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Ideas Notes 2030: Strategic Reflections on the Future of UN Policing

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Geneva Centre for Security Policy

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Partners and Contributors

This is a compilation of Ideas Notes on the Future of UN Policing written in the context of the New Agenda for Peace and in support of the preparations for the Summit of the Future. 25 leading scholars and practitioners from a global range of universities, think tanks, training centres, departments and ministries, governmental and non-governmental, has come together and are submitting the present complimentary perspectives and ideas intended to inform ongoing reflections on how to strengthen UN Policing to be optimally fit for the future.

Contributing authors are introduced and presented at the beginning of each Idea Note / chapter.

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Acknowledgement

This is a collective effort, in the truest sense of the word. The ideas and reflections on how to strengthen UN Policing for the future, contained in this compilation of short essays, is the result of a joint undertaking by 25 experts - researchers and practitioners - from all continents.

We are grateful to the authors for their overwhelmingly positive response when asked to contribute to this collection of 'Ideas Notes'. Their readiness to contribute with their knowledge and experience is deeply appreciated. It is gratifying to see how the peace operations research and policy development communities are embracing the New Agenda for Peace mantra of being nimble, agile and effective. Each eminent author is introduced and presented at the beginning of their respective chapters. We salute the quality and relevance of your interventions.

We also thank the United Nations Department of Peace Operations, the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions, the Police Division, and the Integrated Training Service, for the excellent cooperation and opportunity to collaborate on important initiatives and capacity building efforts. The inspiration to pursue this project comes from the UN Police Division in the Department of Peace Operations. During the UN Police Commanders Course 2023, co-hosted by Switzerland, a module on "Strategic Reflections on the Future of UN Policing" was introduced. Generating a timely and forward leaning conversation, the UN Police Division Leadership decided to continue the deliberations with its Leadership Team, including with Heads of Police Components in field missions. To this end, a UN Police Division Leadership Team Retreat was hosted by Switzerland in February 2024. Several of the Ideas Notes in this compendium were shared with the Retreat, whereas several additional, complementary perspectives, have been added in time for this publication, to continue providing inputs to the ongoing reflections on future UN policing.

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Last but not least, we would like to thank our outstanding resource expertise and colleagues at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy who have made this, and other UN peace operations related projects and initiatives possible. Thank you.

Contents

1. Introduction
Thomas Greminger and Annika Hilding Norberg 6

2. UN Peace Operations: The Road to 2030 and Beyond
Richard Gowan, Solomon Dersso and Daniel Forti 12

3. Preparing for UN Policing 2030: Challenges and Opportunities
Annika Hilding Norberg, Charles T. Hunt, He Yin and Emma Birikorang 20

4. How Can UN Policing Become More Nimble, Adaptive and Effective? Insights from Complexity Theory and Adaptive Peace Operations
Cedric de Coning and Caty Clément 31

5. UN Policing in Times of Crisis: Leading into the Unknown
Mike Hardy and Rycko Amelza Dahniel 37

6. Advancing Women Leadership in UN Policing – Organisational Culture Reboot
Cristina Finch, Heather Huhtanen and Tarryn Bannister 44

7. Preparing for the Future: Climate-Supportive United Nations Policing
Wendy MacClinchy, Ahmed Abdel-Latif, Dina El Mamoun and Sara Rabie 53

8. Implications and Opportunities for United Nations Police: Harmful Information in the Context of Peace Operations
Annika S. Hansen and Fatoumata Kaba 66

9. Leveraging New Technologies in Support of United Nations Policing
Mike Kelly and Ann-Kristin Kvilekval 76

10. Addressing the Elephant in the Room: Peace Operations and the Threat of Organized Crime
Walter Kemp, Dawit Yohannes and Meressa Kahsu Dessu 85

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1. Introduction

Thomas Greminger and Annika Hilding Norberg

Since the 1960's, UN police has provided a critical capability in the evolving tool-box of UN peace operations. UN policing, pioneered and supported in its development by UN Member States, has grown into a people-centred, field focused instrument in the service of peace. Over the years and until recently, the number of UNPOL incrementally increased allowing wider scope and greater impact.

However, as the world is increasingly struggling with accelerating fragmentation, polarization, and securitization, the ability of peace operations, including UN Police, to deliver on the ambitious mandates authorized by UN Member States, has become more difficult. The context and the nature of violent conflict is changing. The challenges to individuals and communities, and to national, regional and international peace, security and development, are significant and mounting. The outbreak of war in the Middle East, the invasion of Ukraine, rising instability across the African continent, the abandonment of rights for women and girls in Afghanistan, and the destructive consequences of climate change for people and planet, are only a few of the current crises that are having a profound impact on all matters of peace and security far beyond the regions concerned.

Mobilizing a response, the United Nations Secretary-General's vision for a New Agenda for Peace was published in July 2023 to inform the preparations for a Summit of the Future to be held in September 2024. It called for a strategic reflection on the challenges and achievements, limitations and achievements of UN peace operations. A zero draft of the Pact for the Future took a somewhat similar approach by calling for Member States to commit to undertaking an inclusive, comprehensive reflection on the future of peace operations, including peacekeeping. It also requested "the Secretary–General to continue to develop new models of peace operations that can respond to the evolving nature of conflict in traditional and new domains, while devising transition and exit strategies."[1]

To this end, and as the world enters a new era, how can UN Policing best be adapted, refined, strengthened and leveraged to ensure its full potential as a key function and tool in a spectrum of UN peace and security engagements, missions and operations? Indeed, building on progress made through the Action for Peacekeeping Plus initiative, this collection of ideas notes is intended to contribute to the larger international strategic reflections on the future of UN policing. The ideas notes explore the possible and desirable future of United Nations policing.

Peace operations only succeed in their mandate implementation with shared vision, understanding, ownership and expectations for end results between primarily but not exclusively, the United Nations system, host countries and police and financial contributors. What role can UN peace operations and UN policing in particular, in partnership with other stakeholders, most usefully play in the future? Where and in which contexts can United Nations policing be best utilized to support the strengthening of peace and security, development and human rights? How can the current 'crisis of multilateralism', and its consequences

1 Pact for the Future, Zero Draft, released by Governments of Germany and Namibia, 26 January, 2024.

for the larger multidimensional integrated peace operations, be turned into an opportunity to build better for the future? How can UN policing sustain the positive developments achieved in a number of areas, including the meaningful engagement of women police peacekeepers? Wherein lie the challenges? What preparations for the future are needed?

In order to strengthen the prevention agenda, how does UN policing most usefully contribute to the overall UN Rule of Law and legal chain framework? What role is there for UN policing in response to more invasive transnational organized crime? How can UN policing potentially expand its role in non-mission settings? In what ways are police and police-centric operations suited to address emergent drivers of conflict and insecurity? How can UN policing contribute to prevention by advancing the climate, peace and security agenda, and environmentally supportive engagements and missions. The ideas notes also explore UN policing in a digital age. How can new technologies and cyber capacities support the strengthening of UN policing? How can UN policing be enhanced to address the escalating occurrence and devastating impact of mis- and disinformation on UN missions and operations? How can UN policing develop abilities and capabilities to mitigate, if not prevent, such risks and threats to its missions and operations? In effect, how can UN policing leverage impact through a competent and confident digital transformation?

The compendium also raises questions and touches upon issues requiring attention in the immediate future, such as what new demands in support to multinational security forces or other types of non-UN police and security missions, if any will be required? What is required for UNPOL to be ready if called upon to support and assist such peace operations? As conflict and violence continues to increasingly migrate into urban and dense environments, how can UN policing strengthen its preparations for these operational contexts and requirements? What role may there be for UN policing in the Middle East, and if there is to be a deployment, what is required for UN policing to adapt? How can UN policing best contribute to steady and secure mission drawdowns, transitions and be ready for upscaling if and when asked to do so? How can UN policing remain focused on integrating a rights-based approach when deployed in increasingly hostile environments?

As discussed in the acknowledgements, this project was inspired by the initiative taken by the UN Police Division to pursue an active approach to thinking, planning and working towards the future. The UN Police Commanders Course and the UN Division Leadership Retreats both focused specifically and practically on reflecting on what future of UN policing. To provide injects from associated sciences and complementary perspectives, ideas notes were developed by a group of almost equal number of women and men, and a wide variety of voices and expertise from the Global South and Global North, East and West. As a follow up to these rich discussions, several additional subjects of relevance for UN policing was added to make for a broader collection of angles and perspectives. The result of which is this compendium .Each chapter stands on its own, while together, they make for an almost 360 assessment of what some of the key challenges for UN policing are, what may emerge in the years to come, but also what some of the strategies, solutions and proactive actions can be pursued to harness the best of UN policing, meet its shortcomings and ensure that UN policing will be ready and fit for the future.

The aim is for the broad range of ideas and recommendations put forward in this compendium to inform ongoing work of key UN Policing related processes in 2024 and 2025, such as the UN Chief of Police Summit 2024, the Summit of the Future and the Pact that is envisaged, the ongoing review and conduct of the UN Senior Mission Leadership Courses and the UN Police Commanders Course, the Peacekeeping Ministerial to be hosted in spring of 2025, and ongoing deliberations of the Special Committee on UN Peacekeeping (C34) and ACABQ.

Following this introduction, the compendium addresses the following subjects, starting with the second chapter, 'United Nations Peace Operations: The Road to 2030 and Beyond', authored by Mr Richard Gowan and Mr Daniel Forti of the International Crisis Group and Dr Solomon Dersso of Amani Africa. It sets the scene for the overall study by examining the forces driving the fragmentation of international crisis management. In light of these developments, the authors elaborate on what types of peace missions may be operational in 2030 and beyond. In addition to looking at what types of missions are probable, the chapter explores the role of the United Nations, and what can be expected or envisaged for the United Nations, in an increasingly turbulent and complex future.

In the third chapter, UN Policing 2030: Challenges and Possibilities Ahead', Annika Hilding Norberg of the GCSP, Professor Charles T. Hunt of the United Nations University Centre for Policy Research, Dr He Yin of the China Police Peacekeeping Training Centre, and Dr Emma Birikorang of Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre, share reflections on the future of UN peace operations by focusing on policing as one of the nimble and effective tools in the peace operations toolkit. The paper explores emerging requirements for UNPOL while considering limitations and challenges, potentials and opportunities. In doing so it examines what the future may demand and how UN policing will need to adapt in order to meet the challenges ahead. The paper begins with a brief overview of trends and emerging challenges. It proceeds to suggest three potential scenarios for future UN Policing to help guide the analysis on potential conditions and requirements for future missions. Third, it indicates some of the emerging responses to the challenges, before offering some recommendations for consideration in the development of UN policing fit for the purposes of the future.

As mentioned, the UN Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace calls on UN peace operations to become more versatile, nimble and adaptive, so that they are in a better position to contribute to maintaining international peace and security amid new levels of complexity. In the third chapter, 'How Can UN Policing can Become more Nimble, Adaptive and Effective?' co-authors Professor Cedric de Coning of Norwegian Institute of International Affairs and ACCORD, South Africa, and Dr Caty Clément, Associate Fellow, GCSP, seeks to answer the question using insights from Complexity Theory and Adaptive Peace Operations. The chapter explores what the implications are for UN Policing when we recognise the world as complex, what is meant by "nimble" and "adaptive", and how adopting and integrating these attributes should lead to more effective peace operations.

Closely linked with Adaptive Peace Operations is the concept of Adaptive Leadership. The fifth chapter explores "UN Policing in Times of Crisis: Leading into the Unknown". Co-authored by Professor Mike Hardy of the International Leadership Association, and Police Commissioner General Prof. Dr H. Mohammed

Rycko Amelza Dahniel of the Indonesian National Police, the chapter examines how recent thinking about leadership in current febrile and polycrisis-characterised times might impact on approaches to UN Policing, when discussions, decisions, deployments and disruptions must take place in a context of complexity, uncertainty and the unknown. They suggest that never before have we been so cognisant of what we do not know. Focusing on leadership and the importance of the development of new dimensions of leadership for policing, nationally and internationally, that can help to make sense, to make positive change more likely and confront the unknowns in our immediate futures. UN Policing needs a globally connected mindset, a systems outlook and orientation, and should invest in additional individual and collective know-how and capabilities that enable it to think about its contribution to safety and security innovatively.

In chapter six, ¨Advancing Women Leadership in UN Policing – Organisational Culture Reboot', the co-authors Ms Cristina Finch of Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF), Ms Heather Huhtanen and Dr Tarryn Bannister, explore why and how peacekeeping operations need to be gender-responsive. The chapter looks at how the UN and Member States supporting Action for Peacekeeping Plus and the Summit of the Future can bolster a cross-cutting gender approach to bring about lasting change, or a "reboot", to organisational culture within policing organisations, thus improving the effectiveness, efficiency, and relevance of UN Peacekeeping going forward. Given the recent escalation in conflict and the 2028 UN Gender Parity Strategy, they propose that there is a particular need to refocus efforts on fostering substantive gender equality within peacekeeping and particularly within policing organisations.

Co-authors Wendy MacClinchy and Dina El Mamoun of Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC) in Geneva and Sudan in cooperation with Ambassador Ahmed Abdel Latif and Sara Rabie of Cairo International Centre for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding, put forward their proposition on "Preparing for the Future: Climate-Supportive United Nations Policing" in chapter seven. A comprehensive essay recognizing the value in "greening the blue" as an essential for reducing the UN's environmental footprint in peace operations, however, they argue this should not be conflated with the integration of climate-security risks in UN-mandated peace operations work. These complimentary different spheres of effort should be understood for their distinct objectives: the environmental sustainability of UN operations in the first case and applying a "climate lens" to UN-mandated operations to mitigate the risk multiplier effect of climate on insecurity in the second case. The chapter puts forward thematic issues and exemplified by case studies in areas of particular concern but also opportunity.

Chapter eight is devoted to the "Implications and Opportunities for United Nations Police: Harmful Information in the Context of Peace Operations". Co-authors Dr Annika S. Hansen of the Center of International Peace Operations in Germany and Fatoumata Lejeune-Kaba Kaba of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees discusses how harmful or misleading information has become an increasingly important and destructive factor in modern conflict environments. Feeling the impact of mis-, dis- and mal information and hate speech (MDMH), the UN is now making a concerted effort to provide guidance and tools to assist mission efforts to meet and mitigate these activities. Looking ahead to 2030 and beyond, the chapter discusses current pressing challenges, key trends in

MDMH, including the role of artificial intelligence and how these developments impact responses, and what it means for the work of UNPOL.

The subject of "Leveraging New Technologies in Support of United Nations Policing" is examined in chapter nine. It is co-authored by Colonel The Hon. Dr Mike Kelly (Retd), former Minister for Defence Material of Australia, and Police Commissioner Ann-Kristin Kvilekval former Police Adviser UN Interim Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) and of National Police University of Norway. The chapter discusses how leveraging the use of data and digital technologies can help in tracking conflict trends, better understand local sentiment, enable inclusive dialogue, more effectively monitor impact and help guide evidence based decisions. Building on the focus of the New Agenda for Peace on the technology revolution underway, the chapter also explores the threat new technologies poses, and the importance for the Global South to have access to the benefits of new and emerging technologies for the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Finally, chapter ten of this compendium is making a pitch for the need to "Address the Elephant in the Room: UN Peace Operations and the Threat of Transnational Organized Crime". Co-authors Dr Walter Kemp of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy and Dr Dawit Yohannes and Meressa Kahsu Dessu of the Institute of Security Studies in Addis Ababa, are concerned with the continued rise in transnational organized crime, and the inadequacy with which it is responded to. While inter-state conflicts are making a comeback, intra-state conflict driven by multiple factors, including competition over illicit economies and organised criminal activities, is becoming an ever growing concern. Organised crime and illicit markets were mentioned in 55% of all UN Security Council resolutions in 2022, and as such is recognised as a threat to peace, security and development. However, the UN and regional organisations seem unsure of how to deal with the problem operationally. This chapter proposes concrete recommendations and proposed actions that could inform a new era of building peace in turbulent times.

On behalf of the co-authors and those that have made this publication possible, we hope it will provide informative, instructive and even inspirational reading. Times are challenging. All the more important to pursue collective efforts, brainstorm across geographical, gender and other divides. To make things happen, the academic / practitioners / policy makers divide need to be bridged. Hence, we hope that some or the other of ideas and recommendations raised and elaborated upon in this compendium may find their way into and help forward the work of UN Policing related processes in 2024 and 2025, including the UN Chief of Police Summit, the Summit of the Future and the Pact that is envisaged, the ongoing review and conduct of the UN Senior Mission Leadership Courses and the UN Police Commanders Course, the Peacekeeping Ministerial to be hosted in spring of 2025, and ongoing deliberations of the Special Committee on UN Peacekeeping (C34) and ACABQ.

We thank everyone who have been a part of the project effort for their thought leadership, concrete ideas and steadfast belief in the power and possibilities of UN policing as a formidable service for peace.

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Mr Richard Gowan was previously a Consulting Analyst with ICG in 2016 and 2017. He has worked with the European Council on Foreign Relations, New York University Center on International Cooperation and the Foreign Policy Centre (London). He has taught at the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University and Stanford in New York. He has also worked as a consultant for organisations that include the UN Department of Political Affairs, the UN Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on International Migration, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Rasmussen Global, the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Global Affairs Canada. From 2013 to 2019 he wrote a weekly column ("Diplomatic Fallout") for *World Politics Review*.

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2. UN Peace Operations: The Road to 2030 and Beyond

Richard Gowan, Solomon Dersso and Daniel Forti

2.1 Overview

United Nations peace operations are in a period of change with no clear end in sight. The era of large, multidimensional missions – primarily deployed in Africa – that characterised UN peacekeeping from the late 1990s onwards is coming to a close, at least for the time being. In some cases, these missions ended in broad success (e.g. Liberia and Timor-Leste), but in others they were unable to establish the roots for sustainable peace, often for reasons beyond their control (e.g. Darfur and Mali). Academic analysts typically take a "glass half full" approach to the UN's performance in this era, noting these missions' strengths, but diplomats and UN officials in New York have a "glass half empty" view, highlighting recent UN setbacks.[2]

In the immediate term, UN overall global deployments are likely to shrink further with the drawdown of MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). However, this does not signify a total collapse of UN deployments, similar to that which followed the disasters in Rwanda and Srebrenica in the mid-1990s. The large-scale blue helmet missions in the Central African Republic (CAR) and South Sudan appear set to continue for the foreseeable future. The current conflict in the Middle East has raised questions about the future of UNIFIL in southern Lebanon, although this mission has survived successive previous wars.

Overall it seems probable that the UN can, therefore, retain a significant global footprint in its *existing* missions through the middle years of this decade. Based on current trends – and assuming no strategic shocks – this could involve around 40,000 uniformed military personnel and 5,000 police officers, with Africa still the main area for UN deployments.[3]

However, while the UN may maintain this stock of *existing* missions for some time, this does not mean that it will launch further large-scale blue helmet peace operations in future. In contrast to the early 2000s, when the Security Council treated blue helmet operations as a "go to" response to many civil wars, we have entered a period in which the Security Council, regional organisations and individual states are turning to a wide range of alternative security options to deal with new crises. These options range from regional peace enforcement missions to bilateral deployments and mercenary forces.

This Ideas Note looks at the forces driving the fragmentation of international crisis management (section 2.2); outlines what types of peace missions may be operational in 2030 and asks what roles the UN can take in this complex picture (section 2.3).

2 For a summary of broadly positive academic views, see Allard Duursma et al., "UN Peacekeeping at 75: Achievements, Challenges, and Prospects", *International Peacekeeping*, Vol.30(4), 2023, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13533312.2023.2263178.

3 These figures are based on current deployment figures excluding MINUSMA and MONUSCO.

2.2 Trends in international crisis management: fragmentation and innovation

Even as UN deployments shrink, there is still a clear need for international crisis management. There has been a surge in deadly violence in recent years. The number of people killed in armed conflict jumped from 120,000 in 2021 to 237,000 in 2022 – and the figures are likely to be worse for 2023. A high percentage of battle deaths take place in a relatively small number of wars – such as those in Ethiopia, Ukraine, Sudan and Gaza – but smaller-scale conflicts (including those involving criminal gangs) remain widespread.[4]

The international response to these conflicts is, however, increasingly incoherent. There are at least six reasons for this incoherence:

- **The complexity of violence:** Through its history, the UN has developed considerable experience of (i) deploying inter-positional forces to monitor ceasefires and peace agreements *between* states (e.g. UNDOF), and (ii) supporting peace agreements in countries recovering from "classic" civil wars (those with fairly clearly delineated warring parties). Yet current conflicts are proving increasingly complicated. This is in part because of *who* is involved in fighting. In Africa, as Amani Africa notes, "traditional rebel groups" are being replaced by "irregular and loosely organised groups such as clan militias, guerrilla forces, criminal networks, ethnic or religious militias, and terrorist groups".[5] This phenomenon is also notable in cases such as Syria and Myanmar. Conflict is also taking place across state borders in regions such as the Sahel – making cohesive responses harder – and tough operating environments, like sprawling cities.[6]
- **Major power competition:** Tensions between the permanent members of the Security Council mean that the UN is often unable to engage meaningfully in new conflicts. Friction between the United States, Russia and China impeded the Council's response to the outbreak of war in Ethiopia in 2020 and the coup in Myanmar in 2021, but tensions have accelerated following Russia's all-out aggression against Ukraine in 2022. Although the Security Council has not become entirely paralysed (continuing to agree on resolutions on issues such as aid to Afghanistan), P5 friction worsened through 2023, affecting debates on cases like Mali and Syria.[7]
- **Limits to action by regional organisations:** With the Security Council often bogged down, UN officials and diplomats increasingly turn to regional organisations – most notably the African Union (AU) – as an alternative authority to mandate and oversee peace operations. Signaling this trend, the Council passed Resolution 2719 in December 2023 authorising potential UN funding to AU missions.[8] But the AU and other regional organisations

4 Shawn Davies et al., "Organized Violence 1989-2022, and the Return of Conflict between States", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol.60(4), 2023, https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1794582/FULLTEXT01.pdf.

