]

With PoC becoming more central to the design and focus of peace operations, UNPOL have been required to take on many new and additional tasks to protect civilians. Developments such as providing internal security at 'PoC sites' in South Sudan, addressing election-related violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Mali, and operating under quasi-executive authority in the Central African Republic have raised expectations and created demand for protection activities that were hitherto unprecedented for police peacekeepers.[65] Yet, the responses of UNPOL to PoC imperatives have received little attention in the peacekeeping literature. This is a striking gap in research since police – both Formed Police Units and Individual Police Officers – make unique contributions to the implementation of PoC

[58]Hultman, Kathman and Shannon, "United Nations Peacekeeping and Civilian Protection"; Hultman, Kathman, and Shannon, *Peacekeeping in the Midst of War*; Kathman and Wood, "Stopping the Killing During the 'Peace'".
[59]Bove and Ruggeri, "Kinds of Blue"; Bove, Ruffa and Ruggeri, *Composing Peace*.
[60]Haass and Ansorg, "Better Peacekeepers, Better Protection?"
[61]Fjelde, Hultman and Nilsson, "Protection Through Presence"; Phayal and Prins, "Deploying to Protect"; Kjeksrud, *Using Force to Protect Civilians*.
[62]For an exception, see Bove et al., *Composing Peace*.
[63]UN 1999: para. 59
[64]UN, 2000: para. 62
[65]Hunt, *Rhetoric versus reality in the rise of policing in UN peace operations: 'More blue, less green'?, 2019,* 609-27; Hunt, *Protection through Policing: The Protective Role of UN Police in Peace Operations*; Hunt, *'To Serve and Protect': The Changing Roles of Police in the Protection of Civilians in UN Peace Operations, 2022.*

mandates. In the future, there is a need to systematically evaluate the effectiveness of the role of UNPOL in POC and to take stock of what works and what does not when police peacekeepers are required to contribute to PoC in peacekeeping.

Civilian components also play crucial roles in preventing or mitigating violence against civilians through dialogue and engagement, whether this is through the good offices work of Heads of Field Offices and Political Affairs or engagement with local authorities and communities by Civil Affairs teams. Civil Affairs units also support community self-protection mechanisms, such as the Community Alert Networks, that by boosting early warning mechanisms contribute directly to the protection of civilians from imminent threats. Strategic Communication sections also contribute to preventing violence against civilians by promoting messages of peace.[66] Moreover, civilian components contribute to a protective environment by supporting institutional reforms. For instance, Security Sector Reform units coordinate capacity-building support to host government's military and police forces, which bear the primary responsibility for protection of civilians. Justice and Correction officials also contribute to the strengthening the capacity of the host state to address violence through the judicial system and fighting impunity, which also contributes to a protective environment. Human Rights units provide detailed reporting to UN headquarters in New York and Geneva, enabling UN member states to put pressure on the host government if it engages in violence against civilians – a type of violence that military and police peacekeepers struggle to address.

Overall, everybody in a peacekeeping operation, including the civilian staff, military, and the police, plays a role in protecting civilians. Dedicated personnel, including Protection of Civilians Advisors, support the implementation of this mandate and ensure that PoC concerns are appropriately mainstreamed and prioritized within the mission. Protection of Civilians Advisors perform advisory, coordination, monitoring, and reporting roles. Specifically, the Senior Protection of Civilians Advisor is responsible for working with mission components to develop and regularly update PoC threat assessments, establishing PoC coordination structures, and supporting the development of a mission-wide PoC strategy.

In spite of the crucial role of civilian components in peacekeeping missions, there is relatively little research that looks at civilian peacekeepers in a systematic and cross-mission manner.[67] Recent exceptions include

[66]Oksamytna, *Policy Entrepreneurship by International Bureaucracies: The Evolution of Public Information in UN Peacekeeping*, *2018*, 79-104; Di Salvatore et al., *Can Information Campaigns Enhance Civilians' Protection in Civil Wars,* 2023.

[67]For an exception, see Duursma and Smidt, *Peacekeepers Without Helmets: How Violence Shapes Local Peacebuilding by Civilian Peacekeepers*, 2023.

studies that demonstrate that civilian peacekeeping staff (as well as UN police) play a crucial role in contributing to the rule of law,[68] and that the number of civilian personnel has a more significant positive influence on democratization in the host country than the number of uniformed personnel in missions that have a mandate to support democracy.[69] Other studies demonstrate that the involvement of UN civilian staff in local peace process makes the recurrence of communal rioting and armed clashes less likely,[70] and increases the likelihood that local ceasefires are concluded.[71] Recent studies have also investigated the effect of peacekeepers' non-military activities on reducing violence and promoting peace.[72] This is an important development, considering that research has shown that peacekeepers rarely use force,[73] and Howard suggests that the power of peacekeeping works best through non-coercive mechanisms.[74]

To the credit of the UN, peacekeeping missions have developed mission-wide strategies for the implementation of PoC mandates linking the work of military, police, and civilian components. Indeed, the UN defines PoC broadly as a wide set of 'integrated and coordinated activities by all civilian and uniformed mission components to prevent, deter or respond to threats of physical violence against civilians, within the mission's capabilities and areas of deployment, through the use of all necessary means, up to and including deadly force'.[75] The UN's operational concept for protection of civilians, initially elaborated in 2010 and updated in the 2020 PoC Handbook, has three tiers: protection through dialogue and engagement, provision of physical protection, and establishment of a protective environment.

Challenges

Against the backdrop of an overwhelming amount of evidence that UN peacekeepers help to reduce violence against civilians, it is nevertheless also important to ask what the limitations of POC are. First, as already

[68]Blair, *Peacekeeping, Policing, and the Rule of Law after Civil War*.
[69]Blair et atl., "UN Peacekeeping and Democratization in Conflict-Affected Countries", *2023*.
[70]Smidt, *United Nations Peacekeeping Locally: Enabling Conflict Resolution, Reducing Communal Violence*m 2020, 2-3.
[71]Duursma, *Making disorder more manageable: The short-term effectiveness of local mediation in Darfur*, 2021, 554–567; Duursma, *Peacekeeping, Mediation, and the Conclusion of Local Ceasefires in Non-State Conflicts*, 2022
[72]Campbell and Di Salvatore, *Keeping or Building Peace? UN Peace Operations beyond the Security Dilemmam 2023*; Smidt, *Mitigating election violence locally: UN peacekeepers' election-education campaigns in Côte d'Ivoire*, 2023, 199–216.
[73]Bode and Karlsrud *Implementation in practice: The use of force to protect civilians in United Nations peacekeeping*, 2019, 458–485. See also: Bellamy, et al., Using Force to Protect Civilians in UN Peacekeeping, 2021, 143-70.
[74]Howard, *Power in Peacekeeping*, 100.
[75]UN Handbook on POC, 2020: 3

stated in the previous section on the principles of peacekeeping, the effectiveness of POC is dependent on host state consent.[76] Research also indicates that the UN is more prone to respond to violence by rebel groups than by government actors,[77] thereby prioritizing maintaining government consent over protection from all types of threats.[78]

Second, some of the current large missions face severe challenges in the form of violence against peacekeepers, where armed actors accuse the UN of bias or interference.[79] Resistance can also take the form of obstruction and intimidation, which also undermines the mission's ability to protect civilians effectively.[80] Sometimes, peacekeepers are threatened and prevented from accessing certain areas by the local population, possibly due to disinformation against the UN.[81] To cater for physical protection of civilians in high risk environments, appropriate capabilities, training, and political support from UNSC are needed to also ensure the safety of the peacekeepers. It is also important to account for the unintended effects of peacekeepers' presence as there are secondary risks to the population as retaliatory attacks can occur to punish cooperation between civilians and the UN personnel,[82] an increase in criminal violence,[83] or issues of sexual exploitation and abuse.[84]

Third, another persistent challenge is that peacekeeping operations often lack the resources and capacity to effectively protect civilians in conflict zones. To successfully prevent attacks against civilians the peacekeepers need to have the ability to rapidly deploy to the affected area, both in terms of deployment to the host country and the deployment to the area experiencing violence within the host state.[85] However key enabling

[76]Duursma, *Pinioning the peacekeepers: sovereignty, host-state resistance against peacekeeping operations, and violence against civilians*, 2021, 670–695; Duursmae et al., *The Impact of Host-State Consent on the Protection of Civilians in UN Peacekeeping*, 2023.

[77]Fjelde et al., *Protection Through Presence: UN Peacekeeping and the Costs of Targeting Civilians. International Organization*, 2019, 1-29.

[78]On this and other possible negative unintended consequences of the PoC mandate, see: Day and Hunt, *Distractions, Distortions and Dilemmas: The Externalities of Protecting Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping*, 97-116.

[79]Salverda, Bl*ue helmets as targets: A quantitative analysis of rebel violence against peacekeepers, 1989–2003*, 2013, 707–720; Lindberg Bromley, *Introducing the peacemakers at risk dataset, Sub-Saharan Africa 1989–2009*, 2018, 122–131.

[80]Duursma, *Obstruction and intimidation of peacekeepers: how armed actors undermine civilian protection efforts*, 2019, 234–248.

[81]On disinformation against peacekeepers, see Oksamytna, Public Information and Strategic Communications, in Handbook of Peacekeeping and International Relations, 148–62; Trithart, *Disinformation against UN Peacekeeping Operations*, 2022.

[82]Hunt, *All necessary means to what ends? the unintended consequences of the 'robust turn' in UN peace operations*, 2017, 108-31.

[83]Di Salvatore, "Peacekeepers against Criminal Violence".

[84]Lee and Bartels, "'They Put a Few Coins in Your Hand".