5 Amani Africa, *Africa and Peace and Security Diplomacy in a Time of the New Agenda for Peace*, 2023, https://amaniafrica-et.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Africa-and-Peace-and-Security-Diplomacy-in-a-time-of-the-New-Agenda-for-Peace-1.pdf.

6 Charles T. Hunt, *The Future of Police in UN Peace Operations*, UN Department of Peace Operations, 2020, https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/hunt_future_of_police_in_un_peace_operations_dpo_future_of_peace_operations_project_20201029.pdf.

7 Richard Gowan, "How the World Lost Faith in the UN", *Foreign Affairs*, 2023, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/israel-gaza/how-world-lost-faith-united-nations.

8 Daniel Forti and Liesl Louw-Vaudran, *The UN Security Council Agrees to Consider Funding AU Peace Operations*, International Crisis Group,

have limitations too. As Amani Africa notes, political and technical tensions in the AU have created a "vacuum which forces desperate governments to seek security partnership and support from anyone willing to provide it, irrespective of the impact on collective security norms".[9]

- **The weakness of peace agreements and peace processes:** While it is an article of faith at the UN that peace operations should support and enable credible political processes, many operations are stuck attempting to maintain stability in cases where (i) there is no real political will *inside* a country to pursue peace; and/or (ii) *outside* actors are either disengaged or divided. In such cases, peacekeepers often find themselves trapped in cycles of on-off violence with no obvious end goal.
- **Host state and public dissatisfaction with peace operations:** UN and non-UN missions alike face growing tensions with the states and citizens that they are meant to assist. This often arises when the host state/public expects a peace operation to achieve certain tasks– e.g. protecting civilians or conducting robust manoeuvres – that are beyond the mandate or capabilities of the operation. This came into focus in Mali, where friction between the UN and the government over military and human rights issues following coups in 2020 and 2021 culminated in the government's demand for MINUSMA's withdrawal last June. In the eastern DRC, by contrast, the public and authorities have been angry with the failure of both MONUSCO and regional security forces to deal decisively with insurgent groups, with some protests outside UN bases turning violent.
- **The rise of predatory security providers:** Given the limits of multilateral peace operations, governments are turning to alternative security providers that they believe will be more effective in dealing with security threats and less critical of their own domestic issues. In some cases, this involves inviting individual states to lead security missions – in others it means turning to private military companies (PMCs) like the Russian Wagner Group. While these PMCs may lead more offensive operations than blue helmets, they have also been linked to human rights abuses and the exploitation of natural resources.

These factors combine to make it difficult for the UN or any other multilateral organisation to deliver integrated, focused responses to new conflicts. Instead, there has been a trend towards more improvisation and innovation in international crisis management, with features including:

- **Mix-and-match security operations:** Rather than turn to one organisation, state or PMC for assistance, many vulnerable countries turn to a mix of security providers for help. In CAR, for example, the government has invited both Wagner and Rwanda to deploy forces in addition to the existing UN stabilisation mission, MINUSCA. In the eastern DRC, the Congolese government has turned to a series of neighbors (first from the East African Community and now the Southern African Development Community) to supplement and/or substitute for MONUSCO. The level of coordination between these deployments is often poor, and in some cases friction

2024, https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/african-union-regional-bodies/security-council-agrees-consider-funding-au-peace-operations.

9 See source at note 5, above.

between parallel missions can be intense. While there are examples of more coherent multi-hatted deployments (such as AU-UN-EU cooperation in Somalia), the growing complexity of these mix-and-match operations inevitably involves high transaction costs.

- **New experiments in peace operations:** The current security environment creates space and incentives for states and organisations to table ideas for peace operations that might previously have not got traction. The most obvious current example of this is Kenya's offer of police personnel to lead a multinational security mission to Haiti, although this has run into domestic political and legal issues.
- **An emphasis on conflict mitigation rather than conflict resolution:** Given the complexity of many conflicts – and the equal or greater complexity of international politics around them – the UN and other actors now often aim simply to mitigate the effects of violence rather than resolve the conflicts.[10] In many cases (e.g. in Gaza and Afghanistan) this primarily involves facilitating humanitarian deliveries. Yet in others it can involve more complex arrangements – such as the 2012 UN-OPCW deployment to destroy Syria's chemical weapons arsenal and the 2022-2023 Black Sea Grain Initiative negotiated by the UN and Türkiye to limit the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war on global food prices – which reduce escalation risks or ease the spillover effects of a war on neighboring states or the global system.

Most of these arrangements come together in ad hoc fashion in response to events and are often shaped by the willingness of individual states to invest personnel and political capital in specific deployments. It is possible that the UN and regional actors may be able to systematise some of these improvised responses to crises in future. Most obviously, Security Council Resolution 2719 holds out the prospect of a more systematic UN-AU relationship. Secretary-General Guterres has also floated the idea of creating a new multistakeholder "Emergency Platform" that could help coordinate deals like the Black Sea Grain Initiative in the future.

Nonetheless, it is likely that between now and 2030, the world of international crisis management will remain fragmented and ad hoc. Where will we be in six years from now?

2.3 A scenario for 2030

Looking ahead to 2030, it is necessary to recognise that some major events within the international system could throw the UN – and the wider international system – into shock, upending international cooperation. These include (i) a war between China and the U.S. over Taiwan; (ii) nuclear weapons use by a P5 or non-P5 power; and (iii) the outbreak of a new pandemic of greater lethality than COVID-19. While it is possible to speculate what these events would do to peacekeeping, it is hard to make any confident predictions about it.

10 Richard Gowan, *Major Power Rivalry and Multilateral Conflict Management*, Council on Foreign Relations, 2021, https://www.cfr.org/report/major-power-rivalry-and-multilateral-conflict-management.

Less dramatically, institutional factors will also shape what is possible in 2030. There is a danger that, facing budgetary pressures and political differences, UN members could curtail funding for the organisation's peace and security functions. Conversely, if experiments in UN-AU cooperation on the basis of Resolution 2719 progress positively, divisions between New York and Addis Ababa could be narrowed (in future UN-backed AU missions might thus become the "new normal" in Africa, not complex hybrid oddities).

Technological advances in this period could additionally reshape the prospects for peace operations, both positively and negatively. Future operations (whoever mandates them) will have increasing access to a range of observation tools (e.g. cheap drones) and analytical tools (e.g. through data mining) that still seemed far off just a few years ago.

Nonetheless, technological advances will also complicate the work of many missions. In direct terms, spoilers will be able to use cyberattacks to disrupt missions' systems and will use social media to spread disinformation against them (as already seen in Mali and the DRC). More broadly, big technological shifts could create new drivers of conflict if they create economic shocks – for example by increasing unemployment – that states cannot handle.

Making predictions about the world in 2030 is, therefore, a risky business. Nonetheless, it is possible to project with a (marginally) higher degree of confidence what the continuation of the current trends identified above could mean for peace operations:

- As *conflict grows more complex*, violence in many regions (ranging from megacities to peripheral areas between weak states) will grow more intense and involve a greater variety of actors, stretching conflict management tools even further.
- *Frictions and flaws within the Security Council* ***and*** *regional decision-making bodies* will make it harder for the UN and other actors to deploy large-scale, multidimensional peace operations (even if a few survive in cases such as CAR).
- In many cases, *multiple crisis management operations will deploy in parallel to conflict-affected countries*, often with unrelated/competing mandates and goals. National authorities in vulnerable countries will continue to pick and choose between security providers, depending on their political and security needs.

In this scenario, mounting effective peace operations will inevitably be difficult. Where multiple operations deploy at once, it will be especially difficult for one actor to act as the lead on crafting mediation and political processes. There is likely to be an enduring emphasis on achieving conflict mitigation rather than resolving conflicts in such cases.

Nonetheless, in such complex environments, organisations and states will need to cultivate a number of virtues if they are to remain significant crisis management players:

- *Strong networks and robust diplomacy organisations and capitals:* The leaders of peace operations (political, humanitarian and uniform) will need to cultivate close ties with their partners in parallel bodies to try to align their approaches to future missions. Joint funding arrangements, such as that envisaged for the UN and AU, may act as frameworks for developing such ties over time – as may regular inter-governmental and inter-institutional talks. This cooperation should not only be technical in nature, but involve robust diplomacy over individual crises, with the goal of hashing out credible solutions to violence that all parties can buy in to.
- *Having niche capabilities ready to go:* However complex future peace operations are, some basic requirements – logistics, administrative support, etc. – will still be necessary. Some organisations may also nurture niche skills (for example around mediation or using data to map conflict settings) as their comparative advantages.
- *Local knowledge:* Given the likelihood that there will be clusters of conflicts in complex environments – such as peripheral border areas – crisis management organisations will need to draw on those actors with in-depth understanding of how different terrorist, criminal and local armed groups work and what their goals are. Institutions will need to draw on a range of experts (ranging from intelligence gatherers to economists and anthropologists) to help navigate unfamiliar settings.

What roles might the UN play in such a context? Even if the UN is less likely to deploy large-scale missions in the near future, it *does* still have niche advantages of its own. These include expertise in mediation, human rights and mission support (including logistics, procurement, aviation, budgeting and administration) that very few others command.

While the UN may have a reduced operational footprint, therefore, it could still act as a hub of expert and backroom support to missions by other organisations (e.g. in the context of Resolution 2719, the UN could send experts to help channel finances to AU missions).

There are many challenges ahead and issues to address moving forward. Among strategic questions that call for reflection, two are at the center of the remaining essays in this collection: (i) whether policing – an area in which the UN has developed considerable expertise in recent years – could be an area of comparative advantage for the UN in the years ahead, and (ii) if UNPOL will continue to deploy in significant numbers or in a more targeted, advisory role alongside police from elsewhere.

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3. Preparing for UN Policing 2030: Challenges and Opportunities

Annika Hilding Norberg, Charles T. Hunt, He Yin and Emma Birikorang

"Specialized policing assistance, as part of the conflict prevention toolbox, can help avoid the need for larger-scale interventions down the road."

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres,
in preparations for the United Nations Chiefs of Police Summit 2018

3.1 Introduction: Building on Experience at a Time of Dramatic Change

The purpose and mission of United Nations Police (UNPOL) is to enhance international peace and security by supporting Member States in conflict, post-conflict, and other crisis situations to realize effective, efficient, representative, responsive, and accountable police services that serve and protect the population. First deployed in 1960, over the years and across a wide range of conflict contexts, UNPOL has provided an important function and mechanism to support conflict-affected countries by temporarily filling a public security gap and/or assisting in rebuilding criminal justice architecture.[11] Examples of successful missions, where UNPOL have played a significant role include, but are not limited to, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cambodia, Namibia, Côte d'Ivoire, and Timor-Leste.[12] Additionally, in a number of cross-cutting areas, UNPOL has pioneered innovation in peace operations by leading the way and "walking the talk". For example, the meaningful involvement and strengthening of women peacekeepers at all levels in UNPOL ranks is one such groundbreaking development.[13]

Despite a well-documented evidence base for the positive impacts of UN peacekeeping over time,[14] as precarious global cooperation is giving way to hostile confrontation, the trend is one of downsizing commitments and the closure of several larger peacekeeping missions across Africa. Amid rapid technological change, accelerating climate change, economic uncertainty and a rise in protracted and increasingly violent conflict, the world, states, organizations and individuals, are ever more challenged.[15] The spread of both intra- and interstate violence, conflict and war, continue, while associated issues of migration, forced displacement, and the spread of transnational organized crime, follow in lock-step.

The resurgence of geo- and power politics in international affairs has had far-reaching implications on most if not all domains of human activity. In the

11 Hansen, A. From Congo to Kosovo: Civilian Police in Peace Operations, Adelphi Papers, International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 2002. See also https://police.un.org

12 UN Police Adviser Shahkar, UN Police Commanders Course, Switzerland, 24 November, 2023. See also https://peacekeeping.un.org

13 Police Commissioner UNMISS Christine Fossen and Dr Emma Birikorang, speaking in the UN Security Council 2022, https://police.un.org/en/un-police-gender-initiatives. For statistics, see https://peacekeeping.un.org

14 Walter, B.F., Howard, L.M., and Fortna, V. P. "The Extraordinary Relationship between Peacekeeping and Peace", British Journal of Political Science (2020).

15 Global Risks Report 2024, World Economic Forum, https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_The_Global_Risks_Report_2024.pdf.

realm of UN peacekeeping operations, shifting power dynamics have played a significant role in the contraction in number and scope of operations deployed. Larger UN multidimensional missions have found it difficult to "deliver peace" in ever more complex and volatile contexts. Several host countries have withdrawn their consent, and others are following suit.[16] In his policy brief on the requirement for a New Agenda for Peace, the UN Secretary-General called for a strategic reflection on the achievements and limitations of UN peacekeeping.

The aim of this Ideas Note is to contribute to these reflections on the future of UN peace operations by focusing on policing as one of the nimble and effective tools in the peace operations toolkit. The paper explores emerging requirements for UNPOL while considering limitations and challenges, potentials and opportunities. In doing so it examines what the future may demand and how UN policing will need to adapt in order to meet the challenges ahead.

The paper begins with a brief overview of trends and emerging challenges. It proceeds to suggest three potential scenarios for future UN Policing to help guide the analysis on potential conditions and requirements for future missions. Third, it indicates some of the emerging responses to the challenges, before offering some recommendations for consideration in the development of UN policing fit for the purposes of the future.

3.2 Trends and Emerging Challenges to UN Policing

International developments are having a significant impact on conflict contexts and, as a result, the ability of UN peace operations to deliver on their authorized mandates. Changes in the character of conflict are generating a new unchartered operational environment for police in peace operations. At least five key trends of particular relevance for UNPOL, have emerged:

1) Increasing urbanization and growth of urban (violent) conflict;

More than half of the global population lives in cities, and projections suggest that by 2050, about 6.4 billion people will reside in urban areas.[17] This massive shift brings opportunities but also challenges and risks. Urban migration disrupts existing economic structures, identities, and social norms, leading to exclusion and inequality among newcomers, which can escalate into urban violence and conflict. [18] The location of conflict in urban centres creates particular problems for UN peace operations.

2) Continuing rise in transnational organized crime;

Illegal economic endeavors frequently support armed factions and contribute to instability in regions targeted by UN peace missions.[19] Transnational organized crime (TNOC) jeopardizes civilian safety, often collaborating with armed groups.

16 A trend now being seen replicated in Special Political Missions (SPMs).

17 de Boer, John. "The sustainable development fight will be won or lost in our cities" *Word Economic Forum*, 24 September 2015.

18 Herbst, Jeffrey. "Population Change, Urbanization, and Political Consolidation", in Robert E. Goodin and Charles Tilly (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis* (Oxford: OUP, 2006). For more detail on urban violent conflict as the intersection between urban violence and conflict, see: Cockayne, James, Louise Bosetti, and Nazia Hussain. "Preventing Violent Urban Conflict: A Thematic Paper for the United Nations - World Bank Study on Conflict Prevention." In *Conflict Prevention Series: No. 2.* New York and Tokyo: United Nations University, 2017.

19 Boutellis, Arthur, and Stephanie Tiélès. "Peace Operations and Organised Crime: Still Foggy?". In *United Nations Peace Operations in a Changing Global Order*, edited by Cedric de Coning and Mateja Peter, 169-90. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019, p.171

Additionally, it undermines government authority by offering alternative services like security, healthcare, and education, challenging the state's legitimacy.[20] It is the view of experienced peacekeepers on the ground that the violent conflicts peace operations are increasingly sent to address cannot be resolved without addressing TNOC.

3) Blurring of political and criminal violence;

Modern conflict parties globally often blur traditional distinctions of state or non-state, criminal or terrorist affiliations. They are frequently locally-rooted, nationally connected, and backed by actors spanning international borders, posing considerable hurdles for peace operations. Especially in volatile settings, missions must navigate swiftly escalating insecurity, shifting from criminal to military threats.

4) Emergence of new technology and cyber space conflict

Every conflict environment in the world is being transformed by the arrival and use of new and emerging technologies. The increasing use of UAVs/drones and other new non-lethal weapons technologies are changing the way those seeking to disrupt armed actors and protect civilians need to prepare. Furthermore, it is expected that cyber attacks by terrorist, organised crime or malicious state-actors will become more possible and likely.

5) Growing impact of climate change on human security.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that climate change is contributing to conflict risks and insecurity. Amongst others, the increased severity of flooding and desertification is leading to disruptions in migration patterns and significant impacts on livelihoods which in turn can exacerbate economic and political marginalization – significant drivers of social unrest and conflict spirals.[21] It is clear that peace operations will need to grapple with this in the future.

In line with these continued transformations, UNPOL is well suited to "respond to the locations, sources, and means of threat to peace posed by emerging and future conflict dynamics".[22] Indeed, as proposed in a 2020 Future of UN Policing study, UNPOL's ability to provide interim operational support while also working towards long-term sustainable rule of law has generated calls by member states that increasing focus should be put on developing police-centric concepts and operations.[23] This interest has gained particular currency in the past year, as the collapsed security situation in Haiti, igniting an initiative to seek to set up a multinational security force led by Kenya. The deployment is still pending, but the development of the force, concept of operation and the preparatory training requirements, all speaks to a heightened interest in robust policing as a concept of preference.

Other recent innovations include Urgent Temporary Measures (UTM) in CAR, Formed Police Units policing of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) / Protection of

20 Day, Adam C, and Charles T Hunt. "UN Stabilisation Operations and the Problem of Non-Linear Change: A Relational Approach to Intervening in Governance Ecosystems." *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 9, no. 1 (2020).

21 UN Police Commanders Course 2023, presentations and discussions by Resource Experts and participating Senior Police Representatives, Stans, Switzerland, 24 November, 2023.

22 Hunt, C, The Future of Police in Peace Operations, DPO Future of Peace Operations Project, 2020.

23 Ibid.

Civilians (POC) sites, joint operations with the military, and so on. The agility of police in these modalities indicates that UNPOL have indeed shown themselves to be capable of responding to the changing needs of missions on the ground.[24] UNPOL's community-oriented policing approach has become a pillar of missions' local engagement strategies, facilitating more people-centred operations. They are seen as playing important roles in early warning, providing visible presence in risky areas, and a sense that the local police cannot predate in those areas, enhancing missions' credibility with the populations they serve. UNPOL experiences in Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia are indicative of how police contributions have been important parts of transition towards reformed and strengthened national security and justice institutions in states and societies deeply fractured by conflict.[25]

Despite the increase in violent conflict, and regardless of the suitability of UNPOL to effective responses, fueled by the deteriorating geopolitical context, the trend of downsizing or closing larger missions across Africa continues. This trend means we can expect fewer UNPOL to be deployed in the near future. However, this contraction also has broader implications First, it will present complex challenges regarding mission transitions. When a large multidimensional mission is closed there is often a transition and handover of some responsibilities to a smaller (less expensive) special political mission (SPM). Police development and capacity-building efforts are invariably part of that handover. The experience of UNITAMS in Sudan demonstrated that it is unrealistic to expect a light foot-print SPM to accomplish much of the mandate that a large integrated peacekeeping operation (UNAMID) failed to. While the operational environment and host state consent become more complicated, there are fewer human and financial resources to support the effort.

Second, the decrease in the number of peacekeepers deployed will have a taxing impact at the institutional level. In previous eras, as UN peace operations surged in size and scope, the UNPOL policy and training architecture, most notably the Strategic Guidance Framework for International Policing (SGF) and its Training Architecture, have become more sophisticated and adapted to the needs on the ground. As the number of deployed UNPOL decreases and the UNPOL support structure and budgets are cut, it will be challenging to maintain and continue regularly updating the UNPOL Policy and Training architecture. Third, the contraction is also likely to have a practical impact on the sustainability of the Police Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System (PK PCR). Over the years, the Police Division and many Member States have invested significant resources in establishing and maintaining Standby Peacekeeping Police Units in support of the PCR. However, as UNPOL deployments shrink, the opportunities for countries to utilize their Standby Units will diminish, and they might be disbanded.

Having outlined the current challenges and the implications of a contraction in the peace operations portfolio, the following section examines what might be required in the future?

24 Hunt, C. The Future of Police in Peace Operations, DPO Future of Peace Operations Project, 2020.

25 Hunt, C. Ibid.

3.3 Three Potential Scenarios for UN Policing in 2030, 2035 and Beyond

As UN peace operations enter a new and uncertain era, two key questions related to the future of UNPOL must be addressed. First, how can UN Policing be best adapted, strengthened and leveraged to ensure its full potential as a key function and tool in a spectrum of UN peace and security engagements, missions, and operations? Second, what strategies and approaches can ensure that UN Policing remains an indispensable tool for the UN to maintain international security and for building sustainable peace? To address these questions and inform the assessment of what will be required from UN Policing in the future, one can explore potential future scenarios for the future UN Policing that map respectively to: 1) Continuity, 2) Evolution, or 3) Revolution.[26]

Scenario 1 – Continuity: More Blue, Less Green.

This scenario highlights a future largely marked by continuity in the ways that UNPOL are utilized in peace operations. In the next 5-10 years and beyond, climate change related migration and impacts on livelihoods will be a particular challenge, while economic and political marginalization deepens generating conflicts characterised by significant levels of social unrest. State governance, including rule of law institutions are degraded and lose trust. It is commonplace that these episodes escalate into widespread public disorder, unrest and violence. Member States may call on the UN to assist in stabilizing the situation but be unwilling to offer the major financial contributions to fund large scale peacekeeping missions. In the projected operational environment, UNPOL have become more central to mission design and support due to their comparative advantages – relying on smaller numbers of police deployed for longer tours of duty for a missions' public security presence, offering a cheaper operating model than sustaining previous large multidimensional force configurations, and being more acceptable to the society and population of a host country.

The underlying logic of UNPOL engagement remains intact. UNPOL are seen as a middle ground between large force components and civilian components. The ability of formed units to appear and behave like paramilitary actors allows them to substitute for lower-level military capabilities in some situations (e.g., urban violence). The ability of armed police to deescalate and handover to police in a more civilian mode allows them to be more community-oriented and engage with local populations more easily and to greater effect. In addition to limited forms of operational support, UNPOL still seek to build the capacity of local counterparts– as part of establishing rule of law as a cornerstone for building sustainable peace and enabling mission withdrawal and transition. Individual UNPOL with necessary expertise and Specialized Police Teams can perform functions of mentoring, advising and monitoring the host state police. The scenario predicts that the trend towards more police and less military, a development that has been under way, albeit slowly, since the early days in 1960s, will continue with the likelihood that a relative rise in UNPOL involvement will result in more police centric concepts, tasks and missions.

26 Hunt, C. presentation at UN Police Commanders Course 2023, Stans, Switzerland, 24 November 2023. This section is primarily based on two papers: Williams, The Future of Peace Operations, DPO Future of Peace Operations Project, 2020, and Hunt, C. The Future of Police in Peace Operations, as part of the same project.

Scenario 2 – Evolutionary: State Support Operations in the Realm of Fragile Sovereigns.

This scenario is centred around a decline in the influence of the P3 (France, the United Kingdom and the United States) and the normative hegemony of the "liberal peace". This comes in the context of the rise of non-Western powers and the increasing influence of their developmental experience, which leads to a situation where UN peace operations are less shaped by the ideologies and modalities of (western) liberal powers.[27] UN peace operations may lean from a state-building-centered "liberal peace" mode towards a stabilization plus economic development-centered "developmental peace" mode.[28] The proposition is that leaders of fragile states request to help stabilize or restore public order, to create favorable conditions for economic and social development, leading to a more conservative and stability-oriented modality for UNPOL over the next decade (i.e. state-support operations).

The role of UNPOL would primarily be to maintain public order, not promote liberal norms. This could include a range of activities designed to support failing states including logistical and operational support for public control, robust counter-terrorist policing operations, anti-gang operations as well as quasi-executive policing mandates where UNPOL are furnished with 'Limited Extraordinary Powers of Arrest and Detention' (LEPAD). They would likely draw increasingly on new non-lethal weapons technologies such as acoustic devices, drones, electronic vehicle-stoppers and advanced taser stun systems. UNPOL would also support states in building capacity and providing training to defend/secure the state against both internal and external criminal threats. These could include large-scale exploitation (e.g. border protection and customs against becoming a haven for criminal networks) and attacks on critical infrastructure (e.g. cyber hacking by terrorist, org crime or malicious state-actors).

Scenario 3 – Revolutionary. Hybrid policing in a post-sovereign state order.

In this scenario, radically changing conflict dynamics may generate quite different socio-political orders that increasingly transcend the territorial state. Although the time frame for this scenario is potentially more long term, in 10-15 years, longer than 2030, as a consequence of an erosion of sovereign state authority *vis a vis* non state actors, national governments are no longer the dominant form of political authority and public goods such as security and justice are increasingly provided by a wide range of state and non-state actors in hybrid political communities characterized by complex demographics.

The UN still authorises and deploys peace operations but these are sent or requested to respond to threats to highly localised or regional order that do not map to sovereign territorialities. The current trajectory of regionalization and decentralization of peace operations, increasingly defusing responsibility for peacekeeping to regional organizations, means that UN peace operations would have been overhauled to adapt to the new normal. They might still have 'police' components, but these are not necessarily sworn police officers and they do not perform policing functions, nor do they work exclusively with national

27 He, Y, "Developmental Peace: Chinese Approach to UN Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding," in Guo Yanjun & I Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja eds., *Sustaining Peace in ASEAN and the Asia-Pacific: Preventive Diplomacy Measures*, Singapore: World Scientific, 2022, pp:1-18.

28 He, Y., "A Tale of Two 'Peaces': Liberal Peace, Developmental Peace, and Peacebuilding," in Courtney J. Fung *et al* eds., *New Paths and Policies towards Conflict Prevention*, London: Routledge, 2021, pp. 42-53.

governments to build up a monopoly of legitimate violence to maintain order. Instead, they are engaged primarily in building and facilitating relationships between community-based sources of policing and justice that are deemed legitimate locally, held to account through means other than a state-society social contract. Policing and justice type services are deeply intertwined with other governance arrangements that reach both below and above the national level with UN efforts increasingly focused on regional initiatives that transcend national boundaries. In this scenario, private actors play a greater role: either private security companies and 'civil' community self-defence groups or violent armed or criminal groups. There will also be a tendency for more developed but risk-averse states to outsource security provision to less-developed actors or regional arrangements.

Implications of Scenario Development

Given the rapid geopolitical change underway, the ability to accurately predict what lies ahead is necessarily very limited. Most likely is a combination of different elements of the three scenarios presented above with other dimensions and developments that do not feature. With this caveat, scenario 1 is arguably the most likely for the short-term foreseeable future, where the strengths and comparative advantage of UN policing come best into play. UNPOL is in this context, particularly useful for the types of contexts that will form one part of developments leading up to 2030. If scenario 2 becomes more pertinent then UNPOL may also have a significant role to play but it will require re-tolling and shifting the culture away from extant norms and principles. Should scenario 3 become more relevant, or indeed prevalent, then the role of UNPOL is likely to reduce or require wholesale transformation.

3.4 Emerging Responses

Assuming scenario 1 will pertain in the short-run, the global composition of UNPOL has a comparative advantage and the relevant skill-set to deal with what has become the new normal, including but not limited to, rising internal unrest, spread of transnational organized crime, and the urbanization of violence and conflict. Provided sufficient resources are available, UNPOL including Formed Police Units, can provide a security presence or guard force for SPMs. UNPOL are community-oriented and people-centred by the very nature of their work. In many cases, UNPOL benefit from a positive appreciation by host country populations, although as seen in Haiti this can be undermined by compromised personnel and action and inadequate public communication. Police-centered approaches often amount to more people-centered modalities. UNPOL already has an advantage in responding to the current trajectory of conflict dynamics and trends. Police reform and a functioning Rule of Law framework is central to the transition and successful exit of missions.

UNPOL can best bring their role into full play where there is peace to keep. Both best practices of the "peacekeeping + peacebuilding" operations in places like East Timor and Liberia, as well as lessons of "stabilization" operations in places like Mali, CAR, and the Democratic of the Republic of Congo, show that the most important advantage of UNPOL - whether they are individual police

officers, formed police forces or other specialized teams[29] - is to help the host country police maintain public security, build public and investment confidence and carry out capacity building under the premise and in support of achieving durable peace.

Even if in smaller numbers, if scenario 1 holds and means the continued demand for UNPOL, the benefit of continued UN policing and the engagement of police contributing countries (PCC) also from young democracies have further advantages.[30] Peacekeepers will be required to provide support at the highest standards and perform tasks that they may ordinarily not perform in their own countries. The domino effect of this practical learning experience is that norm diffusion can occur whereby international institutional norms and standards practiced during peacekeeping missions are then transposed formally and organically in the police service of the contributing country.[31]

While the world changes, UN Policing is not standing still. The New Agenda for Peace is putting pre-eminent focus on strengthening prevention, and as such, the role of UNPOL is central. In particular, as put forward by Stockholm Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), UNPOL has: (a) direct operational actions aimed at mediating and defusing tensions and deterring violence; (b) structural prevention linked to capacity-building activities of mentoring, training, and advising host state police, as well as supporting the development of more effective, accountable, and legitimate law enforcement institutions; and (c) systemic prevention through support for international and regional norms and mechanisms to combat transnational organized crime, illicit arms flows, and human trafficking."[32]

Moreover, a number of programs aimed at preparing UNPOL for the future have been developed and continue to be pursued through adaptive iterations. The UN Department for Peace Operations through its Action for Peacekeeping Plus (A4P+) initiative has identified strategic priorities to strengthen peace operations value and impact in the new context of increasingly volatile and unpredictable environments. Particular focus has been devoted to 1) enhancing performance, 2) strengthening conduct and discipline, 3) advancing the women, peace and security agenda, and 4) developing strategic communications to counter disinformation, misinformation, mal-information, and hate speech.[33] Progress has been made, but given the complexity and increasingly destructive power in countervailing political trends, more is required.

3.5 Preparing for the Future - Recommendations for Strengthening UN Police

Building on progress made through the Action for Peacekeeping Plus initiative,[34] and in response to the call for nimble, adaptive and effective peace operations in the New Agenda for Peace, in principle, the role and functions of UN Policing

29 See, Hunt, C.T. Specialized Police Teams in UN Peace Operations: A Survey of Progress and Challenges. New York, International Peace Institute, March, 2024.

30 Dr Emma Birikorang, speaking in the UN Security Council 2022, https://police.un.org/en/un-police-gender-initiatives.

31 Ibid.

32 "UN Police and Conflict Prevention", Caparini, M., SIPRI Discussion Paper 2018, p. 1.

33 USG Peacekeeping Jean-Pierre Lacroix speaking in the UN Security Council during UN Police Week 2023.

34 See A4PK 4th Progress Report, January 2024.

- mandate, skill sets, tools and instruments, are particularly well-suited to addressing many of the types and locations of conflicts and violence that are on the increase today. Recommendations for consideration:

- **UNPOL needs to continue develop its capacity for nimble, flexible, and adaptive missions and operations.** In times of great complexity, mandates, roles and UNPOL expertise need to focus on continued innovation, adaptation and with mindsets for change, dealing with current and emerging challenges. UNPOL needs to leverage its adaptiveness to change and to respond effectively at a time of shrinking resources.
- Given the **changing nature of conflict and violence**, UNPOL need to prepare for new contexts and situation, including police peacekeeping in urban areas and conditions. Increasingly, as transnational organized crime has become widespread and mission disruptive, a UN system-wide strategy and effort to mitigate this development is required.
- **UNPOL and its Rule of Law Partners** need to strengthen innovative cooperation for optimal synergies to be generated through the broader **UN Rule of Law framework**, including effective integration rights-based approaches.[35] In particular, UNPOL in partnership with its ROL partners need to plan for steady and secure mission drawdowns in the context of post-conflict transition and peacebuilding in order to strengthen local capacity and to ensure that reforms are sustainable.
- **Continue to resource Policy, Guidance and Training Development** to respond to the challenges of the future. The Strategic Guidance Framework for International Policing and its Training Architecture should continue to be improved and promulgated. As the number of missions deployed reduces, those remaining will require even more stringent quality requirements for UNPOL. A strengthened SGF Training Architecture can also assure high standards when UN Member States provide bilateral or multi-lateral policing assistance.
- **Strengthening partnerships** is a cornerstone of the New Agenda for Peace. Partnerships should be enhanced to widen the pool of UNPOL and to enhance links between UN and regional arrangements. UNPOL is likely to be requested to support other actors authorized by the UN Security Council to deploy police peacekeepers, such as multinational security forces or other types of non-UNPOL missions. In partnership with relevant counterparts, UNPOL needs to plan for steady and secure mission drawdowns or upscales in the context of post-conflict transition and peacebuilding, to strengthen local capacity and to ensure that reforms are sustainable.
- **Prepare to contribute UNPOL in Non-Mission Settings.** As larger missions are contracting, UNPOL could be made more available in response to requests from Member States that need support with law enforcement or capacity building, also in non-peacekeeping mission settings. To meet the demand, Member States can be encouraged to prepare to commit Standby Capacities for deployment in non-mission settings.

35 Hunt, C. T., Strengthening a Rights-Based Approach to United Nations Peace Operations, GCSP Policy Brief, February 2024. See also https://unglobalcompact.org/library/1341.

- **New and emerging technologies** have a profound impact on both crime and policing. UNPOL should take advantage of the benefits, which are plentiful, while mitigating the potential harms and risks associated with digitalization and technological innovation. Information is becoming weaponized, so preparing UNPOL to prevent and tackle the impact of mis- and disinformation on their own operations as well as conflict dynamics will be critical in the foreseeable future.
- UNPOL needs to **prepare for climate supportive UN policing**, taking into account the impacts of climate change on security at all levels, which in turn generates smuggling of migrants, and a range of secondary threats and risks for international peace and security.
- Member States need to commit to delivering their best men and women police peacekeepers **supporting more flexible profiles of UNPOL units, officers, and specialized teams**. By ensuring equal opportunities for the **recruitment of women police peacekeepers**, this will allow a more inclusive, people centred approach.

Concluding, as the world goes through significant changes that impact UN peace operations with specific ramifications for policing, it is easy to become preoccupied with the urgent and immediate. However, although transitions and downsizing are currently the trend, for the benefit of future needs and missions, it is imperative to "not conflate complex situations, such as in Mali, with the overall track record of peacekeeping".[36] Leadership is of the essence, and the ability and commitment to lead into the unknown is critical. Indeed, given the current proliferation of conflicts, the need is now, and in addition, at some point these will end and if the UN is called upon to support war-to-peace transitions then these missions will require a significant police presence in complex post conflict environments as well. Now, is the time to deepen the understanding and act, to prepare for the future.

36 UN Police Adviser Shahkar, presentation at the International Association of Peacekeeping Training Centres Annual Conference, Nairobi, November, 2023.

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4. How Can UN Policing Become More Nimble, Adaptive and Effective? Insights from Complexity Theory and Adaptive Peace Operations

Cedric de Coning and Caty Clément

The strategic reflection on the future of UN Policing is taking place at a time during which UN peace operations have to adapt to operating in an international peace and security environment that is characterised by increasing turbulence, fragmentation and uncertainty. In this context the UN Secretary-General's New Agenda for Peace (2023) calls on UN peace operations to become more versatile, nimble and adaptive, so that they are in a better position to contribute to maintaining international peace and security amid these new levels of complexity.

In this reflection paper, we will explore what the implications are for UN Policing when we recognise the world as complex, what is meant by "nimble" and "adaptive", and how adopting and integrating these attributes should lead to more effective peace operations.

4.1 Peace operations are an instrument to influence complex social systems

All societies are social systems that are empirically complex.[37] This means that they are made up of elements (individuals, families and institutions) that relate to each other locally, and that these interacting relationships generate emergent behaviour and properties (the whole is more than the sum of the parts).[38] One of these emergent properties that is important for sustaining peace is self-organisation, i.e. the system regulates itself, which also means it can adapt and transform itself. Another important attribute of complex systems is that they are highly dynamic and non-linear, in other words, small changes in initial conditions or behaviour may produce large effects.[39] Because of the ability of complex systems to be emergent – in other words, to generate outcomes that cannot be deduced from simply extrapolating previous behaviour along a linear causal path – it is not possible to find general laws or rules that will help us predict with certainty how a particular society or community will behave in future.[40]

One way to highlight the unique characteristics of complex systems is to contrast them with complicated systems. A complicated system can potentially be fully understood and predicted, provided sufficient information is available. Designing, building, and launching a rocket into space is highly complicated, but once it is mastered, the same process can be repeated with a reasonable degree of certainty and predictability. In contrast, social systems are complex. This means we cannot plan a project – for example, a community policing initiative in Somalia – and predict with certainty what the outcome will be. Nor can we

37 David Byrne, *Complexity Theory and the Social Sciences*, Routledge, 1998.

38 Paul Cilliers, *Complexity and Postmodernism: Understanding Complex Systems*, Routledge, 1998.

39 John H. Holland, *Complexity: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2014.

40 Paul Cilliers, "Why We Cannot Know Complex Things Completely", in Rika Preiser (ed.), *Paul Cilliers: Critical Complexity: Collected Essays*, De Gruyter, 2016.

use a model that has performed relatively well in one context – for instance, the use of specialised police teams in Haiti – and expect that it will necessarily have the same effect in another context.[41]

Societies are deemed complex rather than complicated when similar solutions may lead to different outcomes. Countries or communities facing similar threats may have different contexts and adaptive capacities, leading some to respond well to reforms proposed by UN Police, while others do not. For example, in the early 1990s in Somalia, negotiations with elders were abandoned by UNSOM I and II and the focus shifted to the leaders of armed groups. In contrast, in Somaliland, in the absence of a UN intervention, the elders were able to some extent to keep the power of former armed group leaders in check. This example also highlights another lesson. UN peace operations tend to focus on what is wrong or lacking, instead of what is still working, and as a result our initial assessments and conflict analysis tend to overlook or under-value a society's sources of strengths and resilience.

Note two important differences between mechanical systems and social systems in these examples. Rockets are designed, built and steered by controlling agents that are not part of the rocket. They control when the rocket is activated or shutdown from outside the system. Social systems design and adapt themselves from the inside through self-organising processes, while they are "in flight".[42] Interventions, like the community policing example in Somalia, are attempts by the UN to influence a specific social system. The UN can influence the system, but it cannot control how the system will respond to its interventions. This uncertainty, unpredictability and irreproducibility cannot be overcome with linear mechanistic planning, more coordination or a larger dataset, because they are inherent characteristics of complex systems.[43] However, we can learn how to cope with this complexity.

4.2 Coping with complexity through adaptation and nimbleness

"Adaptation" refers to a specific methodology for making sense of and influencing complex social systems by adapting our actions based on what we have learned from our previous actions in a continuous process of experimentation, feedback and learning. There are two important principles that should guide adaptive peace operations.[44]

Firstly, we generate knowledge about the system inductively, i.e. we do not approach the problem with a preconceived analysis and solution. We will develop an understanding of the problem and solution by engaging with it and learning from that process. We will, of course, come to a given situation with our prior knowledge and experience, but we should guard against that resulting in us engaging with the system with predetermined conclusions about the problem and the solution.

41 In UN peacekeeping we deal with both complicated and complex systems. We need to have a certain number of people and equipment in a specific place in the future to, for example, help organise an election. That is complicated, but how the people, enabled by the equipment, will try to bring about a successful election in the context prevailing at that time is complex.

42 Cedric de Coning, *Insights from Complexity Theory for Peace and Conflict Studies*, Palgrave Encyclopedia of Peace and Conflict Studies, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

43 Emery Brusset et al., *Complexity Thinking for Peacebuilding Practice and Evaluation*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

44 Cedric de Coning, "Adaptive Peacebuilding", *International Affairs,* Vol.94(2), 2018, pp.301-317.

Recognising that complex systems are inherently dynamic, non-linear and emergent, and therefore unpredictable, should instil in peacekeepers a humility about the relevance and applicability of their prior experience and an awareness that their prior knowledge is provisional, and will need to be continuously adapted as new learning takes place.[45] This also means that a programme that worked today will not necessarily keep having the same results next month. Thus, UN peacekeepers need to be weary of so-called best practices and the scaling-up of successful programmes. UN Police needs to remain nimble by continuously reflecting and learning, based on the feedback that is generated by its actions. In practice, this means that instead of importing a model from what worked elsewhere, adaptability could entail running different small-scale pilot programmes to see which ones – including some based on previous experiences – yield the better results in the given society.

Secondly, social systems are self-organising, which means that for peace to become self-sustainable, societies need to develop their own social institutions that can sustain their peace. Peace cannot be given or imposed by peacekeepers; it needs to emerge from the society itself. The role of the peacekeepers is limited to assisting the process. The more UN Police interferes with, solves problems, and makes decisions for local police services, the longer it will take for them to self-organise and become self-sustainable. It is thus important that local police are engaged in making decisions about which reforms the UN should support them with, and that they should participate in the design and evaluation of such initiatives, in order to learn from their own successes and failures. In a context where the national police are still largely associated with an abusive regime (e.g. Gambia under former President Yahya Jammeh), various iterations of the relationship with and decision-making process itself may need to be tested to find a working model for that particular context. Ultimately, however the national and local police need to take ownership of the process for reforms to become self-sustainable.