[85]Ruggeri et al., *On the Frontline Every Day? Subnational Deployment of United Nations Peacekeepers. British Journal of Political Science*, 2018, 1005-1025; Lundgren et al., *Only as Fast as Its Troop Contributors: Incentives, Capabilities, and Constraints in the UN's Peacekeeping Response*, 2021, 671–86.

capabilities, such as, for instance, air assets, uncrewed aerial systems, reconnaissance units, and explosive ordnance removal teams, remain persistent gaps that need to be filled.[86] Furthermore, TCCs may differ in their interpretation of the mandate or the rule of engagement and therefore choose not to use force to protect civilians.[87] The sheer scope of the PoC task in geographically large countries where host state security forces lack the capacity to protect makes PoC highly challenging. There are often inflated expectations of what peacekeepers can achieve, which sometimes leads to protests demanding the withdrawal of peacekeeping missions, paradoxically because they are not providing enough protection. The UN has no capacity to put a 'peacekeeper behind every tree'.[88] What the UN can do, however, is to manage expectations better through its strategic communications stressing that PoC is the primary responsibility of the host government.[89]

Fourth, even if peacekeepers have the capacity to act, they might not always be aware where violence against civilians is likely to take place. While peacekeeping-intelligence plays a key role in protection of civilians,[90] the ability to anticipate attacks is still limited. Research on how new technologies, in particular artificial intelligence, can support the UN on various aspects of PoC could provide important contributions to future peacekeeping operations.[91] These issues are explored in greater detail in the section on early warning.

In sum, in spite of PoC having become a core component of UN peacekeeping mandates, there have been challenges in implementing this task, including due to wavering host state consent, violence against peacekeepers, a lack of capacity, and difficulties in maintaining comprehensive situational awareness. Nevertheless, scholarly evidence clearly suggests that UN peacekeeping missions contribute to the protection of civilians.

[86]The gaps are recorded in the Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System (PCRS), https://pcrs.un.org. For a discussion of how the UN used PCRS to facilitate rapid deployment and fill capability gaps, see Coleman, Lundgren, and Oksamytna, "Slow Progress on UN Rapid Deployment".

[87]Paddon Rhoads, 2016; Breakey and Dekker, *Weak Links in the Chain of Authority: The Challenges of Intervention Decisions to Protect Civilians*, 2014, 307-323.

[88]Bellamy et al., *Twenty-First Century Un Peace Operations: Protection, Force and the Changing Security Environment*, 2015, 1277–98.

[89]Donais and Tanguay, *Doing less with less? Peacekeeping retrenchment and the UN's protection of civilians agenda*, 2020, 65–82.

[90]Duursma (2017) *Counting Deaths While Keeping Peace: An Assessment of the JMAC's Field Information and Analysis Capacity in Darfur, International Peacekeeping*, 823-847; Brûlé and Myriam, *Finding the UN way on Peacekeeping-Intelligence*, 2020.

[91]Sarfati, *New Technologies and the Protection of Civilians in UN Peace Operations, 2023*.

The Primacy of Politics

Allard Duursma, Sara Hellmüller, Janek Bruker, Susanna Campbell, Marco Donati[92], Valentin Geier, Dennis Gyllensporre[93], Jenna Russo, & Hannah Smidt

Supporting political solutions has always been a primary goal of UN peacekeeping operations in that peacekeeping was originally conceptualized as using military approaches as a means to achieve political ends. Howard and Dayal aptly note that the founding fathers of UN peacekeeping in 1948 had the 'strange but simple idea' to 'use military troops not to fight and win wars, but to help implement peace accords'.[94]

While traditional peacekeeping operations rarely had active good offices mandates, the principle of 'the primacy of politics' has been reinvigorated in recent years, not least against the background of increasingly robust mandates discussed in the previous section. 'The primacy of politics' theme was popularized by the publication of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) report in 2015. It highlights the importance of peacekeepers to support a political process:

> Lasting peace is not achieved nor sustained by military and technical engagements, but through political solutions. The primacy of politics should be the hallmark of the approach of the United Nations to the resolution of conflict, during mediation, the monitoring of ceasefires, assistance to the implementation of peace accords, the management of violent conflicts and longer-term efforts at sustaining peace[95]

The 2018 Action for Peacekeeping Declaration (A4P) similarly emphasizes the need to pursue political solutions to armed conflicts, further committing UN peacekeeping operations to 'stronger engagement to advance political solutions to conflict and to pursue complementary political objectives and integrated strategies'.[96] In practical terms, this means that working towards political solutions should guide the design and implementation of other mandated tasks.

Yet, political primacy in peacekeeping can mean different things to different people. As articulated by Russo and Mamiya, there are at least three non-exclusive understandings of the primacy of politics within UN peacekeeping.[97] First, in some contexts, it is contrasted with peacekeeping approaches that drift towards peace enforcement and/or the militarization

[92]The views expressed in this forum article do not necessarily reflect the views of all authors or the views of the United Nations.
[93]The views expressed in this forum article do not necessarily reflect the views of all authors or the views of the United Nations.
[94]Howard et al., *The Use of Force in UN Peacekeeping*, 2018, 71.
[95]United Nations, *Uniting Our Strengths for Peace, Politics, Partnerships and the Peoplem*, 2015.
[96]United Nations, *Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations*, 2018.
[97]Russo and Mamiya, *The Primacy of Politics and the Protection of Civilians in UN Peacekeeping*, 2022.

of mission mandates while in other contexts, it is contrasted with mandates that have too many tasks that do not fit together into a coherent political strategy[98] and may therefore be less implementable.[99] Second, it can be used to refer to the broader political approach, in which peacekeeping is but one tool that is used to address a conflict. This second perspective places more emphasis on the role of the UN Security Council in advancing a political solution, with the peacekeeping operation acting in service of this approach. Finally, at the mission level, the primacy of politics can refer to the political work of an SRSG to advance some type of an agreement between the conflict parties towards the cessation of hostilities and longer-term peace.

The primacy of politics is often reflected in mediation mandates of UN peacekeeping operations. While other UN actors, regional and state actors can offer their good offices, UN peacekeeping operations often also facilitate political dialogue and attempt to resolve conflicts. Such mediation efforts can help to bring parties to the negotiating table, find common ground, and build trust.[100] This can lead to the conclusion of peace agreements that have the potential to provide a basis for sustainable peace or support the implementation of a peace agreement. The importance of mediation mandates has increased in recent years: While 33.3% of all peacekeeping operations had mediation mandates in 1991-2000, it increased to 40% and 60% in 2001–2010 and 2011–2020 respectively.[101] Further quantitative evidence suggests that mediation in the context of peacekeeping operations positively contributes to lowering levels of violence, the conclusion of peace agreements, and ending armed conflicts.[102]

In addition to mediation efforts, UN peacekeeping operations can support political processes in other ways. This can include providing funding and technical assistance to strengthen the capacity of domestic institutions, including promoting human rights and the rule of law, supporting the development of democratic institutions, and facilitating the equitable distribution of socio-economic goods.[103] In particular, Campbell and Di Salvatore show

[98]Peacekeeping missions established in the early 1990s included an average of 5.8 tasks per mandate, while operations established in the 2010s have had on average 20.8 tasks at the outset. Di Salvatore et al., *Introducing the Peacekeeping Mandates (PEMA) Dataset*, 2022, 924–51. Available at: https://peacemandates.com.

[99]Blair et al., *When Do UN Peacekeeping Operations Implement Their Mandates?,* 2022, 664-680.

[100]Hellmüller, *Knowledge Production on Mediation: Practice-Oriented, but not Practice-Relevant*, 2023, 1847–1866; Beardsley et al., *Mediation Style and Crisis Outcomes. Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 2006, 58–86; Duursma, *African Solutions to African Challenges: The Role of Legitimacy in Mediating Civil Wars in Africa*, 2020, 295-330.

[101]These numbers include mediation at the local level. See Hellmüller and Tan, *United Nations Peace Mission Mandates (UNPMM) Dataset,* 2021.

[102]Beardsley et al., *Mediation, Peacekeeping, and the Severity of Civil War;* DeRouen and Chowdhury, Mediation, *Peacekeeping And Civil War Peace Agreements*, 2018, 130-146; Clayton and Dorussen, *The effectiveness of mediation and peacekeeping for ending conflict*m 2021; Duursma, *Peacekeeping, Mediation, and the Conclusion of Local Ceasefires in Non-State Conflicts*, 2022.

[103]Hellmüller et al., *What is in a mandate? Introducing the United Nations Peace Mission Mandate (UNPMM)*.

that peacekeeping operations support inclusive peace when operating under predominantly peacebuilding mandates that enable them to help sustain host governments' commitment to implementing inclusive policies. They argue that the focus of peace processes on redistributing resources to marginalized groups creates an inherent *implementation problem*: the same political actors who are supposed to implement these redistributive reforms are also the actors who are most likely to lose out from their implementation. Campbell and Di Salvatore argue that UNPO peacebuilding capacity addresses this implementation problem by mobilizing political support for the implementation of redistributive reforms and filling the government capacity gaps necessary to implement these reforms.[104]

Furthermore, several recent studies demonstrate that UN peacekeeping operations can positively influence the quality of elections after war.[105] These findings are important because elections are a prominent feature of war-to-peace transitions as they can confer legitimacy on post-war governments and allow citizens to have a say in public affairs.[106] Since the end of the Cold War, elections have also become a 'core business' of multidimensional peacekeeping operations.[107] Most evidence suggests that peacekeepers can help reduce electoral violence[108] and, under certain conditions, even improve the quality of democracy.[109] Several mechanisms may explain this result. First, the local deployment of blue-helmeted soldiers may protect polling stations, election workers and candidates.[110] Second, civilian peacekeepers can assist in the organizations of elections, thereby preventing delays and manipulation and reducing electoral conflicts.[111] Finally, peacekeepers assist electoral security through voter education, enabling voters to punish

[104]Campbell and Di Salvatore, *Keeping or Building Peace? UN Peace Operations beyond the Security Dilemma*, 2023.

[105]Smidt, *Keeping electoral peace: The impact of UN peacekeeping activities on election-related violence,* 2021, 580-604; Fjelde and Smidt, *Protecting the Vote? Peacekeeping presence and the risk of electoral violence*, 2022, 1113-1132.

[106]Brancati et al., *Time to Kill: The Impact of Election Timing on Postconflict Stability*, 2022, 822-53;Flores et al., *The Effect of Elections on Postconflict Peace and Reconstruction*, 2012, 558-70.

[107]Smidt, *Keeping electoral peace: The impact of UN peacekeeping activities on election-related violence*, 2021, 580-604.

[108]Smidt, *Mitigating election violence locally: UN peacekeepers' election-education campaigns in Côte d'Ivoire*, 2020, 199-216; Smidt, *Keeping electoral peace: The impact of UN peacekeeping activities on election-related violence*, 2021, 580-604; Fjelde and Smidt, *Protecting the Vote? Peacekeeping presence and the risk of electoral violence*, 2022, 1113-1132.

[109]Birger, *Peacekeeping Operations and Transitions to Democracy*, 2011, 47-71; in Fjelde et al., *Building Peace, Creating Conflict*; Blairet al., *UN Peacekeeping and Democratization in Conflict-Affected Countries*, 1-19; For failure of democracy promotion by peacekeepers in DR Congo, see: von Billerbeck et al., *Enabling autocracy? Peacebuilding and post-conflict authoritarianism in the Democratic Republic of Congo*, 2019, 698-722.

[110]Fjelde and Smidt, *Protecting the Vote? Peacekeeping presence and the risk of electoral violence*, 2022, 1113-1132.

[111]Lührmann, *United Nations electoral assistance: More than a fig leaf?*, 2019, 181-96; Smidt, *Keeping electoral peace: The impact of UN peacekeeping activities on election-related violence*, 2021, 580-604.

coercive electoral strategies; for instance, by not voting for candidates that orchestrate or order violence.[112]

Beyond the impact that peacekeeping operations may have on political processes at the national level, peacekeepers are increasingly involved in local level formal and informal political processes. There is, for instance, a growing recognition that political solutions are equally important when it comes to ending communal conflicts taking place on the local level. While the UN has faced criticism for not responding to local conflicts,[113] several reports indicate that UN peacekeeping personnel, at least in more recent years, frequently provide support for conflict management at the sub-national level. Specifically, in communal conflicts between different groups, UN staff have been working towards maintaining social cohesion and preventing civilian casualties.[114] A body of academic literature is starting to emerge that highlights that UN peacekeeping staff are effective in preventing and ending armed violence in local conflicts[115], as well as contribute to the conclusion of local ceasefires.[116]

Indeed, at the Field Office level UN peacekeepers have been playing a critical role in leveraging their knowledge and relations with local stakeholders (including through the deployment of Community Liaison Assistants) and their access to logistic and military assets helps to generate space for dialogue between communities and parties in conflict. This has been particularly the case when addressing intercommunal conflicts, which are not only intertwined with and manipulated by power dynamics at the national/regional level, but also driven by competition for scarce resources and fueled by identity narratives.[117] For instance, in South Sudan and Central African Republic the peacekeeping missions were able to work with herder and farmer communities to regulate the migration of cattle to reduce incidents that have sparked in the past a lethal cycle of violence. In many cases, these efforts were focused on revitalizing traditional agreements

[112]Mvukiyehe and Samii, *Promoting Democracy in Fragile States: Field Experimental Evidence from Liberia*, 2017, 254-67; Smidt, *Mitigating election violence locally: UN peacekeepers' election-education campaigns in Côte d'Ivoire*, 2020, 199-216.

[113]For example, see: Autesserre, The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding, 2010.

[114]Brockmeier and Rotmann. *Civil Affairs and Local Conflict Management in Peace Operations*; O'Bryan and Hellmüller, *The Power of Perceptions: Localizing International Peacebuilding Approaches*, 2013, 219-32; O'Bryan, Rendtorff-Smith, and Donati, *The Role of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in Addressing Local Conflicts: A Study of Practice*, 2017.

[115]Blattman et al., *How to Promote Order and Property Rights under Weak Rule of Law? An Experiment in Changing Dispute Resolution Behavior through Community Education* 2014, 100-120; Smidt, *United Nations Peacekeeping Locally: Enabling Conflict Resolution, Reducing Communal Violence*, 2019, 344-372; Duursma, *Making Disorder More Manageable: The Short-Term Effectiveness of Local Mediation in Darfur*, 2021, 554-567; Duursma, *Peacekeeping, Mediation, and the Conclusion of Local Ceasefires in Non-State Conflicts*, 2022.

[116]Duursma, *Peacekeeping, Mediation, and the Conclusion of Local Ceasefires in Non-State Conflicts*, 2022.

[117]United Nations, The Role of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in Addressing Local Conflicts, 2017.

and promoting a confidence building process that would allow them to work anew rather than introducing foreign approaches.[118] Similarly, in Ituri, the daily endeavour of Community Liaison Assistants reknitting basic levels of trust amongst key local actors has allowed dialogue amongst the different communities to resume and negotiate local political solutions.[119] The enabling role played by peacekeepers in these instances relies on the same principles of consent of the parties and impartiality that guide peacekeeping in general, but also on the careful application of the principle of inclusivity, since broad-based support is a must for local agreements more than for elite-based deals in capitals. These efforts at the local level are tantamount to local peacebuilding and do use some of its incentives such as small investments through Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) or Programmatic Funding as well as the coordinated intervention of other UN and non-UN actors. In this regard, the increased engagement of the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) in conflict-affected settings is helping to fill a gap between the peace and security and development space. However, these local peace agreements remain vulnerable to relapse if not carefully integrated into the broader effort to also seek political solutions to the national and often regional conflict dynamics.[120]

As shown, the growing involvement of UN peacekeeping staff in local conflicts is mostly due to the necessity to address inter-communal violence, often closely intertwined with national conflict dynamics, that in many settings became the leading cause of civilian casualties. In this regard it is the protection of civilians imperative – as well as the actual presence at the sub-national level – that has led peacekeepers to become increasingly engaged in addressing local conflict dynamics. 'Elevating' these efforts from reducing violence at the local level to making peace locally linked up then with calls to being more 'people-centered' and the 'turn towards the local' in peacebuilding.[121] Yet, it is also, in some cases, a result of the UN being edged out of national level processes. In some cases, where the UN does not have a clear role to play at the national level, it adopts a strategy of 'more peace at any level', as termed by the former SRSG of UNMISS.[122] While mediation by the UN has become more difficult to implement at the national level in recent years due to withering consent from host-states – as evident in

[118]United Nations, *Preventing, Mitigating and Resolving Transhumance-related Conflicts in UN Peacekeeping*, 2020.
[119]Duursma, *Non-state conflicts, peacekeeping, and the conclusion of local agreements*, 2022, 138-155; Hellmüller, *A Trans-Scalar Approach to Peacebuilding and Transitional Justice: Insights from the Democratic Republic of Congo*, 2021, 415-432.
[120]Duursma, *Non-state conflicts, peacekeeping, and the conclusion of local agreements*, 2022, 138-155.
[121]Mac Ginty and Richmond, The Local Turn in Peace Building: a critical agenda for peace, 2013, 763-83.
[122]Russo, *Protecting Peace? Analyzing the Relationship Between the Protection of Civilians and Peace in UN Peacekeeping Settings*, 2022; Russo and Mamiya, *The Primacy of Politics and the Protection of Civilians*, 2022.

South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo – some recent research suggests that the UN can effectively support local peace processes even in contexts where host-state consent is compromised.[123]

The UN would then do well to consider how to structure local-level political strategies that connect its field offices to one another and to the country headquarters. The framing of these local-level engagements as PoC rather than as political engagements limits these connections. There is not always an understanding of how local level political processes – including actions undertaken by UN field offices – connect with the national level, even though in some contexts, they are inextricably linked. In this regard, UNMISS in South Sudan has made a conscious effort to understand interlinkages between local and national dynamics and stakeholders, using its good offices in the capital to reduce tensions at the local level. Yet, sometimes local level political processes present opportunities for greater impact by UN peacekeepers, as there is more room for individual agency, flexibility, innovative solutions, and they are less bogged down by the 'heavy' nature of national level processes.[124]

Future Research

The above indicates four interesting avenues for further research. First, it points to a need for a better understanding of a broad conceptualization of the 'primacy of politics'. We observe that while UN peacekeeping operations are increasingly tasked with mediation and good offices mandates, this has become more difficult to implement in recent years due to withering consent from host-states. In some contexts, like CAR or DR Congo, the respective governments aim to limit the political role the UN missions play.[125] In addition, non-state armed groups may not necessarily see the UN as an honest broker if it has engaged in stabilization actions against them.[126] Against this background of the UN's declining formal role in political processes at the national level, understanding its role at the local level is important. Policy and academic research should seek to understand how informal and local-level political engagement helps to create a conducive environment for broader peace that may eventually 'trickle up' to the national level.[127]

[123]Duursma et al. 2023.

[124]UN Mediation Support Unit, *UN Support to Local Mediation: Challenges and Opportunities,* 2022; Russo and Mamiya*, The Primacy of Politics and the Protection of Civilians*, 2022.

[125]Hellmüller and Keller, *Mediation in Peacekeeping Contexts: Trends and Challenges for Mission Leadership*m 2023; Duursma et al. 2023.

[126]Hellmüller and Keller, *Mediation in Peacekeeping Contexts: Trends and Challenges for Mission Leadership*m 2023.

[127]This can be challenging. See: Duursma, *State Weakness, a Fragmented Patronage-Based System, and Protracted Local Conflict in the Central African Republic*, *2022*.