The adaptive peace operations methodology consists of a three-step process with two pitfalls to avoid.[46] The first step is planning. Based on the mandate, and in a process of co-decision-making with the local police, decisions are made regarding the goals, objectives and desired outcomes that the UN and local police will work towards collaboratively. A number of interventions are then designed collaboratively (not just by UN Police) to try to take the first steps towards bring about the desired outcomes, or perhaps intermediate outcomes. The design of the interventions will be based on a combination of prior knowledge and experiences and an understanding of the current context. It is important that there is variety in the interventions. We cannot know beforehand what will work, and we thus need to plan the interventions in such a way that we can experiment with a number of different approaches simultaneously. This will enable us to evaluate later which ones bring about the desired behaviour change in the target audience. Examples of behaviour change include a shift from traditional to community policing, more peaceful and less violent crowd control, non-violent interrogation techniques, etc.

45 Cedric de Coning, "Adaptive Peace Operations: Navigating the Complexity of Influencing Societal Change Without Causing Harm", *International Peacekeeping*, Vol.27(5), pp.1-23, 2020.

46 Cedric de Coning et al., *Adaptive Peacebuilding: A New Approach to Sustaining Peace in the 21st Century*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2023.

The second step is implementation. These interventions are implemented together with the national police and other key stakeholders, including communities and civil society organisations. Special care needs to be taken to monitor the effects that the interventions are producing. All the stakeholders should participate in the monitoring because each will contribute their own perspectives and insights. It is important to not only monitor for intended effects, because any attempt to influence a complex system will always generate a variety of responses, and most will be unintended. Some of these unintended effects may be positive and one would want to build on those. Others will be negative or may even cause harm, and one would want to stop or adapt those urgently. For instance, supporting traditional judicial systems may overcome the judicial backlog and deliver judicial relief to some members of the society, but this needs to be considered against the need to also uphold human, women's and children's rights.

The third step is adaptation. After a period of implementation, the UN and local police need to collaboratively assess where the interventions have had the desired effect towards bringing about the outcomes. Based on the information generated by the monitoring process, decisions need to be made to stop some interventions, to continue with and perhaps expand others, and to introduce new interventions. More variety can be introduced among those interventions that worked well in order to further refine and improve the effectiveness of the interventions. However, because of the inherent complexity of the system we are trying to influence, it is highly unlikely that any programme will continue to be effective if it is not regularly adapted. Sometimes, short-term gains may be counterproductive in the medium to long run. Sources of resilience can be a double-edged sword: community elders may preserve social stability in the short term, but if that mean that the youth feel excluded and marginalised, this may in due course become a new source of instability. So even the most effective programmes need to remain nimble and be regularly assessed and adapted.

These three steps – planning, implementation and adaptation – need to be repeated as long as the peacekeeping operation lasts. Adaptation and nimbleness are thus an iterative process of learning from doing and doing from learning. The cycle needs to be short enough so that the mission can adapt to and co-evolve with developments in the country, but long enough so that the interventions have had a change to generate some effects. Over time, this iterative cycle of learning and adaptation generates the information that also drives operational and strategic level adaptation. Mission leadership may choose to adjust priorities and reallocate resources as part of an annual budget planning cycle, and the Security Council, on the basis of a strategic review, may decide to adapt the mandate as part of a multi-year mandate renewal process.

The UN has developed a system – the Comprehensive Planning and Assessment System for UN Peacekeeping Operations (CPAS) – that has provided a process and methodology for mission-wide planning and assessment, and the UN Police component can make use of this system, and complement it with its own additional process, to help generate the information it needs to remain nimble and adaptive.[47]

47 Daniel Forti, *UN Peacekeeping and CPAS: An Experiment in Performance Assessment and Mission Planning*, New York, International Peace Institute, 2022.

The two most common pitfalls to avoid are focusing on outputs rather than outcomes, and on our own accomplishments rather than the larger systemic change we are contributing to.

The first pitfall relates to the tendency to find comfort in our sense of control instead of recognising that we are merely able to influence change. Planning and measuring what we produce (i.e. outputs) is part of project management. We should not confuse, however outputs, e.g. the number of people trained, with the outcome we want to achieve (the change in behaviour that our intervention is intended to produce). For instance, to what extent did police brutality reduce as a result of human rights training given by UN Police in a specific mission? If the change was low, is that the result of shortcomings in the training or are there perhaps deeper systemic issues in the police or the entire penal chain that need to be addressed? Training may contribute to individual police officers having a better understanding of human rights, but may be insufficient to change the behaviour of the larger system that the individual officer is part off. The CPAS system provide a methodology for thinking through these questions.

The second pitfall relates to the tendency to want to plant our flag and claim credit for results achieved. The insights we gain from recognising how change in complex systems works help us to understand that no one intervention can be credited with bringing about a change in the behaviour of, for example, a national police force. Any change will be the result of the sum of many interventions over time. There are results-based budgeting reporting requirements, political visibility necessities and other incentives that drive us to want to show and report results. What we can do is to explain how our various interventions contributed to common change, while acknowledging that the outcomes achieved also needed the synergistic effects of the interventions of others (we may have trained and mentored individual officers, but someone else may have worked on reforming the management structure and culture, etc.), and most importantly the commitment and engagement of the national police and other local stakeholders. We have not achieved change, we – together with others – have helped the national police to change.

How to be nimble and adaptive together is one of the steepest challenges to overcome. The adaptive peace operations methodology to facilitate system change may help us cope with the complexity inherent in trying to bring about change in social systems without causing harm.

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Police Commissioner General Prof. Dr H. Mohammed Rycko Amelza Dahniel, Head of the Indonesian National Counter Terrorism Agency and Professor at the Graduate School of Police Science

Commissioner General Mohammed Rycko Amelza Dahniel currently serves as the Head of the National Counter Terrorism Agency (BNPT) in Indonesia. His distinguished career spans various key positions in the Indonesian National Police (POLRI), including notable roles such as Adjutant to former President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2009); Regional Chief of North Sumatra Province (2016-2017) and Central Java Province (2019-2020); Head of the Intelligence and Security Agency (Baintelkam, 2020-2021); and Head of the Police Education and Training Institute (Kalemdiklat, 2021-2023), his last designation before appointed as the Head of BNPT. As a law enforcement professional with over three decades of experience in various high-ranking positions in POLRI, he is noted for his exceptional investigative skills and strong track record in counter-terrorism operations. His commitment to national security and tireless efforts in countering violent extremism and terrorism demonstrate his dedication to sustainable peace in Indonesia and beyond. He obtained his doctoral degree from the University of Indonesia in 2008 and has been teaching in several universities in Indonesia ever since. He was appointed Professor at the Graduate School of Police Science (PTIK) in 2020.

5. UN Policing in Times of Crisis: Leading into the Unknown

Mike Hardy and Rycko Amelza Dahniel

A conflicted world continues to polarise us, fragmenting our relationships, and paralysing our ability to work together. A world working in concert through collaborative and coherent international organisations and interventions seems to have evolved into an impossible dream. Related Ideas Notes in this series look at how UN Policing might cope with this complexity and with a changing geo-political landscape over the next ten years or so. This is a time when interacting relationships on the ground and globally are generating challenging and unstable behaviours and, sometimes, self-regulating and unpredictable systems. 2024 is set to be difficult, demanding and testing, all and at the same time, with safety and security uppermost in our thinking.

More than ever, this is a time of crisis.[48] Crises occur cyclically and are characterised by the perceived value of loss, probability of loss and perceived stress. This creates complex decision problems, as the Ideas Notes in this compendium describe, with which UN Policing must deal. The World Economic Forum's (WEF) *Global Risks Report* presented at Davos in 2023 introduced the word "polycrisis" to refer to "a cluster of related global risks with compounding effects, such that the overall impact exceeds the sum of each part".[49] The WEF report and others, including the regular threat assessment of the US intelligence community, reveal that in terms of crises, leaders are preparing for a long road ahead.

This Ideas Note looks specifically at how recent thinking about leadership in such febrile and polycrisis-characterised times might impact on approaches to UN Policing when discussions, decisions, deployments and disruptions must take place in a context of complexity, uncertainty and the unknown. Never before have we been so cognisant of what we do not know. So, what hope for effective, meaningful interventions when the terrains for action are so challenging? As reviews of UN Policing are fully under way, this paper focuses on leadership, and highlights the importance of a new *leadership* for policing that can help to make sense, to make positive change more likely and confront the unknowns in our immediate futures. To manage their part of *polycrisis*, UN Policing needs a globally connected mindset, a systems outlook and orientation, and must invest in additional individual and collective know-how and capabilities that enable it to think about its contribution to safety and security innovatively.[50]

By convening, curating, and enabling, leadership can have significant impact supporting the choices evident between past approaches, current and existing strategies, and what the future may hold. We have acknowledged that United Nations peace operations are reacting to fragmenting winds of change, turbulence, and uncertainty. This crisis context creates opportunities for leadership

48 A. Kluth, "So We're in a Polycrisis. Is That Even a Thing?", *Washington Post*, 21 January 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/so-were-in-a-polycrisis-is-that-even-a-thing/2023/01/21/cf05856e-9963-11ed-a173-61e055ec24ef_story.html.

49 https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_Risks_Report_2023.pdf.

50 V. Herrington and J. Sebire, "Policing the Future: The Future of Policing", *Policing Insights*, 2021, https://policinginsight.com/features/analysis/policing-the-future-the-future-of-policing/.

to become architects of change, to anticipate, innovate and take control. So, we can elaborate **what** we might seek to do – i.e. the alternative improvisations, innovations, and focused responses to new conflicts – and **how** we might see UN Policing operations as nimble and adaptive in a complex world. We should also reflect a little on how the quality of and investment by leadership in times of crisis, through the choices that need to be and can be made, can become a positive game changer. After all, it is leadership that helps to make sense of contexts and helps positive and deliberate actions to happen; when it works well, leadership enables people and organisations to be nimble and adaptive, and super-sensitive to context.[51]

As others have observed, in mid-2024, people, organisations and countries around the world are trying to grapple with an ever-growing number of unprecedented political, security, economic, information, environmental and health challenges. The war in Ukraine grinds on, a series of military coups in Africa is seemingly becoming a "new normal", while the war between Hamas and Israel has taken the conflict cycles of the Middle East to a different horrifying level. Globally, violent conflicts are increasingly prolonged and protracted. Moreover, transboundary threats are aggravating the situation, from the impact of the pandemic and climate crisis to the spread of transnational organised crime and cyber insecurities and attacks. The gap between governing elites and those governed continues to widen. While decisive action to promote peace, security, human rights, and sustainable development is urgently required, the international community is increasingly fragmented, polarised and often in conflict.

In this context, how can global peace operations, and the functionality of UN Policing in particular, meet the challenges of today and tomorrow. The nurturing, inspiring, enabling and empowering of leadership structures, networks, organisations, and individuals committed to making a concrete, positive difference for a more peaceful world are as critical as ever. This is a moment when worldwide diplomatic efforts to end violent conflict are failing; more leaders are pursuing missions militarily – and more leaders believe they can succeed in this way. In this polarised and polarising world, there are 21st century choices for leaders; at the global level, the United Nations has invited the world to develop, and work to, a New Agenda for Peace.[52] It is expected that a Pact for the Future and a Declaration for Future Generations will be signed by governments at the Summit of the Future at UN Headquarters in New York in September 2024. At the same time, work in the academy is exploring how leadership can support, enable and empower others to advance the emerging agenda for peace, security, and prosperity for a just and thriving future. Despite our difficulties in resolving each and every conflict, we better understand now how leaders, followers and communities can step up to transform conflict into prospects, potentials, and possibilities. Leadership can make choices: a conflicted world can step back or move forwards.[53]

51 M. Hardy et al., "Leading and Learning During a Crisis: Closing the Gap between Theory and Reality", *Home Team Academy Journal*, Issue 13, January 2024.

52 https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-new-agenda-for-peace-en.pdf.

53 C. Owen et al., "Command in Complexity Development Program: An Evaluation of a Professional Development Initiative", AIPM, 2019.

5.1 The need for change[54]

Initial reflection suggests qualities likely to emerge from a refreshed leadership of UN Policing would include:

- *Asking the right questions.* Is it really the case that the tried and trusted approaches of the past will best inform strategies for the future? In changed contexts, this is not necessarily the case. As we discuss below, asking the right questions is key to acquiring relevant knowledge about current challenges.
- *Working with complexity.* Security agencies need to be able to work creatively. As other Ideas Notes in this series indicate, technical experts are often caught in linear and reductionist modes that fail to adapt to emerging complexities, and leadership often struggles with grasping the intricacies of operating within complex adaptive systems.
- *UN Policing must prioritise the cultivation of trust.* It is no longer the case that when a leader appears to work effectively, trust is earned and built. Trust is formed and broken horizontally between individuals (e.g. affiliation, affection) and vertically between institutions. Distrust of both authorities and institutions has increased enormously in the last decades.
- *Being agile and adaptable to the profundity of contemporary change.* These are difficult behaviours. Nothing stays in place for long; processes are continuously updating. Positive experiences and past successful solutions will neither be sustained nor sustainable without agility and adaptability.
- *Investing in continuing learning.* The current intensification and disruptiveness of both social and technological change requires a humility which acknowledges that continuous learning matters, resulting in a leadership commitment to mainstream learning, experimentation, and innovation.
- *A UN Police leadership that engages with the whole.* The definitions of leadership vary and typically romanticise leaders. Leadership is often defined by what leaders do. We should be less leader-centric and emphasise the active engagement of the whole and be inclusive and empathetic about the role of all participants or stakeholders.
- *Acknowledgement that not everyone is a winner!* Central to refreshed policing must be a commitment to manage and make meaning of the losses and suffering of stakeholders.
- *Mainstreaming the relationship between local and global.* Policing at the global and local levels is not mutually exclusive and localisation should not create detachment from the global context. Old assumptions of unilateralism and tribalism must adapt to the interdependences between these extremes. Global issues have local impact and vice versa.

54 M. Hardy, "Responding to Turbulent Times: Where Does Leadership Come In?," *New England Journal of Public Policy*, Vol.34(2), Article 6, 2022, https://scholarworks.umb.edu/nejpp/vol34/iss2/6.

5.2 Leading in times of crisis

To the **what** and **how** of UN Policing in times of polycrisis we must add the **why** – the purpose – and encourage a discussion about the sustainability and long-term impact of each intervention. The purpose of 21st century UN Policing will be more than just preparing for and responding to events; to be sustainable and ensure positive change it must also be about recovery – building future contexts and relationships likely to survive and improve overall security. In this sense, a more effective overall leadership can and should place emphasis on purpose-focused qualities. These might include the following:

- *A non-negotiable commitment to an ethical approach.* Policing must be characterised and designed so as to "do no harm" at a minimum; and at best to protect and sustain human rights. The process must try to find a way to protect one person's rights and needs against and alongside the rights and needs of others.
- *An open and inclusive approach to all stakeholders.* Inclusivity is the practice of bringing people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised into a process. Inclusivity typically leads to outcomes that are balanced and include multiple perspectives.
- *An ability to listen, hear and reflect on conversations in the public square.* More impactful security processes mobilise inclusive and civil conversations. Through convening small and large groups, for example citizen assemblies, there is a huge potential for civil society to inform the process and affect policy. Generative conversations that bring about new ideas from the people who are present in the process should be ongoing, and carried out consciously and deliberately at various points in time. This joining up within communities, or a whole-of-society approach, can help make new policing regimes fit-for-purpose.
- *Embracing multigenerational solidarity and continuous learning.* Full community engagement encompasses the promotion of a multigenerational approach to learning. A holistic approach to education can move people from apathy to empathy and intergenerational dialogue can strengthen critical thinking and mobilise social media and digital technology as a force for positive change.
- *Being defined by questions and not answers.* Forms of governance need to become educated consumers of information. Inquisitiveness, healthy skepticism, and openness to different questions lead to a fuller understanding of challenges and therefore better solutions. Leaders receive the answers to the questions they pose: when leaders ask the wrong questions, they receive the wrong answers and overall leadership struggles. Technical experts can inform leadership on specific topics, but interdisciplinary, non-linear solutions require coordinated input from multiple stakeholders. Given the existing silos and polarisation, better governance needs breadth of exposure to both a diversity of experiences and training.

The leadership of UN Policing in times of crisis will change the role and impact of leadership itself: new emphases on processes and priorities will emerge and be reflected in the relationship between the policing function and communities

under stress. In refreshed approaches to UN Policing, we will want to see a stronger commitment to sense-making, to agile and speedy decision-making, to a policing function that does not just "do" but enables others to contribute, and that coordinates and encourages joint learning. Above all it will be an open UN Police where communication *before the event* becomes more prevalent that *reporting on events* after they have happened.[55]

5.3 Leading into the unknown

An often-cited obstacle to change is the unknown. Acknowledging the unknown and restating its impact on effective security will not, however, always be helpful. New leadership contributions can invest in knowledge and frame uncertainty with different emphases. This responds to the questions: *what do we need to know?* and *where should we invest in knowledge?*

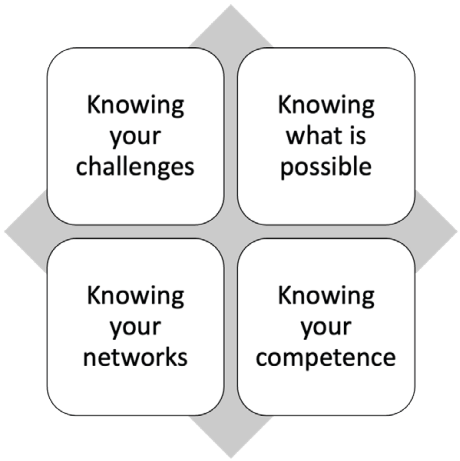

Figure 5.1: Investing in knowledge

Firstly, whereas we may not be able to forecast events and anticipate all eventualities, we must be clear about the challenges that we are facing. Investing in knowledge about challenges in times of uncertainty is crucial and distinguishing between critical and less-critical challenges is a good investment.

Secondly, investing in knowledge about what is possible, rather than what is desirable, helps ground service delivery and service partnerships. Both can help effectiveness and build solidarity with and between stakeholders.

Similarly, thirdly, there should be a strong acknowledgement about who is needed "on the team". In an era of enhanced uncertainty and turbulence, this is a commitment and acknowledgement that collaboration and teamwork matter.

Fourthly, knowledge and clarity about competence are needed: being clear about skills and abilities that exist or need to be developed and supported, and about

55 US Department of Homeland Security, National Incident Management System", 2008, https://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nims/NIMS_core.pdf.

how these match the challenges identified, provide a strong agenda for ensuring a close fit between organisational strengths and needs.

In these ways, the uncertainty and the unknown need not be as constraining; a focus on knowledge *about* roles, contributions and purpose, rather than knowledge per se is likely to be so much more important in the current era of polycrisis.

This Ideas Note asks questions about the future of UN Policing in the current context, particularly about its leadership. The process of moving forward positively and embracing change is not in the solutions, but in the questions we ask. Globalisation and technological advances challenge leaders to operate within a complex system characterised by disruptions, uncertainty, interdependencies, rapid change and unpredictable outcomes. We have suggested that a particular set of characteristics are more likely to help with positive responses. We have looked, also, at questions about the purpose of such leadership and the importance of process.

We hope that these ideas are not too contestable, but the detail and consequences will be crucial. And there are areas where further research would help.

There is the question of **power** – how it works and the difference it makes within leadership. The way that we manage UN Policing, its leaders and leadership, cannot be ambivalent about power and the complexity of acting or making choice, even where exercising power may include difficult, unpopular or expedient components versus exercising leadership that is deliberate and ethical but may be less expedient.[56]

Similarly, there is the question of the possibility of a **solutions-based focus** for policing where stakeholders mobilise their own communities in support of solutions via tactics such as citizen diplomacy and community leadership.[57] Such activists require tools and agency to be effective, and this may require formal UN Policing to take a step back from the front line.

In our 21st century world context, there remains the question about **empathy** and how we approach and feel for others.[58] The UN Police systems and its leadership have a choice between self-centredness and selflessness, and whether to focus on and within the private or public space.

A key challenge is how stakeholders maintain a focus on empathy and on a compassionate collaboration likely to support movement towards a better world.

56 See https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/socialpolicy/2021/03/05/policy-change-vs-social-change-its-a-question-of-power/.

57 See Joseph Nye's notes in https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/pros-and-cons-citizen-diplomacy.

58 P. Boossabong and P. Chamchong, "Hope, Fear and Public Policy: Towards Empathetic Policy Process", *Critical Policy Studies*, 2023, 1–19, https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171.2023.2247048.

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6. Advancing Women Leadership in UN Policing – Organisational Culture Reboot

Cristina Finch, Heather Huhtanen and Tarryn Bannister

This Ideas Note draws on DCAF's Elsie Initiative[59] policy brief series, specifically Policy Brief 4 authored by Heather Huhtanen.