Another important question for future research is to what extent the effectiveness of UN diplomacy in political processes benefits from the military force within peacekeeping missions.[128] This question is particularly relevant in light of an overall shift away from peacekeeping operations towards political missions that can be observed in recent years. The last peacekeeping operation, albeit with no military component, was deployed in 2017 to Haiti (MINUJUSTH), as a small follow-up mission to earlier missions. At the same time, the UN Security Council deployed five new political missions (special political missions and special envoys) between 2017 and 2020 (e.g. to Yemen, Burundi, Colombia, Myanmar, Mozambique). While sometimes deployed side by side, such as in Cyprus or Lebanon, in countries where this is not the case the question arises whether the UN will be able to play a positive role in the political processes in these countries without being able to draw on the military capacity that comes with the deployment of UN peacekeeping operations.

Third, an important question is whether potential positive effects of peacekeeping for political processes hold after their exit.[129] Recent analyses suggest that peacekeepers' exit from subnational locations creates a security vacuum and increases political violence generally. Yet, withdrawals have no effect on electoral security locally.[130] What remains to be seen is whether the positive effects of election assistance and democracy promotion hold in operating environments of UN peacekeeping operations, where armed conflict is ongoing, disinformation campaigns target peacekeepers, and the consent of the government and large parts of the population are uncertain. How election assistance can be designed to work in these contexts is an important avenue for future research.

Finally, another avenue for future research is how climate variability affects communal conflicts and the role UN peacekeeping staff can play in promoting political solutions to mitigate the negative effects of climate variability. In many host countries, communities are highly vulnerable to climate change impacts due to their livelihoods' reliance on renewable natural resources like water and fertile land as well as the detrimental consequences of armed conflict for local resilience.[131] While recent scholarship suggests that climate variability can increase the risk of local violence in these

[128]For instance, Duursma and Gamez find that UN civilian staff are more successful in initiating negotiations in non-state conflicts when a higher number of military personnel is deployed. Duursma and Gamez, *Introducing the African Peace Processes (APP) dataset: Negotiations and mediation in interstate, intrastate and non-state conflicts in Africa*, 2022; Smidt and Duursma, *Peacekeepers Without Helmets: How Violence Shapes Local Peacebuilding by Civilian Peacekeepers*, 2023.

[129]Gledhill, *The Pieces Kept after Peace is Kept: Assessing the (Post-Exit) Legacies of Peace Operations, 2023,* 1-11.

[130]Kissling and Smidt, *(UN-)protected Elections – Left for Good? Withdrawal of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and its Effects on Violence during Electoral Periods in War-Affected Countries*, 2023, 165-197; Blaire et al., *UN Peacekeeping and Democratization in Conflict-Affected Countries*, 1-19.

[131]Buhaug and von Uexkull, *Vicious Circles: Violence, Vulnerability, and Climate Change*, 2021, 545–568.

contexts[132], we continue to have limited systematic knowledge on how it may affect local political processes. With the UN increasingly taking steps to improve the climate-sensitivity of its peacekeeping operations[133], including through 'climate-informed mediation',[134] this topic has immediate relevance for peacekeepers in the field. Future research could also address how local-level peace processes may be affected by climate change impacts such as increasing climate variability or more frequent natural disasters.

Overall, the primacy of politics in UN peacekeeping operations is essential to achieve lasting peace. Military force can at best reduce the virulence of the conflict, but it cannot address the underlying issues that gave rise to the conflict in the first place. By emphasizing political solutions and supporting political processes, the UN can help to build the foundations for sustainable peace at all levels.

Early Warning

Dirk Druet, Sascha Langenbach, Andreas Wenger, Francesco Re, Melanie Sauter, Rajkumar Cheney Krishnan[135], Daniel Oriesek[136], Allard Duursma & John Karlsrud

UN peacekeepers need to have adequate information and situational awareness to anticipate armed clashes between conflict parties and threats to civilians.[137] With this in mind, Jean-Marie Guéhenno, the former Under-Secretary-General for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, describes peacekeeping in his memoir as 'a never-ending exercise in risk management and decision-making in an environment of uncertainty'.[138] The need for adequate information and situational awareness has also been recognized in several prominent UN reports. For instance, the final report of the High-Level Implementation Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) recommended in 2015 that new technologies introduced in the field should aim to improve early warning.[139] Similarly, the 2020 Protection of Civilians Handbook of the UN notes that efficient and proactive decision-making on

[132]Koubi, Climate Change and Conflict. Annual Review of Political Science, 2019, 343–360.
[133]Scartozzi, *Climate-Sensitive Programming in International Security: An Analysis of UN Peacekeeping Operations and Special Political Missions*, 2022, 488–521.
[134]UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, *The Implications of Climate Change for Mediation and Peace Processes*, 2022.
[135]The views expressed in this forum article do not necessarily reflect the views of all authors or the views of the United Nations.
[136]The views expressed in this forum article do not necessarily reflect the views of all authors or the views of the Swiss Armed Forces.
[137]Duursma et al., *Predictive Peacekeeping: Strengthening Predictive Analysis in UN Peace Operations*, 2019, 1–19.
[138]Guéhenno, *The Fog of Peace: A Memoir of International Peacekeeping in the 21st Century*, 2015.
[139]United Nations, *Uniting Our Strengths for Peace, Politics, Partnerships and the People*m 2015, 3.

protection of civilians requires the systematic use of early warning, peacekeeping-intelligence, information acquisition, and assessment tools.[140]

In spite of the clear need for early warning and situational awareness in UN peacekeeping, this has traditionally been lacking in peacekeeping operations. In an assessment of how UNPROFOR could not prevent the Srebrenica massacre, Deputy Force Commander Major-General Barry Ashton emphasized that operations 'were frequently impaired by a lack of credible and dedicated intelligence means'.[141] UNAMIR Force Commander Lieutenant-General Roméo Dallaire writes in his memoir on the Rwandan genocide in 1994 that he had 'no means of intelligence on Rwanda' and further notes that he and his staff 'always seemed to be reacting to, rather than anticipating, what was going to happen'.[142]

It is only since relatively recently that the UN peacekeeping operations have designated information analysis units. Specifically, in 2005-2006, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations made significant strides in establishing information-gathering and analysis structures by introducing the Joint Operations Centre (JOC) and Joint Mission Analysis Centre (JMAC).[143] These entities are responsible for gathering and analyzing information to guide the leadership of peacekeeping missions. The JOC serves as a centralized hub for information at the mission's headquarters, facilitating situational awareness through integrated reporting on current operations and day-to-day situation reporting. On the other hand, JMACs act as a strategic planning body, primarily supporting senior management in analyzing the security landscape and political context.[144]

In addition, the UN Civil Affairs section has innovated early warning in peacekeeping. Civil Affairs Officers serve as the primary interface between the mission and local communities, building relationships with a wide range of actors, including local government officials, traditional leaders, civil society organizations, media, and IDPs. Following mishaps that had hindered protection responses because of the failure to tap into local knowledge, the UN mission in the DRC in 2010 introduced the category of Community Liaison Assistants (CLAs), who are civil affairs national staff working alongside the UN military forces to better engage with local communities, build trust and improve situational awareness with the aims of improving early warning. Since then, CLAs have been collecting information on

[140]United Nations, The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping, 23.
[141]Wiebes, *Intelligence and the War in Bosnia 1992–1995: The Role of the Intelligence and Security Services*, 2003, 11.
[142]Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*, 90, 104.
[143]UN DPKO, Policy Directive: Joint Operations Centres and Joint Mission Analysis Centres, 2006.
[144]Shetler-Jones, *Intelligence in Integrated UN Peacekeeping Missions: The Joint Mission Analysis Centre*, 2008; Norheim-Martinsen and Ravndal, *Towards Intelligence-Driven Peace Operations? The Evolution of UN and EU Intelligence Structures,* 2011; Duursma, *Counting Deaths While Keeping Peace: An Assessment of the JMAC's Field Information and Analysis Capacity in Darfur,* 2017, 823-847.

threats to civilians in several UN peacekeeping missions, contributing to preventing and mitigating these threats to civilians through a whole-of-mission approach.[145] CLAs also manage Community Alert Networks (CANs) in several missions through providing telephones and credit to key contacts and widely distributing emergency telephone numbers. In some instances, with the help of Quick Impact Project (QIP) funding, radio networks have been established to support the CANs.[146]

UN peacekeeping operations have also made progress in terms of coordinating between different sections and units within a mission. Realizing that effective early action in UN peace operations relies on coordination among various mission components, the JOC has been tasked with integrating situational awareness and coordinating Protection of Civilians (POC) efforts through established Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). However, as the JOC primarily focuses on immediate threats, a complementary role is played by the Strategic Planning Unit (SPU). The SPU's responsibilities encompass policy framework development, strategic planning, advising mission leadership, monitoring reform implementation, budget coordination, and outcome measurement.[147] Although SPUs serve a vital strategic function, they are typically understaffed, even in major UN missions. A case study in MINUSMA illustrates the positive impact of investing more resources and personnel into the SPU. In 2018, MINUSMA expanded its SPU, facilitating collaboration among POC advisers, military, police, and other mission personnel. This holistic planning approach proved invaluable when MINUSMA responded to escalating violence against civilians in central Mali in 2019. The SPU spearheaded the campaign, coordinating military operations to enhance security, civil engagement with community members, and cooperation with development and humanitarian actors. This integrated planning approach helped MINUSMA protect civilians more effectively, breaking down silos in analysis and planning, linking threat analysis with operational decisions, and aligning field office activities with the mission's overall strategic objectives.[148]

Different sections and units within a peacekeeping operation also collaborate on conducting patrols. For instance, in line with the whole-of-mission approach, Joint Projection Teams (JPTs) were introduced in MONUC in the Democratic Republic of Congo in early 2009. JPTs are typically deployed temporarily to assess local dynamics and develop localized protection plans. These teams comprise sections and units related to civilian protection,

[145]UNDPKO, *Civil Affairs Handbook*, 144; Brockmeier and Rotmann, Civil Affairs and Local Conflict Management in Peace Operations, 2016, 34.
[146]Kullenberg, *Community Liaison Assistants: A Bridge between Peacekeepers and Local Populations*, 46.
[147]United Nations. *Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping Handbookm* 2020, 7.
[148]Spink, *Strengthened Planning in UN Peacekeeping Operations: How MINUSMA Is Reinforcing Its Strategic Planning Unit*, 2019, 3.

such as Civil Affairs, Political Affairs, Human Rights, Child Protection, Public Information, and UNPOL, with Civil Affairs taking on the role of coordination.[149] In specific instances, like MONUC in the DRC, JPTs concentrated their efforts on filling gaps in field-level data collection and analysis, thus contributing to early warning and situational awareness.[150] In short, early warning has traditionally been lacking in UN peacekeeping operations, but this capacity has steadily improved since the early 2000s as a result of, among others, the creation of designated information collections and analysis units, the hiring of local staff, and greater coordination and cooperation among different units and sections within peacekeeping operations.