6.1 Introduction

The field of policing, particularly in peacekeeping missions, has primarily been dominated by men.[60] While there have been some improvements, the total proportion of women police officers in UN operations is only 19%.[61] Simultaneously, only 7% of UN military peacekeepers are women.[62] This is problematic because gender-based violence (GBV), the most extreme manifestation of gender inequality, is exacerbated in situations of war and conflict.[63] Traditional justice systems can also serve as a barrier for women seeking to access justice in situations of conflict, particularly when men act as the gatekeepers.[64] Peacekeeping operations therefore need to be gender-responsive. Given the recent escalation in conflict and the 2028 UN Gender Parity Strategy,[65] there is a need to refocus our efforts on fostering substantive gender equality within peacekeeping and particularly within policing organisations.[66] This is necessary if we are to "dismantle … oppressive power structures [hindering] … women's full, equal, and meaningful participation in political and public life" as outlined in the UN's New Agenda for Peace.[67]

This imperative aligns with the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative[68] (launched in 2017), which has become an effective framework for the UN Secretariat to organise internal peacekeeping reform, moving the needle in areas like improving safety and security, monitoring mission and unit performance, and capacity building of troop and police contributors.[69] Despite modest and uneven

59 The Elsie Initiative is a multistakeholder Canadian-led project that uses the Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations (MOWIP) methodology to research the barriers and opportunities for women's meaningful participation in UN peace operations. The governments of Canada and Norway provided funding for this policy brief series.

60 R. Patil & M. Bagavandas, "Gender Discrimination as Determinants of Stress in Police Profession", *Journal of Forensics Science and Criminal Investigation*, Vol.13(3), 2020, pp.1-7; see also Angelo Kevin Brown, "The Impact and Experience of Female Police Officers in Peacekeeping Missions: A Qualitative Exploration", *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice*, September 2022, DOI: 10.1080/01924036.2022.2125023.

61 K. Carlsson "5 Steps to Reach the 2028 Targets for Gender Parity in Peacekeeping", 2024, https://www.dcaf.ch/5-steps-reach-2028-targets-gender-parity-peacekeeping.

62 Ibid.

63 "Conflicts also exacerbate pre-existing patterns of discrimination. Misogyny, offline and online, fuels gender-based and sexual violence in all parts of the world, but in conflict settings the added challenges of institutional weakness, impunity and the spread of arms predominantly borne by men massively aggravate the risks" (United Nations, "Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace", 2023, p.5, https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-new-agenda-for-peace-en.pdf).

64 UN Women, "Multi-country and Analytical Study on Access to Justice for Victims and Survivors of Violence against Women and Girls in East and Southern Africa", 2021, p.xxi, https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Africa/Attachments/Publications/2021/MULTI%20COUNTRY%20ANALYTICAL%20STUDY%20ON%20ACCESS%20TO%20JUSTICE%20FOR%20VICTIMS%20AND%20SURVIVORS%20OF%20VIOLENCE%20AGAINST%20WO.pdf. Police officers must balance community efforts at restorative justice with the integral need to protect the safety of women and girls while being responsive to the gendered power imbalances within communities.

65 The UN Gender Parity Strategy aims for 30% women in field missions and 35% in UN headquarters. See Carlsson, 2024 and https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/uniformed-gender-parity-2018-2028.pdf.

66 UN, 2023.

67 Ibid.

68 United Nations Peacekeeping, Action for Peacekeeping (A4P), 2022, https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/action-for-peacekeeping-a4p.

69 United Nations, "Action for Peacekeeping: Highlights of Key Achievements", 2019, https://www.ipinst.org/2019/09/a4p-one-year-into-

progress to date, the latest phase of the initiative, titled "A4P+", presents the best opportunity for achieving the reforms needed to foster women's meaningful participation in peace operations. This is due to gender no longer being siloed within commitments related to the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. "**Rather A4P+ understands gender as a 'cross-cutting mode of analysis' to be applied to all seven of the initiative's priority areas.**"[70] These seven priority areas include collective coherence behind a political strategy, strategic and operational integration, fostering capabilities and mindsets, accountability to (and of) peacekeepers, strategic communication and cooperation with host countries.[71]

Drawing on the research findings of the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF), the International Peace Institute (IPI), the African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum (APCOF) and the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, this Ideas Note details how the UN and member states supporting A4P+ and the Summit of the Future can bolster a cross-cutting gender approach to bring about lasting change, or a "reboot", to organisational culture within policing organisations, thus improving the effectiveness, efficiency, and relevance of UN Peacekeeping going forward.

6.2 Why do we need a reboot?

Organisational culture is the bedrock of a fit-for-purpose institution – one that can optimize its policing human resources from recruitment to retirement. Security institutions, including policing organisations, are operating in an increasingly complex and rapidly changing global environment. 21st century peacekeeping is routinely undertaken in the context of health epidemics, the climate crisis and mass immigration, in addition to conflict and violence. Given that the New Agenda for Peace calls for an increased focus on conflict and violence prevention, there is a need to further strengthen effective police participation (and particularly police organisations informed by substantive gender equality) in peacekeeping. This is due to military doctrine, equipment and training being founded on the principle of employing maximum force to achieve victory over an adversary.[72] In contrast, international policing standards call for the minimum use of force to protect public safety and security. Police officers are often the first responders to modern peacekeeping challenges, performing an essential element in restoring (normalising) peace and security in post-conflict settings.[73] Research has indicated that when policing operations are informed by substantive gender equality, fairness and inclusivity are promoted.[74] A commitment to gender equality also strengthens overall compliance with human rights and the rule of law.[75] This aligns with the A4P's priorities pertaining to integration and accountability.

implementation-of-the-declaration-of-shared-commitments; https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/191101_a4p_achievements_one_pager.pdf.

70 Gretchen Baldwin and Jake Sherman, "Peace Operations Still Exclude Women, but A4P+ Can Change That", DCAF Elsie Initiative Policy Brief series, Policy Brief 6, 2021, p.2.

71 Ibid.

72 Security Workstream, "The Role of Police in Preventing Mass Human Rights Violations", 2024, p.11.

73 Angelo Kevin, "The Impact and Experience of Female Police Officers in Peacekeeping Missions: A Qualitative Exploration", *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice*, September 2022, DOI: 10.1080/01924036.2022.2125023.

74 L. Denny, "Policing and Gender", DCAF, 2019, https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/GSToolkit_Tool-2%20EN%20FINAL_0.pdf.

75 Ibid.

Ever-increasing mission complexity therefore requires individuals and units to be agile and adaptable, while also arriving in the field with strong communication, conflict resolution and multicultural skills. The Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peacekeeping Operations (MOWIP) methodology developed by DCAF and Cornell University employs a scientific approach to assess the barriers and opportunities for women in peacekeeping operations. MOWIP serves to establish, among other issues, a foundational understanding of attitudes and beliefs regarding gender equality. MOWIP data identified gender roles and social exclusion as consistent barriers to women's meaningful participation and an impediment to mission effectiveness in peace operations. This signals a need for an organisational culture reboot – one that is able to capitalise on women's meaningful participation while improving mission effectiveness.

6.3 The role of leaders

Organisational culture is the nexus between the policy and doctrine of an institution and the extent to which these are consistently applied by personnel at all levels. Organisational culture is created, reproduced, and reinforced by those with leadership responsibility. Leaders play a central role in designing, modernising, and implementing policy and doctrine. As such, organisational culture is not something established and finished; it is dynamic and continuously changing.

Leaders are responsible for fostering an organisational culture that:

- is responsive to the unique gendered challenges experienced by police officers involved in peacekeeping. While this necessarily refers to both men and women, institutions need to be responsive to the gendered burden of caring work which predominantly impacts upon women's professional lives;[76]
- is agile, fit-for-purpose, and responsive to the dynamic and multicultural realities of 21st century peace operations;
- effectively leverages the skills, abilities and character attributes required for peace support operations; and
- engenders group solidarity and loyalty in a manner consistent with peace operations mandates, including enhanced trust and cooperation, reduced conflict and exclusion, and efficient decision-making and action implementation.

6.4 The consequences of social exclusion

MOWIP defines social exclusion as whether women are treated as equal members of the team. The methodology explores the presence of in-group/out-group attitudes and behaviours and how they translate into marginalisation, ostracisation, or harassment/bullying. Social exclusion is an indicator of counterproductive organisational culture, and an impediment to both women's meaningful participation and mission effectiveness. The social exclusion of women is largely correlated with attitudes and values in support of rigid gender roles which dictate whether a man or a woman is most suitable for a specific rank, role

76 UN Women, "Why Women Earn Less: Gender Pay Gap and Labour Market Inequalities in East and Southern Africa", 2023, p.viii, https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/gpg_regional_un_women_final.pdf.

and/or unit. For example, men are overwhelmingly considered more suitable for elite jobs that confer greater "prestige, rewards and possibilities for faster rank advancement'' like combat or operational command roles.[77] Policing is also still largely seen as a masculine occupation.[78] This masculinised occupational culture effectively results in female police officers often encountering sexual harassment, patriarchal domination, and gender stereotypes.[79] Social exclusion can thus manifest as conscious harassment, hazing, and bullying, as well as unconscious bias and discrimination that may be more subtle. This includes accepting only those women who conform to a specific masculine organisational culture or who "become one of the guys".

Gender roles and social exclusion are consistently high barrier issue areas that impede women's meaningful participation in peace operations. The data shows the following:

- Leaders may be reluctant to deploy women if they have young children, if the peace operation is considered high risk, or when looking to fill operational or tactical roles, regardless of whether these women have the skills and training required. These views may be the result of conscious or unconscious bias in decision-making.
- Men are consistently more likely than women to believe that women are best suited for humanitarian roles, working with women and children, and undertaking functions that avoid operational or tactical engagement. These views may result in social exclusionary behaviours, as well as unconscious bias.
- Social exclusion manifests within all the assessed institutions and included to a greater or lesser extent things like harassing and bullying type behaviour (sharing of unwanted images and messages), making jokes about appearance, discussing sexual conquests, and visiting brothels. These behaviours are neither conducive to women's meaningful participation, nor consistent with peace operations mandates.

MOWIP data also reveals a **link between social exclusionary practices and support for rigid gender roles and counterproductive conduct**.[80] Individuals who support rigid gender roles are:

- **more prone to escalate a security situation** – and less likely to de-escalate as required by peace operations mandates;
- **less likely to believe that sexual exploitation and abuse are serious;** and
- **less likely to report** colleagues that engage in sexual exploitation and other forms of misconduct – **a breach of the UN standards of conduct**.

77 E.M. Archer, "The Power of Gendered Stereotypes in the US Marine Corps", *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol.39, 2013, p.367, cited in L. Heinecken, "Conceptualizing the Tensions Evoked by Gender Integration in the Military: The South African Case", *Armed Forces and Society*, 2017, p.204.

78 For example, in 2019 the Uganda Police Force (UPF) collaborated with APCOF in a study that focused on examining the operational barriers to recruiting female police officers into the UPF. The study found that the barriers that women face extend beyond recruitment and operational policing to include "the UPF as an institution". All operational systems and approaches bear the "stamp of the male gender". The UPF recruitment and deployment systems are "developed with a man in mind". See APCOF, "Women in the Uganda Police Force: Barriers to Women in Operational Policing", 2021, https://apcof.org/wp-content/uploads/women-in-the-uganda-police-force-barriers-to-women-in-operational-policing-pdf.pdf.

79 Timothy Prenzler and Georgina Sinclair, "The Status of Women Police Officers: An International Review", *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice*, Vol.41, 2013, pp.115-131.

80 L. Huber et al., "The Commando Effect: The Impact of Gender on Misconduct, among Security Force Personnel Using Experimental Survey Evidence from Four Countries", unpublished manuscript, 2021, courtesy of the authors.

All MOWIP assessments have identified the presence of social exclusionary behaviours and support for rigid gender roles. This results in an organisational culture that cannot fully enable women's meaningful participation or advance mission effectiveness. It also reinforces other barriers related to deployment selection, household constraints and on-mission experience.

6.5 Six lessons learned for leaders in policing

- **Organisational culture is grounded in the values and identity of the institution.** In security institutions these are often associated with a specific form of masculinity. The exclusionary and homogeneous value of the "combat masculine war-fighting"[81] identity associated with kinetic skills leaves little room for the recognition of the full range of skills, knowledge, and character attributes necessary for successful peace operations.[82] To achieve mission success, security personnel need to be able to understand and communicate effectively with personnel from partner countries and civilian populations from different cultures.[83] Peace operations mandates require a range of non-kinetic competencies, including liaising, negotiating, preventing and de-escalating conflict, facilitating the (re)establishment of the rule of law, protecting civilian personnel, and supporting democratic principles of governance, among others.[84] Escalating conflict, engaging in abusive conduct and failing to report misconduct all correlate with the degree to which personnel hold rigid views on gender roles and the extent to which social exclusion is prevalent within institutions.
- **Women who are deployed to UN peace operations, particularly in command positions or operational roles, represent important role models for both women and men in security institutions. MOWIP data shows that the first women deployed as peacekeepers contribute significantly to the career of other women serving in security institutions.** Moreover, MOWIP data identified that 82% of previously deployed personnel believe women are capable of serving in special tactical operations.[85] Women trailblazers are critical to fostering organisational change by demonstrating to all security personnel that women have the capability to undertake a full range of roles and ranks within security institutions and in the context of peace support operations.

  Female police officers as trailblazers/role models: In 2018 Ms Phyllis Ama Tebuah Osei from the Ghana Police Service won the prestigious International Female Police Peacekeeper Award for her impactful work in Somalia. She played a pivotal role in protecting women and girls in Jubaland, Somalia while promoting women's rights within the host state. She also initiated an adult literacy training programme for female police officers and established a Female Peacekeeper Network to provide support to fellow female

81 K. Dunivin, "Military Culture: Change and Continuity", *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol.20, 1994, pp.531-548, cited in Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, *Challenge and Change in the Military: Gender and Diversity Issues*, 2004, p.34.

82 Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, 2004.

83 G.J. Hofstede et al., *Exploring Culture: Exercises, Stories and Synthetic Cultures,* Boston, Intercultural Press, 2002, cited in Lena Kvarving, "Gender Perspectives in the Armed Forces and Military Operations: An Uphill Battle", 2019, Diss. No. 755.

84 R. Woodward and C. Duncanson, "An Introduction to Gender and the Military", in R. Woodward and C. Duncanson (eds), *The Palgrave International Handbook of Gender and the Military*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, cited in Kvarving, 2019.

85 In the course of the MOWIP survey, out of 855 previously deployed personnel who were asked whether they believe women are able to serve in special tactical operations, 703 (82%) answered in the affirmative ("agree or strongly agree"). See section 3.1.3, "Implementing the Survey", of the MOWIP methodology for more details on how this data was collected.

peacekeepers. Her work underscores the power of female peacekeepers to have an enduring social impact in their host states, as well as their capacity to inspire and mentor fellow female peacekeepers (and female police officers).[86]

In 2022 Chief Warrant Officer Alizeta Kabore Kinda of Burkina Faso was awarded the United Nations Woman Police Officer of the Year Award. Serving as a gender focal point with MINUSMA in Mali, she played a key role in significantly increasing the reporting of sexual and GBV cases. She also expanded girls' education and reduced early marriages. Her work exemplifies how female police officers can inspire others and bring diverse perspectives to peace operations, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and effective police service. As underscored by Jean-Pierre Lacroiz, UN Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations: "Chief Warrant Officer Kinda's work is a shining example of how the participation of women police in peace operations directly impacts the sustainability of peace, by helping to bring different perspectives to the table and making our work more inclusive .... Through her actions, she embodies a more representative, efficient police service that is better equipped to serve and protect the public".[87]

- One means of producing organisational culture is through hero narratives of **women and men who embody the desired attitudes and values or character of the institution and symbolise a broad range of skills, knowledge and competences associated with the institution and its mandate**. It is critical that when women are heroised, however, it must be done in recognition of their skills, knowledge, competence, and character, and not their gender.[88]
- **Leaders play a vital role in the design of policy and doctrine** – i.e. the codified expression of organisational culture. Leaders have an even greater role in ensuring the effective implementation of policy and doctrine – i.e. the alignment between policy and practice – through their social influence.[89] The MOWIP methodology identifies situations where the attitudes and behaviours of leaders do not align with institutional policies, and thus present a barrier to women's meaningful participation and mission effectiveness.
- **Role modelling by leaders is essential.** Failure to hold individuals to account who engage in counter-productive behaviours (including jokes, comments, etc.) and other forms of misconduct effectively gives subordinates a social licence to express attitudes and behaviours that should otherwise be condemned.[90] One potential avenue for transforming the culture within police institutions is to adopt an attitude of zero-tolerance of GBV (with a broad understanding of this violence) within such institutions.
- **Personnel at all levels have a role to play in upholding the values and mission of the institution** – i.e. to create, reproduce and reinforce an organisational

86 Permanent Mission of Ghana to the United Nations, "President Nana Addo Salutes Phyllis Osei for Emerging Best UN Female Police Officer", 2018, https://www.ghanamissionun.org/nana-addo-salutes-phyllis-osei-for-emerging-best-un-female-police-officer/#:~:text=Phyllis%20Osei%2C%20a%20Superintendent%20of,state%20police%20in%20Jubaland%2C%20Somalia.

87 United Nations Peacekeeping, "Peacekeeper from Burkina Faso Serving in Mali Receives 2022 United Nations Woman Police Officer Award", 2022, https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/peacekeeper-burkina-faso-serving-mali-receives-2022-united-nations-woman-police-officer-award-0.

88 See Margaret C. Harrell and Laura L. Miller, *New Opportunities for Military Women: Effects upon Readiness, Cohesion and Mora*le, Santa Monica, RAND, 1997, p.95, DASWO1-95-C-0059.

89 K. Blanchet, "How to Facilitate Social Contagion?", *International Journal of Health Policy and Management*, Vol.1(3), 2013, pp.189-192.

90 See G. Vukotich, "Military Sexual Assault Prevention and Response: The Bystander Intervention Training Approach", *Journal of Organizational Culture, Communications and Conflict*, Vol.17(1), 2011, pp.19-35; Robyn K. Mallett and Margo J. Monteith, *Confronting Prejudice and Discrimination: The Science of Changing Minds and Behaviors*, London and San Diego, Academic Press/Elsevier, 2019.

culture that enables women's meaningful participation and advances mission effectiveness. Bystander intervention training programmes have proven to be effective in achieving this by building the awareness and capacity of personnel to intervene when colleagues engage in conduct that undermines institutional values such as trust, cooperation, and social cohesion that enable an inclusive institutional culture.[91]

6.6 Top recommendations

An organisational reboot will require a **multifaceted approach aimed at creating and maintaining an inclusive and fit-for-purpose organisational culture**. This reboot must come from leaders at all levels, be manifested in both policy doctrine and practice, and be consistently reflected throughout the institution.

A reboot will include leaders taking responsibility for:

- **undertaking a participatory gender-sensitive analysis** and audit of the current organisational culture such as a MOWIP assessment and (together with women officers) identifying specific barriers to women's equal participation;
- **working towards providing holistic services to officers** that are responsive to their private lives and responsibilities (such as childcare facilities and holistic health care);
- **role modelling** that normalises women personnel as fit for every rank, role, and unit based on skills, knowledge, competence, and character;
- institutionalised **bystander intervention training** to build the commitment and capacity of personnel to contribute to fostering an organisational culture based on trust, cooperation, and social cohesion;
- institutionalised **social inclusion (and diversity) programming** that fosters women's meaningful participation and advances the skills and character needed for peace operations missions (e.g. mixed-gender activities like training, sports, cooking, dancing, singing, problem-solving games, etc.);
- implementing **robust policy frameworks, and accountability and oversight mechanisms** (non-discrimination policy, harassment/bullying complaints mechanism, employee climate surveys); and
- **improving information dissemination** about peacekeeping opportunities through organisational communication, training academies, and mentorships while developing **public relations material, social media, and recruitment strategies** that avoid tokenism, target women specifically and valorise the character and skills, knowledge and competences needed for peace operations.

91 Vukotich, 2011.

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7. Preparing for the Future: Climate-Supportive United Nations Policing

Wendy MacClinchy, Ahmed Abdel-Latif, Dina El Mamoun and Sara Rabie

7.1 Multiplying risks present new challenges

The UN has described the global climate emergency as the defining challenge of our time. Evident in many contexts where UN Police personnel are deployed, the confluence of climate and security risks emerging from a global climate emergency have become both broadly recognised and unavoidable, often fuelling conflicts over resources, across boundaries and borders, and between communities. These can, in turn, drive food insecurity and disruptive mass migration patterns of animals and people; affect biodiversity and natural resources; and accelerate natural disasters such as mega fires, flooding, and hurricanes in ways that can drive scarcity and, with it, competition. In these ways climate change acts as a threat multiplier, compounding already existing risks, and increasing their severity and impacts in numerous and multidimensional ways. One of the most important of these for UN Police relates to climate risks exacerbating the crime-conflict nexus and driving both environmental crimes and violent criminal activity in vulnerable communities which can coincide with conflict triggers in a vicious cycle. The facts are clear: climate change fundamentally exacerbates threats to human security.

These are not future scenarios, but very much present realities for millions of people in all parts of the world and, unfortunately, they are only expected to grow more acute. In briefings to the UN Security Council, experts, practitioners, and governments share the same prognosis: the strong link between climate change and international peace and security can no longer be denied or ignored.[92] The chief scientist at the UN World Meteorological Organization (WMO) told the Council that climate-related extreme weather issues are "increasingly regarded as a national security threat" inhibiting access to food and clean air, and driving internal displacement and the potential for water conflict.[93] The effects are evident in many contexts hosting UN peace operations – drought in Somalia; desertification in the Sahel; flooding and changing transhumance routes in South Sudan; and extreme weather event-related internal displacement driving inter-communal tensions in Central African Republic, exacerbating humanitarian crises in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and fraying the social fabric, disrupting livelihoods and driving armed group recruitment in the Horn of Africa.[94]

The negative impacts of ongoing and worsening climate hazards and environmental degradation, including on existing and new conflict dynamics, affect virtually

92 See https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15318.doc.htm.

93 See https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/news/climate-change-recognized-%E2%80%98threat-multiplier%E2%80%99-un-security-council-debates-its-impact-peace.

94 See https://reliefweb.int/report/central-african-republic/coups-violence-climate-change-among-factors-destabilizing-central-africa-delegates-underline-security-council.

all aspects of the UN's work in the most challenging contexts.[95] The climate and security-related challenges to civilians are particularly acute in countries lacking the state institutions, governance, and resources needed to adapt to climate stressors.[96] Ongoing conflict and state fragility degrade natural resources and the environment while undermining the ability of both communities and governments to build climate adaptive infrastructure.[97]

There is a clear recognition that efforts to prevent and manage conflict should be coordinated with the efforts to mitigate, adapt and respond to the impacts of climate change. The cross-disciplinary integration of climate adaptation, peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts could work in parallel to leverage sustainable, context-specific, and impactful climate responses. In addition, it ensures that conflict prevention and resolution efforts robustly address climate-induced risks that could potentially exacerbate fragility.[98]

From field patrols to headquarters, peacekeepers in these contexts see first-hand the impact of climate change on the threats and vulnerabilities faced by civilians, along with its impact on the capacities civilians have available to them to respond and adapt.[99] These effects have a disproportionate effect on women, children, and other people in vulnerable situations, which must be considered respectively. However, these groups have shown tremendous leadership in driving local solutions – Yemeni women mediating local water clashes, South Sudanese local leaders convening intercommunal mediation or communities fighting environmental crimes in the DRC.[100]

This Ideas Note offers a brief introduction to this topic in the context of UN peace operations. As a point of clarification, while "greening the blue" efforts are essential for reducing the UN's environmental footprint in peace operations – reducing reliance on fossil fuel energy, for example – these should not be conflated with the integration of climate-security risks in UN-mandated peace operations work. Though complementary, these different spheres of effort should be understood for their distinct objectives: the environmental sustainability of UN operations in the first case and applying a "climate lens" to UN-mandated operations to mitigate the risk multiplier effect of climate on insecurity in the second case.

7.2 Adapting the UN to climate response

So stark are these risks for global peace and security, and urgent the need for robust measures to address them that, like the UN Secretary-General, both the UN Department of Peace Operations (DPO) and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) have made it a strategic priority, as has most of the UN system, insisting on bold measures to abate and prevent the worst

95 See https://www.usip.org/publications/2021/07/climate-change-risks-new-violent-conflict-how-respond and https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/climate_security_2021.pdf.

96 https://www.sipri.org/publications/2022/policy-reports/security-risks-environmental-crises-environment-peace-part-2; https://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/images/Publications/Briefs/Climate_Crisis_UCP.pdf.

97 https://reliefweb.int/report/world/report-secretary-general-protection-civilians-armed-conflict-s2021423-enarru.

98 cccpa-eg.org/pdf_read_download.php?type=read&newFileName=Knowledge+Gaps+in+the+Nexus+of+Climate%2C+Peace+and+Security&file=7307_06121622.pdf.

99 See https://medium.com/we-the-peoples/protecting-peace-how-un-peacekeepers-are-part-of-the-climate-solution-707c7fecba6e.

100 See https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15318.doc.htm.

predicted effects that are already evident in the rising seas of the Pacific island states, extreme weather events in South Asia, or recurrent droughts and flooding in Africa.[101] Recognising the cross-cutting nature of the crisis, in 2018, the UN created the Climate Security Mechanism — a joint initiative between DPO, DPPA, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to facilitate inter-agency cooperation, coordinate strategies, and strengthen capacities to address climate impacts on peace and security.[102]

Member states too are joining the call, through a diverse and ever-expanding "Group of Friends on Climate and Security", a coalition of 66 member states calling for "concrete, tangible action" and insisting "the entire UN system must address this complex challenge in all relevant fora and within all relevant mandates".[103] This group relies on an Informal Expert Group of Members of the Security Council to advise on the Council's agenda, including a proactive group of elected members which have pledged to ensure climate security stays on the Council's agenda.[104] In addition, an Arria-Formula meeting held in 2022 highlighted the broadening understanding among Council members of the climate, peace, and security nexus and how climate change impacts peacebuilding efforts. Together these efforts have resulted in the increased appearance of climate-security aspects in UN peace operations mandates, including on regular reporting (see UNMISS example below). How these, like other additional mandated tasks, are received is the subject of long-standing debate over lengthy "Christmas tree" mandates requiring missions to do more, often without additional capacities or budgets. However, the supporting rationale is to ensure that mission primary tasks, like the protection of civilians (PoC), are more consistently informed by better analysis of climate risks.[105] In CIVIC research in South Sudan, one official in Malakal said they actively supported including climate change in the mandate of UNMISS, because they and others believed that explicit recognition of the connections, for example between flooding and cattle raiding, would be useful in informing threat analysis and planning.[106]

A growing pressure on the UN Security Council to take more concerted action since climate change first appeared on its agenda 16 years ago, has been mounting, contributing to the more than 70 resolutions and statements on climate-related security risks passed since.[107] While region- and country-specific mandates like those in Somalia, Lake Chad Basin, Darfur, Mali and West Africa, as well as CAR and South Sudan, are important incremental steps, failure to sustain climate, peace and security on the agenda marks a stark contrast to both a growing acceptance of the evidence on climate-security links and its accelerating negative impacts on the countries on the Council's agenda, among many others globally. However, political polarisation within the Council's P5 members inhibiting progressive

101 See https://dppa.un.org/en/addressing-impact-of-climate-change-peace-and-security.

102 See https://www.unep.org/topics/fresh-water/disasters-and-climate-change/climate-security-mechanism-csm.

103 See https://new-york-un.diplo.de/un-en/-/2601564 and https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2022/11/arria-formula-meeting-on-climate-peace-and-security.php.

104 In 2023-2024, this includes the UAE, Malta, Mozambique and Switzerland.

105 CIVIC and EPON interview #4 with UN officials, 29 May 2023; CIVIC interview #29 with UN official, 30 May 2023; CIVIC interview #170 with expert, 19 June 2023.

106 CIVIC interview #144 with UN official, 1 June 2023.

107 United Nations, "With Climate Crisis Generating Growing Threats to Global Peace, Security Council Must Ramp up Efforts, Lessen Risk of Conflicts, Speakers Stress in Open Debate", UN Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, 9345TH MEETING (AM & PM), SC/15318, 13 June 2023, https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15318.doc.htm and https://www.un.org/press/en/2007/sc9000.doc.htm.

Council action may be overcome by well-organised and strategic initiatives of its ten elected members able to seize opportunities.[108] However, the General Assembly may also have a role, invoking UN General Assembly Resolution 377.[109]

7.3 Adapting strategies and mandated tasks in UN peace operation contexts

UN peacekeeping operations have long dealt with the effects of climate change on the ground. As Secretary-General António Guterres told the Security Council in 2020, "[it] is no coincidence that seven of the 10 countries most vulnerable and least prepared to deal with climate change host a peacekeeping operation or special political mission".[110] The increasing appearance of climate-security language in UN Security Council resolutions reflects this reality. For example, the most recent resolution – S/RES/2692 (2023) – approving a new UN operation in Haiti acknowledged the climate-security risks inherent in that country's cyclical humanitarian, violent crime and conflict crises following decades of environmental devastation, entrenched poverty and violence.[111] At the time of writing, plans include UN Police to form the backbone of the multinational UN presence there, underscoring the need for UNPOL to deepen its understanding of these issues. This Ideas Note will briefly touch on four other examples: South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Somalia and Yemen.

South Sudan

In South Sudan, climate impacts, most clearly in the form of flooding and drought, have contributed to mass displacement, exacerbated resource and food scarcity, and dramatically affected agricultural and grazing patterns. As in other contexts, these phenomena do not alone explain the persistent conflict and political violence that have seized South Sudan in the short time since its independence. Even so, dramatic changes in the natural environment can interact with underlying political and economic factors in ways that can fuel armed violence – or serve as its pretext. These phenomena can also fundamentally exacerbate the vulnerability of civilians to the effects of conflict, and complicate efforts to protect them, notably for the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), a peacekeeping mission that has been given a priority task of protecting civilians from violence. The latest UN Security Council resolution renewing the mandate for UNMISS (S/RES/2677) calls on the UN to report on the "risks associated with climate change that may adversely impact peace and security in South Sudan, and implementation of the Mission's mandate" while requesting the Secretary-General to inform the Council of any obstacles and stressing that the protection of civilians shall be given priority.[112]

108 Adam Day et al., "Climate Change in the Security Council: What New Council Members Can Achieve in 2023", IPI Global Observatory, 30 January 2023, https://theglobalobservatory.org/2023/01/climate-change-security-council-elected-members/.

109 Adam Day and Florian Krampe, "Beyond the UN Security Council: Can the UN General Assembly Tackle the Climate-Security Challenge?", SIPRI Commentary, 20 June 2023, https://www.sipri.org/commentary/essay/2023/beyond-un-security-council-can-un-general-assembly-tackle-climate-security-challenge and https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FRES%2F377(V)&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False.

110 See https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/07/1068991.

111 See https://binuh.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/res_2692_2023_e_1.pdf and https://adelphi.de/en/opinion/why-international-support-for-haiti-must-include-climate-security.

112 See S/RES/2677, https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15227.doc.htm.

CIVIC research highlights how UNMISS is beginning to implement this new mandated requirement which is based on the rationale that considering the impacts of climate change on the vulnerability of civilians and on the operating environment for protection could help UNMISS improve measures to both prevent and respond to risks to civilian, including physical harm, that result from violence. With over 2,100 police personnel, UNMISS has an important role in the protection of civilians, including in and around the POC camp in Malakal, for example, and in the prevention of a further escalation of political violence. The research specifically investigates how the mission integrates climate-related data into its threat assessments and operations, how UNMISS is leveraging the recently created climate security advisor role as it relates to the protection of civilians, how climate stressors have affected UNMISS PoC capabilities, and how the mission's PoC directive is informed by climate adaptation analysis and initiatives (e.g. including non-mission initiatives of UN agencies).

Democratic Republic of the Congo

In the Kivu provinces in the eastern DRC, climate change is driving complex and persistent cycles of vulnerability and insecurity. A spike in violence over the last five years has both been a cause and result of a huge displacement crisis: between 2008 and 2022, 1.7 million Congolese were internally displaced by floods and storms in a region already prone to both natural disasters and armed group violence.[113] The result is a compounding of risks deepening a humanitarian and protection crisis, because these internally displaced people (IDPs), without livelihoods or local community support networks, are more vulnerable to increasing temperatures impacting health, agriculture, and water resources, while also deepening poverty. Climate-related crop yield losses drive deforestation, which, in turn, drives both local conflicts and short- and long-term climate insecurity.[114]

These trends multiply local risks with such severity that they in turn drive regional humanitarian crises and cross-border conflict dynamics as further environmental degradation and resource exploitation thrive in a "conflict market" where a mix of criminal and armed groups collectively undermine human security at a colossal scale and with severe impacts to conflict prevention and peace consolidation efforts. In acknowledgement that incoherence in climate- and peace and security-related approaches can deepen these risks, some countries in the region, like the DRC, are building mitigation and adaptation strategies into their national adaptation plans – important steps to integrate these risks in short- and long-term national strategic planning on climate adaptation.[115]

Somalia

Somalia witnessed its worst recorded drought from 2021 to 2023, during which it experienced an unprecedented five consecutive failed rainy seasons. The acute drought left livelihoods in Somalia extremely threatened and raised the risks of famine in much of the country's areas. The compounded risks of climate-induced

113 In fact, the DRC is already experiencing one of the highest displacement crises in the continent, with 6.4 million IDPs. See https://www.nupi.no/news/climate-peace-and-security-fact-sheet-democratic-republic-of-the-congo#:~:text=Climate%20change%20can%20contribute%20to%20conflict%20through%20changing%20migration%20and%20mobility%20patterns.&text=Between%202008%20and%202022%2C%201.7,over%20the%20last%20five%20years.

114 See https://www.sipri.org/publications/2023/partner-publications/climate-peace-and-security-fact-sheet-democratic-republic-congo-2023.

115 See https://www.cgiar.org/research/publication/climate-environment-peace-security-related-policy-outputs-coherent-policy-coherence-awareness-analysis-climate-security/ and the DRC's NAP: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/DRC-NAP_EN.pdf.

drought and loss of livelihood, coupled with conflict operations against Al-Shabaab in many drought-affected regions, led to almost 3.8 million internally displaced Somalis, and left the country severely vulnerable to climate risks.[116]

Rural-urban migration has put the infrastructure of Somalia under immense pressure, as almost one fifth of the population has relocated to urban areas in search of alternative means of livelihood. For example, the population of Baidoa (the capital of South-West State) doubled within three years, after an estimated 277,000 sought refuge from the drought.

In 2018, the UN Security Council acknowledged the "adverse effects of climate change, ecological changes and natural disasters among other factors on the stability of Somalia [and] the need for adequate risk assessments and risk management strategies by governments and the United Nations relating to these factors".[117] Somalia witnessed severe droughts in this period, which compounded existing security risks. In response, the UN deployed staff with relevant expertise in 2020, with the first climate security and environmental advisor embedded in UNSOM.[118]

UNSOM works to advise and coordinate programmes implemented by the active stakeholders in Somalia, such as the UN country team and national actors, to integrate climate-related assessments into their various activities. In addition, UNSOM integrates climate-related security risks into mandated peacebuilding efforts using data-informed approaches to connect the climate and security communities in Somalia. This contributes to leveraging more sustainable responses and more long-term and sustainable mobilisation of funding.[119]

Yemen

Scientists have been discussing the threat posed by climate change in Yemen for decades. One of the most water-poor countries in the world, Yemen is at great risk of running completely dry, leaving its 30 million inhabitants without water. In 2010, the World Bank published a paper predicting that Yemen's groundwater reserves would be depleted between 2030 and 2042 – a prediction that remains largely unchanged. Ten years later, in 2020, the Century Foundation published a report stating the same thing, even as the war rages on. Although water scarcity in Yemen is a complex problem with multiple causes, climate change has exacerbated the problem (and continues to do so) while also contributing to the dire food scarcity and famine experienced throughout the country.

In addition to the threat that climate change poses to Yemenis' ability to access water and food, it also threatens to exacerbate the current conflict and spark future conflicts due to expected increases in resource competition and migration – threats that the UN Secretary-General warned of in 2020. This phenomenon is already evident in Yemen: the dangerous impacts of a rapidly changing

116 Virtual interview with International Organization for Migration (IOM) officials, July 2023. 80% of IDPs are in urban centres and over 50% of IDPs in Somalia are in Mogadishu and Baidoa. See also IOM, "Displacement in Somalia Reaches Record High 3.8 Million: IOM Deputy Director General Calls for Sustainable Solutions", 28 February 2023.

117 UN Security Council, "Security Council Extends Somalia Mission Mandate, Adopting Resolution 2657 (2022) by 14 Votes in Favour, 1 Abstention", UN Press, 2022.

118 Interview with Christophe Hodder, Nairobi, June 2023.

119 Interview with South-West State Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Baidoa, March 2023. See also, UNHCR, "Protection & Return Monitoring Network Data", July 2023. One initiative, called Saameynta (Impact in Somali), supported by the UN and Somalia's planning ministry, aims to settle 100,000 people permanently in Baidoa. However, the project lacks funding and struggles to secure land.

climate, combined with the harm warring parties in the current armed conflict have inflicted on the environment and on critical resources, have contributed to resource scarcity and forced migration across the country. These impacts have, in turn, led to increased protection threats, tensions between different communities over resources, and outbreaks of violence and local conflicts. With no sustainable, long-term solutions in place to mitigate the effects of both climate change and environmental destruction, the population of Yemen faces great risks moving forward – both in their ability to attain needed resources to survive and in the potential for conflict to continue well into the future over increasingly constrained resources.

Extreme heat is a factor that poses considerable risk as temperatures in Yemen have already increased by 1.8 degrees Celsius over the last 50 years and continue to rise. Water levels in the country's water basins have rapidly declined in the last few decades, and a significant number of the country's wells have already dried up. Prior to the start of the current conflict, it was predicted that Sana'a would be the first capital city in the world to run out of clean water – a result of poor planning and resource management over the last several decades. Extreme weather events have also increased in the last several years, including flooding and droughts, further devastating the country's land and resources. In the summer of 2022, severe floods wrecked many areas of the country, killing and displacing thousands of people.

The last eight years of conflict have compounded the impacts of climate change on land, water, and food through the deterioration of basic government services, blockades by warring parties, direct attacks upon farmland and water sources, and the placement of landmines across wide swathes of agricultural land as well as near and inside of water sources. Resource mismanagement has been an issue for many decades in Yemen, starting long prior to the conflict. However, it has been exacerbated by the conflict. The breakdown of government institutions due to the lack of salary payments since the start of the war – as well as the broader impacts of the war – have left many government entities either completely shut down or working with minimal resources. Additionally, there are possibly over two million landmines scattered across the country.

CIVIC found that combined with the environmental destruction that has been caused by warring parties, climate change is directly correlated to shortages in critical resources, loss of livelihoods, forced migration and, ultimately, conflict.[120]

7.4 Considerations for UN Police

The UN's Climate Security Mechanism and many other platforms and studies cited in this Ideas Note are consolidating resources useful for UN peace operations personnel, including profiles of good practice and comparative lessons, case studies and tools, for the UN and partners to better mainstream climate-security factors into their work. These efforts begin from a better understanding of the interconnected ways in which climate change impacts different mission components, activities and operations.

120 See CIVIC, "Risking the Future: Climate Change, Environmental Destruction, and Conflict in Yemen", 4 October 2022, https://civiliansinconflict.org/risking-the-future-climate-change-environmental-destruction-and-conflict-in-yemen/.

Concurrently, in the context of embedding climate responses in peace-positive approaches, the Egyptian Presidency of COP27 launched an initiative entitled "Climate Responses for Sustaining Peace (CRSP)", aiming to ensure that integrated responses to climate change contribute to peace and sustainable development, while aligning with national ownership and context specificity.[121] This was further complemented by the COP28 Presidency Declaration on "Climate, Relief, Recovery and Peace".[122]

In a meeting at the COP28 climate summit (September 2023), the UAE called on UN Police leadership to urgently establish a UN Climate Incident Observers Unit tasked with monitoring and responding to climate-related incidents – a kind of "Green Helmets" brigade. UNPOL representatives from UNMISS, MINUSCA, MONUSCO, UNSMIL, UNSOM, and BINUH attended a workshop at COP28 in Abu Dhabi which highlighted the need for strengthened accountability, capabilities, and performance requirements. In the event, Alexander Zuev, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions, cited "the importance of taking essential steps toward environmentally responsible policing within Peace Operations cannot be overstated. Our collective duty transcends traditional boundaries. We must strive not only to maintain peace but also to protect the planet that sustains us all".[123]

Similar innovative proposals appear in various policy and diplomatic initiatives, including the UN's New Agenda for Peace and the Summit of the Future (planned for September 2024). These include proposals for UN governance reforms aimed at improved effectiveness against current and future threats.[124] These important proposals, however, should not deter action UN Police and other personnel can take now within existing mandates and policies. The following are a few areas for consideration.

Enhancing environmental mediation processes

Addressing and responding to inter-communal tensions and conflicts is increasingly emphasised in the mandates of peacekeeping missions, highlighting the need for leveraging a climate lens in the dialogue processes taken forward by the UN missions.[125] Climate-induced risks continue to exacerbate fragility and potentially fuel further inter-communal competition and conflict; thus, environmental considerations are crucial to prevent, mitigate and resolve inter-communal violence.

While environmental peacebuilding does not feature in mandates, it is crucial to consider incorporating environmental considerations into the mandated activities such as reconciliation, mediation and the protection of civilians. Including climate considerations within the mandated activities would also support the facilitation of peace-making processes, through bringing together conflicting

121 See CCCPA, "Climate Responses for Sustaining Peace (CRSP) COP27 Presidency Initiative", CCCPA Research/Publications, 5 April 2023, https://www.cccpa-eg.org/publications-details/1107.