One area in which the UN could still make progress is tapping into data for early warning. With the increasing availability of conflict data and the advancement of technology, peacekeeping operations could leverage data analytics to detect patterns and anomalies and even try to predict conflict events ahead of time.[151] To explore the latter possibility, the UN Operations and Crisis Centre (UNOCC) in New York and the Center for Security Studies (CSS) at ETH Zurich entered into a joint research collaboration in December 2021. The aim of the collaboration is to combine conflict-event records from the UN's internal Situational Awareness Geospatial Enterprise (SAGE) database with state-of-the-art methods from machine learning. Since SAGE was not designed with machine learning in mind, and since event-prediction for conflict zones remains a nascent field of research, both parties decided to begin with a pilot project, in order to map opportunities and challenges.

Another type of data-driven early warning method that could be explored is to use remote sensing based on publicly available and freely accessible satellite imagery. Utilizing satellite images offers several advantages. Firstly, these images are independent of political dynamics within the country, ensuring unbiased information. Secondly, satellite images can cover an entire country. Some communities may be too dangerous for CLAs to operate in or may not wish to engage with peacekeepers. Moreover, national military or police presence may be lacking in certain areas. Furthermore, peacekeeping missions often struggle with staffing issues, including long absences due to rest and recuperation periods and lengthy recruitment processes.[152] Additionally, satellite images are regularly updated, providing a consistent stream of data for analysis.

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[149]UNDPKO, *Civil Affairs Handbook*, 144.

[150]Holt et al., *Protecting Civilians in the Context of UN Peacekeeping Operations: Successes, Setbacks and Remaining Challenges*, 196.

[151]Duursma and Karlsrud, *Predictive Peacekeeping: Strengthening Predictive Analysis in UN Peace Operations*, 2019; Duursma, *Mapping Data-Driven Tools and Systems for Early Warning, Situational Awareness, and Early Action* 2021; Sauter et al., *Spatio-Temporal Incident Mapping: A Data-Driven Tool to Advance the Protection of Civilians during Force Operations*.

[152]Sauter et al., Spatio-Temporal Incident Mapping: A Data-Driven Tool to Advance the Protection of Civilians during Force Operations.

For instance, satellite imagery can be employed to measure changes in vegetation, which serves as an indicator of regions affected by drought. This information is crucial as climate change and droughts are often considered threat multipliers impacting conflict dynamics. Particularly in the case of communal violence, which frequently involves territorial disputes over arable land or water sources, understanding and forecasting the severity of drought in a region becomes highly relevant. Considering that many peacekeeping missions are deployed in areas where communal violence prevails, integrating remote sensing and satellite imagery into the early warning system can potentially enhance the effectiveness of peacekeeping efforts.[153]

With the UN Secretary-General's Data Strategy,[154] there is now a push within the UN towards data-driven early warning. This has led to some concerns about the potential risks of an emphasis on technological applications to early warning, understood as applications that can process data in real time and send alerts, acting as a kind of panic button when bad things are imminent. Such a data-driven approach can be contrasted with an approach based on a human intelligence, involving a more sustained effort to detect early symptoms of relations breaking down and political dynamics shifting that would allow to put in place preventive strategies. Broadly defined, human intelligence refers to information collected through personal interactions, interviews, and observations. The introduction of CLAs and CANs in some UN peacekeeping operations is a good example of the UN trying to make use of human intelligence. The positive impact of CLAs on early warning and situational awareness demonstrate that it is essential for peacekeeping operations to gather information from local communities and stakeholders to understand the local context, tensions, and underlying drivers of conflicts and to protect civilians.[155]

Another important reason why data-driven early warning should be seen as an additional tool and not replace human intelligence efforts is that an over-reliance on near-real time situational awareness risks failing to capture the reality that day-to-day violence and other security incidents are increasingly challenging peacekeeping missions at a higher level.[156] Trends in the weakening of host-state consent, the deployment of the Wagner Group in CAR and Mali, and the persistent failure of the UN to address the economic drivers of violence today present a political context in which belligerents use force – or the threat of force – selectively to

[153]Sauter et al., *Go where you are needed: Improving early warning systems in UN peacekeeping through remote sensing data*.

[154]UN Secretary-General, Data Strategy of the Secretary-General for Action by Everyone, Everywhere with Insight, Impact and Integrity, https://www.un.org/en/content/datastrategy/index.shtml.

[155]Duursma, *Mapping Data-Driven Tools and Systems for Early Warning, Situational Awareness, and Early Action*; Sauter, Melanie, Sebastian Frowein, and Marcello Cassanelli. 2020, pp. 17-21.

[156]Druet, *Commodities, Commanders and Corruption: Political Economy in the Evolving Tradecraft of Intelligence and Analysis in UN Peace Operations*, 2023.

constrain the ability of peacekeeping missions to address the most pressing threats to the achievement of PoC mandate, the maintenance of safety and security for peacekeepers, and the viability of peacekeeping enterprise more generally.[157]

Some of the most salient recent examples of these trends have occurred in CAR and Mali, where combined-host state and Wagner Group forces have systematically denied missions' access to mining sites and other economic flash points of violence and have prevented them from investigating alleged atrocities against civilian that, in turn, have exacerbated ethnic tensions and escalated intercommunal violence. The inability of missions to access these sites and their unwillingness to confront host state and Wagner forces has undermined their capacity to respond tactically by placing hard and unambiguous limits on where peacekeeping missions are able to go and the types of threats they are able to deter or defeat. They have fundamentally constrained missions' abilities to reduce key drivers of violence.[158]

In this changing context, early warning of discrete events is no less necessary but is less and less sufficient as a frame through which to focus the UN's efforts to improve mission responses to violence. This is important because, to date, the majority of surveillance, analysis and information management efforts have been geared toward tactical and operational decision-making. This focus has heavily influenced the acquisition of new tools and technologies and has taken up a significant fraction of the UN's limited institutional capacity to deliver the complex organization transformations required to deploy new tools and approaches.

For peacekeeping's early warning agenda and infrastructure to meet today's challenges, information gathering and analysis tools must adapt increasingly strong links between discrete, day-to-day events and the UN's strategic positioning within the political and threat environment. This requires a reconfiguration of the relationship between tactical situational awareness and strategic analysis, including at the cross-border and geopolitical levels. By using both human intelligence and data, peacekeeping operations can potentially build a more complete picture of the situation on the ground and anticipate potential threats before they escalate. Early warning systems that leverage both human intelligence and data-driven approaches can potentially provide peacekeeping operations with a more accurate and timely understanding of the local context and help them take proactive measures to prevent violence and protect civilians. Such an approach

[157]Druet, *Wagner Group Poses Fundamental Challenges for the Protection of Civilians by UN Peacekeeping Operations*, 2023; International Crisis Group, *What Future for UN Peacekeeping in Africa after Mali Shutters Its Mission?*, 2023.

[158]International Crisis Group, What Future for UN Peacekeeping in Africa after Mali Shutters Its Mission?, 2023.

ensures that data-driven approaches are not used in isolation and that human intelligence and political analysis remain crucial components of early warning systems.

An example of a peacekeeping mission where staff used both data and human intelligence is KFOR. Peacekeeping staff within KFOR have in the past used weather forecasts for the next 1–2 weeks, to predict the emergence of water scarcity. Since water scarcity often acted as a conflict trigger in Kosovo, this predictive approach empowered the mission to proactively identify hot-spots, validate them through patrols and key leader engagement, and ideally take preemptive measures, such as dispatching water tankers, before conflicts erupt among affected populations in specific areas.[159]

Finally, obtaining relevant early warning and enhancing situational awareness is important, but it is equally, if not more, important to translate this information into early action. As a former senior UN diplomat pointed out in this regard, early warning is not an end in itself: 'Early warning without early and effective action would only serve to reinforce stereotypes of UN fecklessness, of its penchant for words over deeds'.[160] There have traditionally been two major challenges in terms of translating early warning into early action. First of all, the relevant units and sections within a peacekeeping mission need to be aware of the early warning. An internal report on peacekeeping operations across the UN found that early warning is a crucial factor in determining the speed of protection responses, but early warnings do not always reach the relevant peacekeeping staff.[161] Secondly, an effective response to early warning requires coordination between the different parts of a peacekeeping mission.

The turn to a whole-of-mission approach has contributed to greater coordination. Moreover, UN peacekeeping operations have been implementing policies to link early warning to rapid responses in recent years. An important step forward was taken by MINUSMA in June 2020, when it adopted its new standard operating procedures for early warning and rapid response, as well as introduced a new tool for the coordination of POC-related responses, referred to as the Early Warning Tracking Form. This form prescribes an adequate mission response to plausible physical threats to civilians. The form not only helps to rapidly verify and disseminate early warning information, it also helps to monitor whether a rapid response is undertaken. When an early warning is issued, each of the relevant

[159]Practical experience by Dr. Daniel F. Oriesek, Col (GS) Swiss Armed Forces, Former Chief of Operations and Assessment JRD-North, Kosovo.

[160]Statement by Luck, Informal Interactive Dialogue on Early Warning Assessment and the Responsibility to Protect, United Nations General Assembly, 9 August 2010.

[161]Office of Internal Oversight Services, *Inspection of the Performance of Missions' Operational Responses to Protection of Civilians*, 2018

components of a peacekeeping mission need to record the actions they have taken.[162]

In conclusion, the need for early warning and situational awareness in UN peacekeeping is paramount, as underscored by various reports and practical experiences. Despite historical deficiencies in this regard, significant progress has been made over the years. The establishment of information analysis units like the JOC and JMAC, as well as the incorporation of CLAs and CANs, have enhanced early warning capabilities. To advance even further, the UN could explore data-driven approaches, such as utilizing satellite imagery and machine-learning methods based on peacekeeping data, to estimate where and when armed violence is likely to take place in order to inform peacekeeping activities to respond and reduce violence.[163] However, it is essential to strike a balance between data-driven approaches and human intelligence efforts, considering the evolving nature of conflicts and the strategic positioning of peacekeeping missions. Ultimately, the aim is not just to gather information but to translate it into early and effective action, a challenge that requires awareness within mission units and coordination. The adoption of new procedures and tools, like the Early Warning Tracking Form, represents steps in the right direction, contributing to early warning leading to timely and appropriate responses.

Partnership Peacekeeping

Corinne Bara, Linnéa Gelot, Annick Hiensch[164], Alexandra Novosseloff, Ueli Staeger, Nina Wilén

The UN has never been the only peacekeeping actor. Throughout the history of UN peacekeeping, regional organizations, coalitions of states, and even individual states have deployed 'impartial' forces to conflicts worldwide.[165] With almost 77,000 uniformed personnel as of May 2023, the UN still has more peacekeepers on the ground than all other organizations together, but the upcoming withdrawal of the large UN missions from Mali (MINUSMA) the DRC (MONUSCO) may soon change that situation.[166]

[162]Smith, *Early Warning and Rapid Response: Reinforcing MINUSMA's Ability to Protect Civilians*, 2023; Duursma and Karlsrud, *Narrowing the Warning–Response Gap: Technology, Coordination, and the Protection of Civilians in UN Peace Operations*; Hirblinger et al., *Forum: Making Peace with Un-Certainty: Reflections on the Role of Digital Technology in Peace Processes beyond the Data Hype, International Studies Perspectives*, 2023.

[163]Duursma and Karlsrud, *Predictive Peacekeeping*.

[164]The views expressed in this forum article do not necessarily reflect the views of all authors or the views of the United Nations.

[165]UN-non-UN partnerships began to be delineated in the mid-1990s, Boutros-Ghali, *Beyond Peacekeeping*, 1992, 113-122; Knight, *Towards a Subsidiarity Model for Peacemaking and Preventive Diplomacy: Making Chapter VIII of the UN Charter Operational*, 1996, 31–52.

[166]United Nations, *Contribution of Uniformed Personnel to UN by Mission and Personnel Type*, 2023; Pfeifer, *Multilateral peace operations in* 2022: Developments and trends, 2023.

This development was foreshadowed in a 2015 statement by then-Secretary General Ban Ki-moon that we have 'entered an era of partnership peacekeeping'.[167] Since these words, the UN has not deployed a single new military peacekeeping operation, compared to more than ten such missions by other organizations.

This trend may continue for the foreseeable future, not only because a divided Security Council has stifled the UN's role as primary guarantor of peace and security, but also because concomitant security pressures on the European continent make the idea of each region being responsible for its own peacekeeping more attractive. For research on peacekeeping to remain relevant, it needs to adapt to these new realities. Peacekeeping scholars, especially those employing quantitative methods, have for long prioritized UN missions due to the availability of detailed data on personnel, troop contributing countries, and mandates.[168] The body of quantitative research on the characteristics and the effectiveness of missions by other peacekeeping actors is still scattered, though new datasets have recently opened up avenues for mixed methods and comparative approaches in the study of these missions.[169]

The new research agenda on UN peacekeeping partnerships will be aided by more conceptual clarity regarding the term partnership peacekeeping. At current, it is used – also by the UN – to denote a wide range of collaboration arrangements, of which the three most common forms are: support packages, where the UN supports a regional operation with technical, financial, or logistical assistance; sequential operations, whereby the UN and a partner deploy after one another; and parallel operations, the contemporaneous deployment of a UN mission and a non-UN partner in the same theater. Even these parallel operations take on many forms.[170] Sometimes the partner mission is large, while the UN has only a small political mission, as in Iraq or Afghanistan. At other times a large UN mission is supported by a small partner operation, as is often the case for EU missions. Yet another manifestation are military partner missions that bolster the UN response in critical situations, such as Operation Artemis and EUFOR in the DRC in 2003 and 2006. Finally, Mali and the Central African Republic (CAR) are examples where both the UN and other organizations or states (France) were present with large missions at the same time.

[167]UN Security Council, *Partnering for peace: moving towards partnership peacekeeping*, 2015, 17.
[168]For a recent review of findings, see Walter et al., *The Extraordinary Relationship between Peacekeeping and Peace*, 2021, 1705-1722.
[169]Bara and Hultman, *Just Different Hats? Comparing UN and Non-UN Peacekeeping*, 2020, 341-368; Kroeker, *Where do Peacekeepers go? Unpacking the Determinants of UNSC-Authorized Peace Operation Deployments,* 2023.
[170]Novosseloff and Sharland, *Partners and Competitors: Forces Operating in Parallel to UN Peace Operations,* 2019.

Such parallel deployments are common, affecting about a third of all months during which the UN is deployed to active conflicts.[171] While they are arguably the most immediate way of partnering in peacekeeping, actual coordination between the partners is often minimal. Individual missions have different mandates and objectives, and there is a lack of understanding of the operational constraints of the partner organization and relatedly, little information sharing. A major UN concern is that host communities are occasionally unable to distinguish between the UN and parallel forces.[172] Actions by a partner mission can undermine the legitimacy of the UN, with downstream effects on the security of its peacekeepers. This is a moral dilemma for the UN: it needs to delegate counterterrorism and peace enforcement tasks to regional organizations and ad-hoc coalitions of states but is wary of potential adverse effects on its credibility.[173]

Despite these challenges of parallel operations, a recent study finds that this form of partnership peacekeeping works well to reduce battlefield violence.[174] It shows, for instance, that while the UN is effective alone, UN troops with parallel non-UN forces can reduce battlefield violence more effectively, that is, with fewer blue helmets. The authors also find that non-UN missions need a UN partner to curb battle violence at all, which the authors explain with the UN's multidimensional engagement, which may offset the negative effects of an all-too militarized approach to violence reduction that is common in many of the larger non-UN missions. While more research is needed to validate the authors' findings and extend them to other effectiveness criteria beyond battle violence, the findings – together with the entire body of research on the effectiveness of UN missions – imply that regional and coalition peacekeeping can support the UN, but not replace it. In other words, we should not expect non-UN missions to be able to make up for an absence of UN multidimensional peacekeeping.

This, of course, prompts the question of what partnership peacekeeping will even come to mean should the current trend towards fewer UN and more regional and ad-hoc missions continue. As already indicated, the term partnership peacekeeping was never limited to situations in which UN and non-UN forces are deployed together, but it surely has to mean more than just delegating peacekeeping to others. Instead, the Secretary-General's report on partnering for peace from 2015 states clearly that partnership peacekeeping requires a minimum of cooperation and

[171]Schumann and Bara, *A New Era: Power in Partnership Peacekeeping*, 2023, 8.
[172]Novosseloff and Sharland, *Partners and Competitors*.
[173]The "New Agenda for Peace" explicitly recommends that "where peace enforcement is required, [the UNSC should] authorize a multinational force, or enforcement action by regional and subregional organizations." United Nations, Our Common Agenda Policy Brief: A New Agenda for Peace, https://dppa.un.org/en/a-new-agenda-for-peace.
[174]Schumann and Bara, *A New Era: Power in Partnership Peacekeeping,* 2023.

harmonization.[175] But the same developments that make it difficult to get authorization for new UN missions have also made the effective management of partnerships with regional actors harder. Since the end of the Cold War, the large majority of peace operations by organizations other than the UN have been authorized or at least recognized ('judged complementary to the UN's goals by the Security Council') by the UN.[176] Will this continue to be true in a more fragmented geopolitical landscape, or will we see more regional and ad-hoc coalitions not only going it alone, but also without the UNSC's blessing?

The utility of a Security Council resolution to guide peacekeeping partnerships should not be underestimated, particularly when multiple organizations respond to a crisis. In Kosovo, for instance, Resolution 1244 (1999) was crucial in coordinating various entities and activities.[177] It put Kosovo under UN administration through the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), and authorized the NATO Kosovo Force (KFOR). It also became the foundation for the OSCE mission focusing on democracy and human rights, and later the EU Rule of Law Mission (EULEX). Essentially, Resolution 1244 acted as a blueprint for the collaboration between multiple organizations who contributed security, civil administration, humanitarian assistance, institution-building and economic reconstruction. If the type of mixed sequential and parallel multi-actor peacekeeping that we have seen in Mali (UN, ECOWAS, EU, France, Group of 5 Sahel Joint Force) or the Central African Republic (UN, AU, ECCAS, EU, France) is becoming the norm, research should explore the UNSC's role in coordinating these efforts, whether or not the UN has blue helmets on the ground or not.[178]

In the future, we may see a further proliferation of regional actors who offer peacekeeping. In the New Agenda for Peace, launched in July 2023, UN Secretary-General António Guterres not only emphasizes the need for strong peacekeeping partnerships with existing organizations, but also offers support for building and rebuilding regional frameworks where there are not yet any.[179] An important discussion and also avenue for further research in this context concerns the competitive advantages of different actors. Different organizations and states have unique peacekeeping strengths, organizational cultures and normative frameworks, and may be better at certain mandates and tasks than others. This specialization prompts questions about which partners the UN should collaborate with

[175]UN Security Council, Partnering for peace: moving towards partnership peacekeeping, 2015, S/2015/229.
[176]Bellamy and Williams, *Trends in Peace Operations, 1947-2013*, 20-21.
[177]UN Security Council, Resolution 1244 (1999) / adopted by the Security Council at its 4011th meeting, 10 June 1999.
[178]Welz, *Multi-actor peace operations and inter-organizational relations: insights from the Central African Republic*, 2016, 568-591.
[179]United Nations, *Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace*, https://dppa.un.org/en/a-new-agenda-for-peace, accessed 4 September 2023.

based on conflict needs and context, and the unique contribution each actor brings to the table. Because if the UN's effectiveness indeed stems from its multidimensional engagement,[180] there are two ways in which other actors could make up for a dwindling number of such multidimensional UN missions in the future: The first is that non-UN missions become more like the UN by expanding their toolbox of non-military peacekeeping measures.[181] Alternatively, multiple regional organizations, coalitions and states together provide a multidimensional response according to every organizations' strengths and expertise.