122 See COP28 UAE, "COP28 Declaration on Climate, Relief, Recovery and Peace", https://www.cop28.com/en/cop28-declaration-on-climate-relief-recovery-and-peace.

123 See https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/uae-gathers-un-police-chiefs-peacekeepers-to-drive-climate-action-calls-for-establishment-of-climate-observers-301933189.html.

124 See, for example, Adam Day, "UN 'Summit of the Future' Must Deliver for the Planet", IPI Global Observatory, 7 February 2024, https://theglobalobservatory.org/2024/02/un-summit-of-the-future-must-deliver-for-the-planet/ and https://dppa.un.org/en/addressing-impact-of-climate-change-peace-and-security.

125 N. Hyman et al., "Preventing, Mitigating & Resolving Transhumance-related Conflicts in UN Peacekeeping Settings: A Survey of Practice", United Nations Department of Peace Operations, 2020.

parties to engage on technical solutions for natural resource management such as water or land.

Data sharing and joint risk analysis

One of the most important areas for intervention highlighted in the ample research is the need for joined up data and analysis, specifically factoring climate-related data and risk factors into threat assessments and planning in order to better inform operational decisions. Several of the tools and resources below offer guidance on how UN Police and other mission personnel can lead these efforts for better informed and coordinated analysis – JOCs and JMACs are instrumental in facilitating such exchanges.

However, working outside the mission is also essential and staff must make every effort to strengthen knowledge management. UN agencies often have longer experience with technical risk assessments of climate-related security risks and their response strategies and can be an invaluable resource. Together, mission personnel, agency staff and NGO partners sharing information can break down the siloes which inhibit coherent responses. They can form an evidence base while also consolidating good practices.[126]

Examples of analytic questions:

- For example, this may involve linking the impact of climate change on the migratory patterns of pastoralist communities which are causing farmer-herder conflicts, resulting in displacements which can further deepen vulnerabilities and heightened risk exposure (e.g. Sudan, South Sudan, Mali), and can cause further tensions between displaced and hosting communities which can erupt into violence.
- Where cyclical droughts, flooding or rising seas may be decimating crop yields, leading to loss of livelihoods, displacement, inter-communal conflict, armed group recruitment and/or violence criminal activity (e.g. Chad, Nigeria, Haiti), how can the UN support mediation, state capacity to assess and prepare for such risks, as well as resilience and adaptation strategies?
- Where drought-fueled water scarcity displaces vulnerable people across regions and borders, how can mission personnel pre-position vehicles and units needed to increase patrols where IDP and refugee influxes may trigger violence in or around a POC site?

Examples of resources available to facilitate joint risk analysis

- Mission personnel should specifically leverage the expertise of a climate security advisor if one is in-mission. If this role does not exist, missions can request surge support from UN HQ or from other missions.
- Missions can also request in-mission training led by the UN System Staff College in partnership with others (e.g. supported by the UN and partners like SIPRI or Adelphi University).[127] One such previous training programme in UNMISS received positive staff feedback.

126 See, for example, https://unu.edu/cpr/project/conflict-prevention-era-climate-change-adapting-un-climate-security-risks.

127 See, for example, https://climate-diplomacy.org/climate-security-expert-network.

- The UN's "Climate Security Toolbox" includes e-learning, training resources, links to experts and a trove of reference material.[128]
- Missions can leverage regional resources such as the United Nations Climate, Peace and Security Hub for the Horn of Africa[129] or United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), which focuses on regional conflict dynamics and climate risks in particular.
- UN personnel can also take advantage of extensive external resources and analytic tools such as those which enable climate-related security risk management through real-time data and analysis, access to research, best practices, mapping of climate-security adaptations, and case studies, among others.[130]
- Research from non-mission settings also offer instructive lessons and guidance for UN personnel in peace operations, including on joint analysis and planning, and the need for the integration of actors.[131]
- Integrated tools or platforms such as the Sahel Predictive Analytics Project can support joint UN efforts to understand interconnected risks, such as identifying vulnerability hotspots.[132] Another example is MINUSCA and IOM's detailed map of pastoral infrastructures along the Kabo Batangafo-Kaga Bandoro and Golongosso-Ndele axes to identify transhumance hotspots.[133]

Integration

- The indirect and unpredictable ways climate change can fuel insecurity, including through natural resource competition, shifting traditional migration routes, disruptive extreme weather events and resulting impact on agricultural production and thus food security, for example, mean that no one UN department or component, system-wide or in-mission, can effectively mitigate these risks without a cooperative approach. Responses necessitate shared data, analysis, resources and engagement. While the UN's Climate Security Mechanism (CSM) is trying to facilitate this cooperation system-wide, at the mission level, mission leadership should encourage consideration of climate-related security risks in both near- and long-term threat assessments, planning and response. Collaboration between mission components is essential for a conflict-sensitive approach to climate and a climate-sensitive approach to conflict prevention.

128 See https://trello.com/c/eL1MPoeW/11-climate-security-toolbox-en-fr-sp and https://trello.com/c/U0zaXmJT/802-climate-security-toolbox-en-fr-sp-2020.

129 The United Nations Climate, Peace and Security Hub for the Horn of Africa is the first regional hub of its kind and the first implementation of the UN Secretary-General's recommendation for regional hubs under the New Agenda for Peace. The hub is an initiative of the UN Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa (OSE-HoA), collaborating closely with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to address climate-related risks to peace and security in the region. See https://trello.com/c/sp8rA3dg/1172-un-climate-peace-security-hub-horn-of-africa and the COP28 event: https://unfccc.int/event/climate-peace-and-security-in-the-horn-of-africa.

130 See, for example, https://www.ecosystemforpeace.org/compendium/adaptive-peacebuilding-improving-climate-related-security-risk-management-through-real-time-data-and-analysis; https://www.undp.org/africa/publications/mapping-climate-security-adaptations-community-level-horn-africa and https://www.interpeace.org/2023/12/cgiar-and-interpeace-launch-innovative-dashboard-to-promote-peace-through-climate-finance/.

131 See Bangladesh and Nigeria case studies and recommendations in this UNU study: Adam Day and Jessica Cause, "Conflict Prevention in the Era of Climate Change: Adapting the UN to Climate-Security Risks: Supporting the UN and Its Partners to Develop Climate-sensitive Conflict Prevention Approaches", United Nations University Centre for Policy Research, 21 March 2020, https://unu.edu/cpr/project/conflict-prevention-era-climate-change-adapting-un-climate-security-risks.

132 See, for example https://www.unhcr.org/media/moving-reaction-action-anticipating-vulnerability-hotspots-sahel-0.

133 See West and Central Africa Transhumance Response Plan 2022 | Global Crisis Response Platform (iom.int).

- Standing coordination mechanisms should allow police, military and civilian mission components – including humanitarian, political, and civil affairs; POC advisors; and gender advisors, among others – to work together to make informed decisions on operations and activities, as well as how to deploy sometimes limited resources for maximum impact.

Infrastructure, logistics and personnel

- Climate risk unpredictability means scenario and contingency planning is essential. Operationally, this could mean planning and optimising logistics support and transport vehicles, such as inflatable boats in Malakal, South Sudan, to enable patrolling in flooded areas, including with local police. Noting the challenges of maintaining a field presence in highly vulnerable areas relies on sometimes significant logistical infrastructure and reliable supply chains, which can be made acutely more difficult in hard-to-access areas, and may require pre-positioning or stockpiling equipment, provisions, or fuel for generators.
- Climate-related environmental changes associated with potential security risks require an assessment of the effect of these impacts on posture and readiness, but also ensuring that missions include personnel with the profiles, skills, and capabilities needed to respond to natural hazards and the flexibility to deploy them as needed.[134]

Early warning systems

- Because the relationship between climate-security risks tends to defy linear models and is not always visible, UN peace operations should factor an informed, and often broader, array of potential risks into existing early warning systems. These systems may need to be more sensitive to climate-related risks and responses. Whether through an early warning hub (e.g. MINUSCA's in Bouar or MONUSCO's in Beni) or facilitated through Joint Mission Analysis Centres (JMACs)- and Joint Operations Centres (JOCs)-supported early warning coordination platforms (e.g. UNMISS), UN personnel across mission components can improve information sharing, coordination and joined up rapid responses to highly vulnerable communities. This can be linked to other areas around community engagement.

Human Rights Due Diligence Policy

- Used strategically, the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP) can be an effective tool for UN personnel to create opportunities for more effective and coherent approaches among national security actors that can be climate- and conflict-sensitive and aligned with human-rights-based principles and practice. It can help focus capacity building and training efforts within mandated mission priorities while also mitigating against risks to both the environment and civilians.

Each of these strategies and tools, which are by no means exhaustive, have shown to be effective in practice, but as always, they should be tailored to the specific circumstances and risks of each context. To reiterate, no one expects

134 From forthcoming CIVIC research, CIVIC interview #155 with UN Official, 7 June 2023; CIVIC and EPON interview #38 with UN official, 5 June 2023; CIVIC and EPON interview #10 with UN official, 30 May 2023 (Juba).

UN Police or peacekeepers to solve the climate crisis, which is well beyond any single institution's mandate or capabilities. But by understanding how climate can deepen insecurity and protection risks, these actors can draw on this analysis to make better decisions for the specific challenges confronting the communities they are mandated to protect.

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8. Implications and Opportunities for United Nations Police: Harmful Information in the Context of Peace Operations

Annika S. Hansen and Fatoumata Kaba

Brief summary

Harmful or misleading information has always been part and parcel of the infamous "fog of war", but has become a growing factor in today's conflict environments. In turn, United Nations peace operations increasingly feel the impact of mis-, dis- and malinformation and hate speech (MDMH). The UN has dealt with the issue for a number of years, but is now making a concerted effort to provide guidance and tools to assist mission efforts to address MDMH. Looking ahead to 2030, and at current pressing challenges, what are key trends in MDMH, including the role of artificial intelligence (AI)? How do they impact responses? And what do they mean for the work of UN Police?

8.1 What is harmful information, how does it affect conflict-affected or vulnerable societies and what role does evolving technology play?

Harmful information rarely creates grievances, but feeds off perceived (and real) inequalities, exploiting these sentiments to destabilise a conflict situation. Most often this is not about a piece of false or misleading information, but a mixture of truth, misinterpretations and lies. For example, images of violence are doctored or relabelled to provide "proof" of a specific narrative. These, in turn, are couched in wider – and at times opposing – perceptions of the roots and drivers of a conflict and the resulting rights and wrongs a given society feels.

Different types of harmful information:

Disinformation: Information that is false and deliberately created to harm a person, social group, organisation or country.

Misinformation: Information that is false, but not created with the intention of causing harm.

Malinformation: Information that is based on reality, used to inflict harm on a person, organisation or country (e.g. information leaks).

In addition, **hate speech** is often closely linked to harmful information or amplified by it.

As a common feature of these different types is their ability to cause harm, so a good overall phrase to use is "harmful information". In its guidance documents, the UN uses the term "mis-, dis- and malinformation and hate speech (MDMH)".

It is important – although not always straightforward – to distinguish different forms of harmful information from legitimate criticism directed at a peace operation. It must be possible for communities to voice their dissatisfaction with a lack of security or their frustration about a lack of progress without this being (labelled as) disinformation. At the same time, disinformation actors wanting to discredit peace operations take advantage of popular frustrations to fuel false narratives.

Harmful information is not only disseminated online, but easily travels to personal exchanges, allowing it to spread even more quickly and making it difficult to track. How exactly disinformation translates from the online to the offline space – i.e. to what extent harmful information online leads to physical offline violence – is not well understood or researched. But clearly, disinformation campaigns increase tensions and exacerbate polarisation in societies, leaving limited space to find common solutions.

Harmful information is typically generated by both state and non-state actors, including individuals and groups. These can include national authorities, local groups, influencers or journalists, diaspora, private companies or foreign governments.[135] That also means that it is used both to influence opinions and behaviour at a local level or to pursue more strategic goals at a regional or global level. It is created, spread and amplified by individuals, but also artificially through campaigns that make use of technologies such as bots and recommendation algorithms.[136]

In fact, with evolving technology, especially with the increased use of artificial intelligence (AI) to create content and to spread this content in a targeted manner, the impact of harmful information grows and the response becomes more challenging. With generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, harmful information is created more quickly and spreads faster and to more people. Harmful information also becomes more sophisticated; campaigns are generated as easily as individual pieces of news, both are more and more difficult to distinguish from truth.[137] In 2023, over 500,000 video and speech deepfakes were disseminated worldwide.[138] By 2026, EUROPOL claims that 90% of online content can be produced synthetically.[139] In a country such as the Central African Republic, where internet penetration is very low, this will take longer to manifest, but the trend is clear.

At the same time, technology companies are doing less and less to regulate the activities on their platforms and are lowering their standards on trust and safety. Some have described this as a "perfect storm" for those wishing to cause harm.

135 For a comprehensive overview over actors, their tools and intent, see Lotte Vermeij et al., *The Impact and Response to Misinformation, Disinformation, Malinformation and Hate Speech in the Digital Era*, NUPI, 2024, pp.25-28, https://www.nupi.no/en/the-impact-and-response-to-misinformation-disinformation-malinformation-and-hate-speech-in-the-digital-era.

136 Monika Benkler et al., *Protecting the Truth: Peace Operations and Disinformation*, ZIF Study, Center for International Peace Operations, 2020, https://www.zif-berlin.org/sites/zif-berlin.org/files/2022-11/ZIF_Studie_Desinfo_en_FINAL.pdf.

137 Eduardo Albrecht et al., *Disinformation and Peacebuilding in Sub-Saharan Africa. Security Implications of AI-Altered Information Environments*, United Nations University, 2024, pp.9f, 20f, https://collections.unu.edu/eserv/UNU:9419/disinformation_peacebuilding_subsaharan_africa.pdf.

138 European Parliament, "Ten Issues to Watch in 2024", EPRS, 2024, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2024/757592/EPRS_IDA(2024)757592_EN.pdf.

139 EUROPOL, *Facing Reality? Law Enforcement and the Challenge of Deepfakes*, 2022, https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/Europol_Innovation_Lab_Facing_Reality_Law_Enforcement_And_The_Challenge_Of_Deepfakes.pdf.

8.2 How does harmful information impact peace operations, including the activities of UN Police?

Information has always been a valuable commodity in conflict zones, where competing narratives struggle to be heard and the media landscape has become a growing factor in conflict dynamics. Social networks are proving to be a particularly effective tool for manipulating emotions, reinforcing existing political and ethnic divisions, influencing elections or undermining peace processes. In conflict areas, messenger services, such as WhatsApp or Telegram, are key sources of information for large parts of the population as well as channels for spreading harmful information online. Because they are often closed, they are difficult to monitor and there is little chance of moderating content.

Beyond the destabilising effect harmful information has upon the operating environment, peace operations can both be the target of disinformation and be hampered in the implementation of their mandates. In a 2023 UN survey cited in the Secretary-General's policy brief on information integrity, 75% of UN peacekeepers stated that mis-/disinformation affects their safety and security. Similarly, 70% of UN peacekeepers state that mis-/disinformation has a critical or severe effect on their mandate implementation.[140] For instance, MONUSCO troops were accused of selling weapons to rebel groups and MINUSCA was accused of interfering in the electoral process, both of which led to threats to and attacks on peacekeepers.

Spotlight on MONUSCO:

In 2002, MONUSCO deployed Senegalese police officers to Goma. However, within an hour, they were verbally assaulted because some people on social media falsely claimed that they were Rwandan forces due to the similarity between the Senegalese and Rwandan flags. Although there were no similarities whatsoever between the two flags, the social media posts elicited emotions and protests, which were beginning to take place. After the incident, MONUSCO learned valuable lessons and implemented a policy of not displaying national flags on uniforms. They also decided to inform authorities and other stakeholders, including civil society leaders, of any planned deployment of uniformed personnel.

This can impact UN Police tasks and activities in different ways. UN Police work closely with host communities, as well as host authorities and police services, in their efforts to promote community-oriented policing and build the capacity of host-state police. Any harmful information that discredits the mission, especially when it suggests the mission may no longer be impartial, can also impact UN Police's relationship with national and local partners.

A number of peacekeeping missions – MONUSCO, MINUSCA, MINUSMA, UNMISS and UNIFIL – have been explicitly mandated to address disinformation in their

140 UN, "Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 8: Information Integrity on Digital Platforms", June 2023, https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-information-integrity-en.pdf.

areas of operation, with tasks ranging from taking countermeasures, such as in MONUSCO and MINUSMA, to developing strategies, such as in UNIFIL, and monitoring and reporting on harmful information, such as in MINUSCA.[141] Regardless of specific mandate language, missions can and should take steps to tackle the issue, in order to ensure the safety and security of staff and to promote mandate implementation. [142]

Spotlight on MINUSMA:

MINUSMA is a mission that has suffered from negative publicity, which ultimately led to its ousting. MINUSMA was subjected to a coordinated misinformation and disinformation campaign, primarily through social media, falsely accusing it of playing the French card following the request by Mali for the withdrawal of the Barkhane Forces. Panafricanist influencers allegedly supported by Russia have been linked to troll farms that constantly question the motives of MINUSMA. Peaks of misinformation and disinformation have been observed after security incidents in which the army came under attack, such as the Sevare complex attack in April 2023 and during the withdrawal from the Kidal region. Even after the departure of the forces, the same false narrative remains active.

8.3 What can peace operations do to prevent, counter, or mitigate the impact of harmful information and what is the role of UN Police?

Harmful information poses a significant threat in conflict zones, fuelling divisions and undermining peace efforts. Peace operations require a well-coordinated, comprehensive approach to effectively address these challenges.[143] As this phenomenon becomes more prevalent, the UN has responded with guidance along two main strands. Throughout, missions must operate in a disciplined manner. The first strand entails establishing dedicated working groups involving UN Police, the military and the civilian components of the missions. Their primary role is to monitor, analyse and prepare a targeted response to mis-, dis- and malinformation and hate speech. The second strand seeks to escalate information about dominant harmful narratives that are taking place offline to the working groups. This role falls on the shoulders of communications and outreach staff, civil and political affairs staff, human rights officers, and UN Police and military personnel. For the purposes of discussion, the following are key areas for consideration:

Whole-of-mission approach: All components of a peace operation – military, police, civilians, and political leadership – must work in unison against

141 Vermeij et al., 2024, pp.13, 73f.

142 For more in-depth examples of how harmful information has impacted MONUSCO and MINUSCA and how dynamics play out among different actors, see ibid., pp.53-76.

143 For an overview over policies and tools developed by various parts of the UN system to date, see Vermeij et al., 2024, pp.31-37; and initiatives by missions, pp.77-103.

misinformation and disinformation. A united front ensures consistent messaging and effective responses.

Gender-sensitive approach: Harmful information affects women, girls, men and boys differently. Each has varying access to information, different ways of communicating and different vulnerabilities, as well as potential as a countering voice. A gender-sensitive approach is as critical in analysing the threat as it is in developing and implementing strategies, activities and engagements.

Tools and policies: Robust tools and policies are necessary for identifying, analysing, and countering harmful information. Specialised teams or units dedicated to monitoring and responding to these threats would significantly boost operational capability. The integrated working groups mentioned above will serve this purpose.

Strategic approaches: Rather than relying on a one-size-fits-all solution, contextualised strategies are essential. To curb the spread of misinformation and disinformation, it is crucial to understand the root causes of their proliferation and address those underlying factors.

Situational awareness and analysis: An analysis of the information environment, including key actors, behaviour (tactics and methods) and content, has to be an integral part of situational awareness and the longer-term political and security assessment. Peacekeepers, including UN Police, must especially maintain heightened situational awareness of the interplay between physical violence and its spread and further stimulation via online platforms. Criminal analysis capabilities should be adapted to address this dynamic.

Addressing government-led disinformation: Peace operations must be prepared to address situations where governments themselves are sources of disinformation. Constructive engagement is vital to encourage honesty and transparency.

Proactive response strategies: Timely responses are critical to counter harmful information. Peace operations should have clear strategies to rapidly disseminate accurate information and debunk falsehoods.

Building resilience: Building resilience against harmful information is crucial in peace operations and local communities. Measures to achieve this may include providing digital literacy training for police officers and fostering trust with local communities. Already local civil society organisations play the most significant role in fighting harmful information. They have the best insight into local circumstances and dynamics, and are valuable catalysts for any messaging, but require funding and other support.[144]

Community engagement: Deep engagement with communities in conflict zones is crucial for peacekeepers, particularly UN Police. Building trust helps communities better understand the dangers of harmful information. Gender-sensitive community engagement is key, as women often feel more comfortable confiding in other women. Therefore, deploying female UN Police staff during patrols and outreach sessions is essential.

144 Albrecht et al., 2024, p.33f.

Partnerships: Peace operations should form broad partnerships with local authorities, civil society groups, and other relevant actors to amplify efforts to counter harmful information. Due to the prevalence of social media in influencing public opinion, it is important for UN Police to closely collaborate with the Strategic Communications division. This will help establish strong partnerships with media outlets, including local radio stations, bloggers, and fact-checkers. For instance, MINUSMA has established WhatsApp channels with over 300 contacts to amplify its messages, restore facts, and debunk or pre-bunk false narratives.