In terms of existing peacekeeping partnerships, the cooperation between the UN and the EU, and between the UN and the AU, have been among the most significant processes, and have accordingly been at the centre of research into partnership peacekeeping. The UN-EU partnership has over time transitioned from relatively close operational cooperation to a more political one. In the first decade after the emergence of the EU's Common Security and Defense Policy, cooperation with the UN helped the EU to develop and test its crisis management instruments on the ground. The EU served, for instance, as an exit strategy for the UN in Bosnia and in Chad. It has also, at the request of the UN, undertaken short-term military stabilization efforts in the DRC and CAR, which required deep and meaningful cooperation and regular institutional dialogue. As the EU has moved towards more niche activities, for instance in training and capacity building, deep cooperation with the UN is more limited and less needed.[182]

The UN-AU partnership is vital since nearly half of all armed conflicts since the AU's founding in 2002 occurred in Africa, and almost all new UN missions in the same time have been on the African continent.[183] While the majority of the close to 40 African-led peace operations launched since then have been led by the AU, an increasing number of missions are led by the regional economic communities (like ECOWAS) and other ad hoc coalitions (such as the G5 Sahel Joint Force and the Multinational Joint Task Force fighting Boko Haram).[184] This fragmentation entails both opportunities and challenges. Some see it as a sign that security practices in Africa adapt precisely to the present conflict dynamics often times subsumed under the category 'violent extremism'. However, the increased preference of

[180]Schumann and Bara, *A New Era.*

[181]See also Akpasom, *What Role for the Civilian and Police Dimensions in African Peace Operations*?, 105–19.

[182]See Novosseloff, *United Nations – European Union Cooperation in the Field of Peacekeeping: Challenges and Prospects*, 2012.

[183]United Nations Peacekeeping, Where we Operate, https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/where-we-operate.

[184]Olonisakin and Ero, *The United Nations and Regional Security: Europe and Beyond*; Döring, *The changing ASF geography: From the intervention experience in Mali to the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises and the Nouakchott Process*, 32-58; Maglia et al., *ADHOCISM dataset: an introduction*.

African states for hybrid security governance arrangements is also a challenge to the AU's authority. We can expect institutional lines to be redrawn and reinvigorated debates about what constitutes appropriate 'African solutions'.[185] This tumultuous period will undoubtedly impact the partnership between the UN and the AU as the African diplomatic community enacts African peace and security interests. Despite contestation, the partnership has produced basic mutual understanding and recognition among groupings of practitioners.

Research has yet to catch up with these changing power dynamics. A promising avenue is to employ the prism of the so-called local turn in UN peacekeeping research also to peacekeeping practices by regional actors. This entails moving from assessing peacekeeping partnerships at the strategic level towards research into tactical level field politics. Studying local agencies and experiences of non-UN mission effects reveals alternative knowledge about partnership peacekeeping.[186] Similarly to the scholarship on UN missions, such work would help question external assumptions about appropriate benchmarks for mission performance.[187] The host population's resistance, for instance, tells us a lot about the limitations of neighbourhood peacekeeping when there is a legacy of regional interference in a specific territory.[188] Alternatively, support among host populations for specific operations provides insights about local protection norms and how come strategies of protecting civilians that seem unconventional may resonate with local populations.[189]

Another key issue in the UN-AU partnership is the financing of operations. The AU is entirely dependent on financial support from the EU, UN trust fund arrangements as well as partner states, yet successfully separates mandating from resource mobilization.[190] The option of financing AU missions from UN-assessed contributions has been an ongoing discussion between the UNSC and the AU for 15 years, and is back on the agenda in 2023.[191] UNSC debates have revolved around burden-sharing, the Council's oversight, and AU operations' adherence to accountability and compliance

[185]Gelot, *African conflict prevention and peace-making: From early warning to early action*.
[186]Witt and Khadiagala, *Towards studying African interventions 'from below' – A short conclusion*, 2018, 1.
[187]Gelot, *Deradicalization as Soft Counter-insurgency: Distorted Interactions Between Somali Traditional Authorities and Intervening Organizations*, 2020.
[188]Fisher and Wilén, *African Peacekeeping*; Tchie, *African-Led Peace Support Operations in a declining period of new UN Peacekeeping Operations*; Lyon et al., *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations*, 230-244.
[189]Gelot and Khadka, *Local Perceptions about Robust Protection of Civilians (PoC) in UNMISS and AMISOM Joint brief series: The Performance of Peacekeeping*.
[190]Staeger, *Resource Mobilization in Security Partnerships: Explaining Cooperation and Coercion in the EU's Partnership with the African Union*.
[191]Security Council Report, The Financing of AU Peace Support Operations: Prospects for Progress in the Security Council?, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/au_financing_2023.pdf.

frameworks.[192] Should a shared financing structure become institutionalized between the two organizations, and actually lead to a net increase of money available rather than merely a multilateralization of existing bilateral and EU contributions, this would mean a significant development of partnership peacekeeping.

Geo-political Context and the Future of Peacekeeping Operations

Sara Hellmüller, Nina Wilén, Han Dorussen, Kseniya Oksamytna & Annika Hilding Norberg

The structural environment in which peacekeeping takes place is changing. We see increased great power competition reflected in a paralyzed UN Security Council on certain matters, such as Ukraine or Syria.[193] Meanwhile, the previous 20-year decline of armed conflicts has reversed, pointing to a greater-than-ever demand for multilateral conflict management; and yet, since 2014, the UN Security Council has not mandated any new multidimensional peacekeeping missions. Though the blockage does not concern all matters and the Security Council has been able to renew mandates of existing missions, increasingly these mandates are adopted without unanimity, thus indicating an erosion of the Council's political backing for these missions. That said, it seems that the P5 are not generally opposed to peacekeeping and acknowledge the important role of the UN in building peace.[194] Peacekeeping has also been particularly supported in situations of counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency in what can be seen as the lowest common denominator of the great powers.[195] However, the P5 oppose missions in states they are allied to when they have what can be considered intrusive mandates, meaning those including for instance the promotion of independent media or civil society capacity building.[196]

We also see less emphasis on certain goals in peacekeeping mandates.[197] China and Russia have for example tried to limit the inclusion of human rights mandates in UN peacekeeping operations and the funding for

[192]Amani Africa, *Discussion on Financing AU Peace Support Operations in Africa*, https://amaniafrica-et.org/discussion-on-financing-au-peace-support-operations-in-africa/; Oksamytna and Wilén, *Adoption, adaptation or chance? Inter-organisational diffusion of the protection of civilians norm from the UN to the African Union*, 2022, 2357-2374.

[193]Hellmüller, *Peacemaking in a Shifting World Order: A Macro-Level Analysis of UN Mediation in Syria*, 2022, 543-559.

[194]Badache et al., *Conflict-management or conflict-resolution: What role in peacebuilding for the United Nations in a multipolar world order*?, 2023, 547-571.

[195]Karlsrud 2023.

[196]Hellmüller et al., *What is in a mandate? Introducing the United Nations Peace Mission Mandate (UNPMM)*.

[197]Karlsrud, *For the Greater Good? "Good States" Turning UN Peacekeeping towards Counterterrorism*, 2019, 65–83; Karlsrud, '*Pragmatic Peacekeeping' in Practice*'.

human rights posts in peacekeeping operations (the latter with limited success so far).[198] This is reflected in their speeches in the UN Security Council.[199] While not actively speaking out against the inclusion of human rights in mandates, China tries to rebalance priorities, for instance by saying that 'the international community has long tended to focus on human rights, the rule of law and security sector reform, perhaps without granting sufficient attention to economic and social development'.[200] More assertively, Russia says that 'the inclusion in mandates of generic tasks, such as human rights monitoring, sexual and gender issues, environmental protection, development and other issues, may well prove to be an unreasonable waste of resources'.[201]

These sharp divisions over human rights as well as gender and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda put into question the pursuit of the UN's normative framework.

The divisions in the Security Council have led to an increase in non-unanimous resolutions including on important mandate renewals for peace operations, from less than 5% in 2011–33,3% in 2022. A steady reduction in the number of PRSTs is also visible, from 24 in 2021–7 in 2022 – a 71% drop – [202] which most likely is linked to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. A weakening of sanctions regimes is also being observed, with several abstentions on regimes for CAR, DRC, Libya, Somalia, and South Sudan. As a result, there has arguably been a steady reduction in the political space for proactive, unified Security Council responses to new and emerging crises. This shifting context also impacts the Council's working methods, where the challenged proactivity of the 'P3' to set the peace operations agenda has led to a new dynamic of distributed burden-sharing with the E10 shaping mandates through co-penholderships and thematic issues.

These developments have gone hand in hand with increased skepticism by some of the host-states towards peacekeeping operations, not least in light of alternatives provided by bilateral support from UN member states – including through the deployment of private security actors – or sub-regional coalitions.[203] The regionalization and privatization of stabilization and peacekeeping tasks imply new dilemmas for the UN in terms of whether and how to collaborate with these regional powers or coalitions, especially those which have been established without Security Council involvement. At the same time the deployment of private mercenaries in parallel to UN peace operations clearly has had a negative impact on the UN's capacity to

[198]Coleman et al., *How Africa and China may shape UN peacekeeping beyond the liberal international order*, 2021, 1451–1468.
[199]Badache et al., *United Nations Security Council peace-related speeches (UNSCPeaS).*
[200]Badache et al., United Nations Security Council peace-related speeches (UNSCPeaS), 2013.
[201]Badache et al., United Nations Security Council peace-related speeches (UNSCPeaS), 2019.
[202]Security Council, *Security Council Working Methods in Hard Times*, 2 May 2023.
[203]John Karlsrud, '*Pragmatic Peacekeeping' in Practice'*.

fulfill its mandate. In Mali for instance, the government has obstructed MINUSMA's mandate implementation to allow the Wagner group to operate without any oversight.[204] Similar developments are observed elsewhere, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, where the government's dissatisfaction with MONUSCO's perceived lack of engagement with armed rebel groups led to calls for deployment of ad hoc coalitions from the East African Community (EAC) and the SADC (Southern African Development Community).[205] Yet, recent experiences with regional and sub-regional stabilization and peace enforcement efforts also seem to demonstrate the limits of such deployments in meeting the expectations of host governments and local populations, or in reducing drivers of conflict.

Careful examination of the increasing deployment of parallel regional operations and/or private security actors in PKO contexts may be a useful reference point in debates over the future of UN peacekeeping operations. Such actors have been deployed where PKOs are not authorized to undertake certain tasks, as for instance engaging in counter-terrorism operations, or where national authorities have spoken out against PKOs, such as in Mali. Do such operations suggest that the future of peace operations is not with impartial forces acting to uphold collective security, but with ones tailored to the achievement of specific political/ military objectives?

While supporting political solutions is a stated goal of many peacekeeping operations, we have seen a shift from peacekeeping operations towards SPMs, as mentioned above. The fact that in instances of extreme levels of violence political missions and good office engagements rather than peacekeeping missions are being deployed speaks to this trend. In Syria, for instance, there was only a short-lived peacekeeping operation (UNSMIS), but a Special Envoy office (OSES) has been appointed. In Yemen, there was no peacekeeping operation, but a special political mission (UNMHA) and a Special Envoy office (OSESGY). Several factors account for this change, namely the fact that SPMs are less expensive and carry less weight and are hence easier to agree on given the dynamics in the Security Council described above. Moreover, some host states do not want to host peacekeeping operations due to the stigma attached of them dealing with 'basket case' countries. Finally, the current Secretary-General is also more in favour of having less rather than more peacekeeping operations deployed. The shift towards SPMs may thus be a pragmatic attempt to adapt to the changes and to what is feasible in the current geopolitical context.

[204]Druet, *Wagner Group Poses Fundamental Challenges for the Protection of Civilians by UN Peacekeeping Operations*, 2023.
[205]Kennes and Wilén, *Multilayered violence in the DRC: Is History Repeating Itself?*

Future Research

The above indicates three interesting avenues for further research. First, and especially considering the Malian government's announcement that MINUSMA should withdraw without delay in June 2023, scholars could look more closely at the question of how belligerent consent to UN peace missions is affected by geopolitics. Concepts like 'forum-shopping' could be applied to examine when and how host states turn to which interlocutor for the satisfaction of which interest. There has been much talk about the increasing influence of Russia in several African countries.[206] Researchers could closely examine the nature and impact of this influence and what it means for UN peacekeeping operations in terms of their positioning vis-à-vis more bilateral approaches to security.

Second, scholars have started to inquire about the forms that peacekeeping operations, but also political missions, may take in the future.[207] While some talk about a turn towards more traditional peacekeeping or the focus on specific mandate tasks, the question remains open what type of peace promotion we will see in the future and based on whose interests and values. Further research into mandate negotiations, and particularly also the role of the E10, may provide insights into the objectives of missions in the future.

Third, as the world is changing rapidly and belligerent consent becomes more challenging, the UN has been engaged in reflections about its role on the ground. While often having carved out a place at the local level or through more technical engagements, the question of the added value as seen from a local perspective remains unanswered. While scholars have long brought these local views into the study of peace operations[208], updating research on what counts as legitimate interventions by the UN could provide much needed guidance for localizing discussions about UN reforms that are currently ongoing.

Conclusion

Nina Wilén, Corinne Bara & Allard Duursma

In this forum article we have aimed to provide both a broad overview of the achievements and challenges of UN peacekeeping over the past 75 years and to identify current trends and developments which influence and shape the practice and future of peacekeeping. In doing this, we made the choice to

[206]Duursma and Masuhr, *Russia's return to Africa in a historical and global context: Anti-imperialism, patronage, and opportunism*, 2022, 407-423.
[207]Osland et al., *UN peace operations in a multipolar order: Building peace through the rule of law and bottom-up approaches*, 2021. 197-221; Dunton et al., *Pragmatic Peacekeeping in a Multipolar Era: Liberal Norms, Practices, and the Future of UN Peace Operations*, 215-234.
[208]Pouligny, *Peace Operations Seen from Below: UN Missions and Local People*.

focus on six different themes which both reflect on the core norms and principles of what peacekeeping is, and what it has become on a theoretical level, as well as on how these norms are translated into practice and transformed over time. Understanding how peacekeeping and the geopolitical context are mutually shaping each other was also part of these themes to better comprehend the current crisis of multilateralism and ponder the future of peacekeeping.

Most fundamentally, an examination of the 'holy trinity' of UN peacekeeping's core principles: consent, impartiality and the non-use of force, have demonstrated the dynamic and evolving aspect of consent, the shift from a passive to an assertive conception of impartiality and a changing interpretation of when, and against whom, the use of force is legitimate or not. These changes have occurred as response to challenges, including difficulties to counter non-state armed violence and ensure the safety of peacekeepers themselves in areas where consent is partial, but have also resulted in new challenges, such as a reluctance to call out and stop government oppression and protect civilians.

Current challenges therefore concern both how to maintain the UN's legitimacy in states where consent is contested, and how to protect civilians more effectively without using excessive force. Research has shown that more efficient early warning capacities, including both human intelligence efforts and data-driven approaches could improve peacekeepers' efficiency in preventing violence and protecting civilians. Avenues for research on these matters include more detailed examination of when, where and how consent is negotiated, what kinds of mandates increase or decrease consent, and what types of peacekeeping activities that are most effective for protecting civilians.

Protection of civilians (PoC) has arguably become a new core principle of UN peacekeeping over the past two decades, yet historical examples in this article show that this is not a new phenomenon but has been an aspect of UN peacekeeping for decades. However, as consensual as the principle seems to be in theory, its implementation in practice has underlined challenges and dilemmas. The heavily militarized approach to PoC has for example provoked questions and criticism against so-called robust mandates, while examples of UN's failure to protect civilians have gained more attention than academic evidence demonstrating that peacekeeping *is* effective in reducing violence against civilians under certain conditions. UNPOL and civilian peacekeepers have played important roles in this context, yet their influence and roles have consistently been undervalued and under-researched, thus suggesting that new research avenues could focus on exploring when, how and with what effects these actors contribute to PoC.

UN's renewed push for the 'primacy of politics', during the past years has been seen as a way to counterbalance the attention given to the military aspect of peacekeeping operations, fueled in part by the heavy military components of some of the multidimensional operations launched in the beginning of 2000s. The broad slogan has been interpreted as a means to recenter focus on UN's role as helping to create space for political solutions or contain violence through assistance in mediating local conflicts, supporting elections and monitoring ceasefires. Yet, many of the current environments to which UN is deployed lack conditions for such activities to be undertaken. This puts the UN again in a dilemma between using military force to help creating the conditions for such activities, while continuing to advocate political and non-violent solutions to conflicts. More research on how the UN can balance these two roles while remaining credible in its claim to promote the 'primacy of politics' is needed.

More research is also needed on what effects partnership peacekeeping has on mandate formulation, mandate implementation, and effects on the ground, as the past two decades has seen an increase of non-UN bodies conducting peace and stabilization operations. Africa remains the centre of attention for these missions, as it is the continent which has seen most operations by both the UN and its partners. A shift from AU led missions towards regional economic communities and coalitions of the willing, mirrors African states' preference for hybrid security governance arrangements. Such a development provokes questions both regarding the future of the UN-AU collaboration and possible structured financing of AU missions but also which role the UN should adopt in relation to the more fragmented security scene on the continent.

The developments analyzed in this article all take place in a rapidly changing geopolitical context profoundly affected by the current great power competition. The UN Security Council has been paralyzed as a result of the latter, while the increase of armed conflicts over the past decade has shown the need for more, and more efficient conflict management. A crisis of multilateralism has been declared by academics and observers, putting into question the future of not only UN Peacekeeping, but UN's existence more broadly. The recent expulsion of the UN mission from Mali following the takeover by a military junta, and the accelerated exit from the DRC in the wake of popular protests, reflect the impact of waning consent and with it the crisis of multilateralism.

This crisis notwithstanding, UN peacekeeping as a practice and as a concept have weathered out crises before. Michael Pugh, the founder of International Peacekeeping, remembered how in 1993, just before he launched the journal, that the prospect that peacekeeping would disappear, seemed a distinct possibility. Yet thirty years later, peacekeeping is still there, constantly adapting to remain relevant in an ever-shifting

environment. We hope that this forum article has provided for both a broad and deep overview of the evolution of peacekeeping, but also that it has contributed to a better understanding of some of the challenges that UN peacekeeping staff face in their work. Foremost, we hope that it has given new ideas and incentives for research that can further develop the study and practice of UN peacekeeping.

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