The UN Police component is in a unique position to contribute to the missions' efforts to combat mis-, dis- and malinformation and hate speech because of its training in criminal investigation, which enables it to gather information, analyse and identify the networks behind false or manipulated information in the communities it patrols. Because it has strong ties to these communities, with whom it regularly interacts as part of its efforts to protect civilians, UN Police can gather insights into local grievances and vulnerabilities. As a trusted interlocutor, UN Police can be part of the mission's strategic communications efforts and spread accurate and reliable information. However, it is important to establish a very close working relationship between Strategic Communications and UN Police to ensure that the messaging is coherent and effective.

Countering harmful information in the context of peace operations has been described as an "asymmetric information war": missions lack the tools and capacities to match both the tactics and content of harmful information campaigns. Several factors make both understanding the information environment and important players within it and the response to harmful information difficult. For one, data on for instance the use of social media is highly uneven and biased, in the sense that it does not reflect all segments of society. Typically, women, older people and people with lower socio-economic status are not equally represented.[145] Another challenge is the multitude of local languages spoken, which renders it virtually impossible to fully capture what dominant narratives are and to be able to address those narratives and their drivers in a targeted manner.

8.4 How will/does technology shape the response to harmful information?

The number of people using the internet worldwide is increasing: in 2023, 67% of the world's population (5.4 billion people) used the internet, which was 4.7% more than in the previous year. Given that 79% of people in the age group 15-24 use the internet,[146] it is not surprising that young people are often particularly targeted by harmful information.[147] The digital infrastructure and the degree of internet penetration of course varies greatly in different conflict areas, but they are growing constantly, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, where in fact 70% of the population is under 30 years old. As discussed above, AI is already amplifying the impact of disinformation today. In the future, some experts warn, this is likely to worsen with growing technology capacities and generative algorithms to produce and spread content.

145 Ibid.

146 See https://www.itu.int/itu-d/reports/statistics/2023/10/10/ff23-internet-use/.

147 Albrecht et al., 2024, p.10.

Other experts play down the danger, suggesting that harmful information is only one part of a wider set of beliefs and behaviours that are not so easily changed.[148] Instead, they argue AI-tools can assist in supercharging countermeasures and facilitate peacebuilding efforts.

Definitions of artificial intelligence (AI):[149]

Artificial intelligence: A branch of computer science that aims to create systems capable of performing tasks that would typically require human intelligence, including the ability to perceive, reason, problem solve, learn and react.

Deliberative AI: A category of AI tools, enhanced by generative AI, which allows for virtual discussions and the exchange of ideas.

Generative AI: A form of AI that learns the patterns and structures of its training data such that it can generate new content, including text, images and other media, using a generative model.

At a fundamental level, technology can enhance existing capacities, but can also replace or substitute for scarce or missing capacities. Put simply, technology can help to hear more, see more, or reach further, all of which is critical for gathering relevant insights and understanding a dynamic information environment. Patrols can be replaced or supported by drones. Community engagement can be "enhanced" by signals intelligence or natural language processing tools to monitor communication or narratives, such as the radio mining tool used by MINUSMA. When it comes to situational awareness and crime intelligence, technology is already being used to crunch numbers, sort and structure data, and analyse more data more quickly.

For instance, AI can be used for automated fact-checking: technology tools can help to detect false information, or whether a video or image has been manipulated, and can more rapidly triangulate facts to verify or disprove claims.[150]But this requires a detailed understanding of the local context, not to mention local languages. Until now most algorithms are developed by Western technology companies and based on data that is not representative of the conflict settings, demographics and communities where peace operations deploy. And whether countermeasures can keep up with increasingly sophisticated falsifications that will soon be nearly impossible to detect is unclear.

Ultimately, technology must always be human-centred. None of the technology tools can – as yet – replace personal interaction with communities to build trust, nor can they provide a contextualised analysis that places data within the specific dynamics of interests, concerns and grievances of a given community. Also, assessing the potential impact of a piece of information requires a person to interpret its content, its meaning and whether it was intended to cause harm.

148 Jon Bateman and Dean Jackson, *Countering Disinformation Effectively: An Evidence-based Policy Guide,* Carnegie Endowment, 2024, https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Carnegie_Countering_Disinformation_Effectively.pdf.

149 Definitions taken from Albrecht et al., 2024.

150 Bateman and Jackson, 2024, pp.85-88.

Other AI tools enable more inclusive deliberations by offering digital platforms that allow more people, especially women who may be marginalised in other fora, to participate. AI can convert speech to text or identify themes and converging views in real time.[151] The use of such tools by UNSMIL in Libya shows the potential as well as the challenges. While digital platforms offer a large and diverse group of participants an opportunity to voice their opinion, participation depends on internet access, which may differ among groups and locations, and use. For example, in Libyan men were typically more active on social media than women and their views were over-represented in the dialogue.

Overall, AI tools have significant potential, but they are difficult to scale up due to a lack of resources and capacities, and bias in the models means they are rarely culturally sensitive. Unanswered questions on how rapidly evolving AI applications can be governed, how to set standards and how to implement them also remain.[152]

8.5 Lessons for the future

When combating mis-, dis- and malinformation and hate speech (MDMH), it is important to focus not only on communication responses, but also on addressing the classic and repeated errors that can damage a mission's reputation. The primary lesson to learn is that prevention is better than cure, especially in cases of MDMH. The most effective approach is damage control, which requires a disciplined messaging strategy involving all mission components. Despite the growing focus on countering harmful information, it is unfortunate that this is not always the case.

Classic errors still occur. Firstly, missions tend to overemphasise communicating their mandate to various stakeholders instead of focusing on the end goal, which is to help establish the path to peace for conflict-affected countries. While it is important to consider the macro level, it is crucial to focus on practical ways to help individuals in remote communities who have been victimised by rebels, national security officials or terrorist groups. This includes resolving community-level tensions and promoting peaceful living conditions. The UN Security Council mandate and responsibilities should be communicated clearly, but the emphasis should be on providing concrete and useful assistance to those affected. Moreover, it is important to consider the specificity of the country's history and cultural conflict resolution mechanisms. It is essential to listen to communities and governments and let them lead the way, rather than relying on one-size-fits-all prescriptions from other peace operations.

Ensuring that UN Police hires individuals with strategic communication, technical monitoring, and digital analysis skills for online monitoring and analysis tools is another important lesson. These tools are designed to identify sources of misinformation, their networks, and the extent of the reach of the narratives they are spreading. This is crucial, because UN Police is in direct contact with communities. At the same time, UN Police should reinforce its own resilience against harmful information through digital literacy training.

151 Ievgen Kylymnyk, *What Questions We Should Be Asking about Generative AI*, DPPA, Futuring Peace on Medium, 2023, https://medium.com/futuring-peace/three-questions-about-generative-ai-we-need-to-answer-adb0c2bf632d.

152 Ibid.; Albrecht et al., 2024, p.8.

UN Police and all other components of peace operations should focus on what is within their control, such as early identification of trends, damage control, and debunking or pre-empting harmful information. And they should avoid being influenced by geopolitical games that are beyond their scope.

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9. Leveraging New Technologies in Support of United Nations Policing

Mike Kelly and Ann-Kristin Kvilekval

9.1 UN Policing and peace operations

United Nations Police build and support, or, where mandated, act as a substitute or partial substitute for, host-state police capacity to prevent and detect crime, protect life and property, and maintain public order and safety in adherence to the rule of law and international human rights law.

UN Policing may also become involved in supporting transitional justice issues to do with establishing processes, investigations, and evidence preservation to support prosecutions for serious crimes. Examples are the Serious Crimes Investigation Unit (SCIU) in Timor-Leste, the Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) supporting domestic Iraqi efforts, and the International Independent Investigation Commission (IIIC) that assisted Lebanese authorities to investigate the assassination of Rafiq Hariri in 2005.

Around 9,000 police from 94 countries are deployed in 17 UN peace operations at present. UN Police officers are supporting the reform, restructuring and rebuilding of domestic police and other law enforcement agencies through training, mentoring and advising.

UN Police officers in these missions seek to achieve "community-oriented and intelligence-led policing approaches", which includes those relating to the safety and security of civilians and serious organised/transnational crime. They may need to have recourse to sound intelligence in the conduct of investigations, special operations and election security. They may also play a key role in the protection of UN personnel and assets and dealing with the actions of UN personnel.

It appears that while the substitution or partial substitution role remains possible, it is unlikely such missions will be deployed or supported in the foreseeable future. The UN New Agenda for Peace (the Agenda) policy, published in July 2023, puts a much greater emphasis on preventative measures and enhancing Chapter VIII regional responses. In particular, this would include "strong civilian, police and development dimensions".[153] Noting the broader range of contemporary threats to human security, the Agenda places much emphasis on the "fundamental importance of the rule of law" and "whole of government and whole of society approaches". Addressing this would clearly include policing capability. The Agenda asserts that initiatives in this respect would have to be grounded in "sustainable development that leaves no one behind" and that would "make national prevention strategies more effective".[154]

153 United Nations, *A New Agenda for Peace*, July 2023a, pp.11, 13, 18, https://dppa.un.org/en/a-new-agenda-for-peace.

154 Ibid., p.19.

This dimension of peace, stabilisation and reconstruction operations is a critical component of advancing the successful attainment of the holistic end state that peace operations seek. Over time the importance of catering for a broader concept of the "rule of law" in mission capacities and objectives has come to be better understood and integrated. This was a factor in the UN's adoption of the concept of the Integrated Mission Planning Process (IMPP), and in the Agenda it continues to be emphasised that "peace operations must be significantly more integrated and should leverage the full range of civilian capacities and expertise across the UN and its partners".[155]

Key in this focus is "fully leveraging the use of data and digital technologies to effectively track conflict trends, understand local sentiment, enable inclusive dialogue, monitor impact and help guide evidence based decisions".[156]

The Agenda makes many references to all the aspects of the technology revolution, both in respect to the threat this poses, including in relation to criminal exploitation, and the need for the Global South to have access to the benefits of new and emerging technologies "for the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals".[157] UN Police support must therefore make it a priority to uplift skills and enable national police services to counter the criminal exploitation of technology, but the international community has to ensure sustainable technology infrastructure is established and the technical tools are available to underpin this. Achieving this outcome goes hand in hand with the primary goals of the UN Global Digital Compact (the Compact), to overcome the international digital divide.[158]

9.2 Challenges and threats

For mission planners and components these realties and objectives can present challenges and threats that straddle every aspect of the mission. We witnessed through the Iraq experience how the Oil for Food programme generated a criminal economy in Iraq that grew to include many international dimensions, particularly in relation to oil smuggling. This also eventually resulted in allegations against some UN personnel. Peace operations' environments are often seen as an opportunity for organised crime and malign foreign interference and terrorism. Relief activities may become the target of infiltration or manipulation, or fronts for terrorist organisations.

One ongoing and significant UN-related example addressing this challenge is the UN World Food Programme (WFP), which manages a massive worldwide operation delivering essential assistance to over 100 million people in around 84 countries. It depends on a vast network of subcontractors in challenging environments. It is essential for WFP to be able to properly evaluate these companies and have trust in them. Within the overall programme management framework, known as DOTS, the WFP is able to absorb the field experience of dealing with

155 Ibid., p.24.

156 Ibid.

157 Ibid., pp.5, 10.

158 United Nations, *A Global Digital Compact an Open, Free and Secure Digital Future for All*, May 2023b, p.13, https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwio_pmN4rOEAxUoumMGHcP_ALkQFnoECBkQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fdigitallibrary.un.org%2Frecord%2F4011891%2Ffiles%2F%255EEOSG_2023_5%255E--EOSG_2023_5-EN.pdf&usg=AOvVaw0Kd4ypA_bVtMpaQhnBoIKC&opi=89978449.

subcontractors and all relevant source material. This is used, for example, to produce a transporter evaluation score that can enable prudent, due-diligence contracting in a timely way. This experience provides possible guidance towards the broader integrated UN Policing and mission solutions to be discussed here.

What we have also seen evolve in recent times is the close inter-relationship among terrorist organisations, organised crime and some state actors. As stated in the Agenda, "violence perpetrated by organised criminal groups, gangs, terrorists, or violent extremists, even outside of armed conflicts, threatens the lives and livelihoods around the world".[159] The technological acceleration and amplification of these threats have posed a huge challenge for security authorities and police worldwide, particularly in the context of having to operate within strict privacy and civil rights regimes. It has become increasingly necessary for intelligence and security agencies to cooperate closely, and to share information and coordinate action in ways that do not transgress their regulatory regimes and threaten democratic standards.

9.3 AI and international civil police solutions

There has been an acceleration in the international technical cooperation of police services driven by the increasing exploitation of technology by criminal and terrorist threats. In particular, many organised crime, terrorist and, at times, associated state actors are particularly concerned to disguise their financial transactions and establish entities to cover their tracks. Criminal activities are also facilitated through digital devices, encrypted applications and online activities. All of this generates vast quantities of data that must be processed and analysed.

The world of financial transactions, for example, can involve billions of data points spread across many sources and platforms. An investigator will be looking for patterns, trends, sources, volumes, identities, relationships, destinations, etc. This has the potential to be a hugely time-consuming endeavour. Through advanced algorithmic and analytical tools this effort can largely be automated, and the investigator provided with material that enables their best skills to be applied to making final judgements and the selection of courses of action. The outcome can be policing results that are reliable, timely, and cost effective, helping to mitigate or even remove the stress resulting from their limited human, material, and financial resources.

This capability is equally applicable to other types of investigation that might require analysis of multiple sources of information, including CCTV surveillance, satellite and drone footage, physical evidence, building and location factors, medical material, statements, and laboratory analysis. AI and machine learning (ML) tools can help quickly join the dots and accelerate outcomes, including in preventative policing. These tools would ideally be available for the Joint Mission Analysis Centres (JMACs) and Joint Operations Centres (JOCs) which have been required to be deployed across UN missions since 2006. For this to create a true capability it is essential that the staff in these components have the requisite skills and validation abilities. Relevant UN offices designing guidance and

159 UN, 2023a, p.13.

protocols for AI/ML would also be providing a point of standards reference for national police services that UN Police are providing capacity-building support to. One example could be in relation to the fraught issue of facial recognition.

AI tools are also being more and more deployed to enhance training. This is particularly the case regarding simulation, including virtual reality immersion, to make the testing of police cadets and the ongoing skills upgrades and evaluation relating to specific police expertise as realistic and meaningful as possible. Military training has been resorting to these options for some time to improve response times, decision-making and awareness. This includes through interaction with other personnel incorporated into the artificial environment.

9.4 Applications for AI in UN Policing scenarios and UN missions

The UN WFP is already deploying advanced technology and drone solutions in its operations, and it makes sense that there ought to be a broader platform approach for UN missions that enables every component to contribute to situation awareness and share information. There are capabilities available that allow for this to happen and at the same time safeguard privacy and protected information. For the UN Police unit involved in a mission, the ability to be plugged into this kind of framework that can also instantaneously perform language translation of all sources and then apply reporting alerts, trend and relationship connections, and analytical tools will greatly accelerate their work.

Master data platforms of this kind are starting to be deployed in exercise situations in coalition military contexts and demonstrate the major potential to enhance and accelerate operational outcomes through information sharing.

In the war in Ukraine we have seen this in real time where Ukraine has participated in the evolution of high-end technology solutions that include conflict management systems that are harmonised to handle not only command and control, change detection, target analysis and prioritisation, bomb damage assessment, readiness and logistics, but also refugee management, and war crimes and corruption investigations. This happens within a system that establishes a single source of truth and common operating picture. The strength of these systems for policing operations is that they can have inbuilt permissions regimes and access controls that ensure that only those authorised to use certain aspects of information will be able to see it. This is particularly powerful where UN Police may be trying to evaluate corruption and malign activity associated with any actors in a mission environment, but also to analyse and prevent threats or properly guide investigations into incidents or activities that have occurred. In a post-conflict situation UN Police will be able to contribute to databases being built regarding serious crime issues that will be the subject of international or national transitional justice.

One key element in successful post-conflict or nation-building activities is the prevention or eradication of corruption. Corruption has been a common problem, seriously detracting from transition processes, stabilisation operations, and peace- and capacity-building. In particular, aid and development funding has

often been siphoned off for corrupt purposes and nascent or rebuilding civil administrations have been undermined by corrupt practices and infiltrations. There are tools being deployed in a number of countries and policing services that can effectively monitor and draw the threads together concerning what is revealed in financial transactions. In Australia in recent years there have been revelations using these tools regarding millions of transactions that violated counter-terrorism financing regulations but were undetected by major banking institutions.

Current technologies can enable remote monitoring and accountability of aid projects. For example, there might be a development proposal to build a road in a particular location. The threat environment may be too high to allow for civil international oversight of the project. It is important to monitor whether the project is being delivered and at what pace, and to properly capture the passage of money and analyse what it tells you about relationships and compromises to the project that might be occurring on the ground. The second- and third-order security, health and economic effects need also to be captured. A system that can fuse all data inputs, ranging from satellite images to human intelligence, can be deployed to reveal these aspects and enable all actors to continuously contribute to the complete picture. These same types of systems have contributed to the exposure of child sex exploitation, as well as human and drug trafficking.

In 2021 an excellent example of the success international cooperation can have by leveraging enhanced technology was Operation Ironsides, as it was known in Australia. This operation led to the arrest in Australia alone of more than 224 organised crime members. The haul included 3.7 tonnes of drugs, 104 weapons, US$44,934,457 in cash, and assets expected to run into the millions of dollars. This coordinated international effort, involving over 9,000 law officers in 18 countries, was based on leading edge capabilities enabling the penetration of the encryption communications application AN0M, which is used exclusively by organised crime. The key focus in the Australian context was on locally based Italian mafia, motorcycle gangs, an Asian crime syndicate and Albanian organised crime operations. The Australian Federal Police (AFP) stated at the time that “AN0M was an influential encrypted communications app but there are even bigger encrypted platforms that are being used by transnational and serious organised criminals …. They are almost certainly using those encrypted platforms to flood Australia with drugs, guns and undermine our economy by laundering billions of dollars of illicit profit”.

AN0M was installed on mobile phones that were bought on the black market and could not make calls or send emails. AN0M could only send messages to another device that had the app. A criminal needed to know another criminal in order to obtain a device. The devices circulated and grew in popularity among criminals confident of the app because high-profile organised crime figures vouched for it. The skills and technical tools the international police involved in this have deployed have given them an edge they have never had before.

UN Policing can be empowered to effectively plug in to this international effort and grow the skills needed among the police services that it is training and supporting to be able exploit these systems. The beauty of what AI offers is that it can be used to create interfaces and interaction that are simplified and intuitive. It can

be made sustainable for nascent and evolving police and criminal intelligence services. This can be the means by which to give UN missions the opportunity to be more impactful and successful and to eliminate the scourge of degrading efficacious civil authority and nurture the growth of democratic cultures.

The training capacity that AI delivers can be equally simplified and sustainable in the mentoring and training missions of UN Police and will enable additional resources to be utilised remotely in the assessment and advice input, reducing time and cost in the process. It also allows for this engagement to be followed up and extended so that deficiencies and adaptations can be identified over time. This in itself will ensure that police trainees and forces will feel they will always be supported and be able to keep up with international best practice and technological advances in the constant game of measure and countermeasure against crime threats. This is also an important investment in global policing so that their international effort leaves no blind spots that can be exploited by transnational crime or malign state-based actors and terrorist groups.

Having the ability to share information in a protected way will also give international police and criminal intelligence agencies the confidence to share information in a way that will not bring them up against domestic regulatory restrictions or breaches of warrant and other probative requirements that might compromise prosecutions. This will be particularly important where there is material that comes from military or intelligence capabilities due to the cross-over relevance of non-criminal actors that would not otherwise be provided if it could not be properly curated and shared securely. In past situations there has been frustration over how much information can be shared with UN missions, but technological developments have made it possible for a much wider exchange while still protecting sovereign or source concerns, as has been well illustrated in the context of operations in Ukraine.

The Compact calls for partners, including industry, to create "new financial models that encourage telecommunications operators to bring affordable connectivity to hard-to-reach areas" and for "an agreed percentage of total international development assistance for digital transformation, with a particular focus on public administration capacity building".[160] Policing in the Global South often suffers from poor connectivity and infrastructure in this regard and the effort to invest in and properly regulate this aspect of governance as a priority will promote all other social and economic sectors. An example of one such investment is the undersea broadband cable project involving a US-Australian-Pacific partnership to support Pacific nations' connectivity.

The importance of this connectivity and the accompanying technological skills and tools was highlighted at the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police (PICP) conference in September 2023.[161] PICP comprises police chiefs, commissioners and directors from 22 Pacific jurisdictions and helps to address regional policing challenges. The 2023 conference was focused on Cybercrime – Countering Child Exploitation. The 2021-2022 Pacific Transnational Crime Network (PTCN) Transnational Crime Assessment, which helps support regional policing, highlighted the use of cyber

160 UN, 2023b, pp.13, 14.

161 AFP "Pacific Police Leaders Reaffirm Commitment to Combat Transnational Crime Together", Media Release, 2 September 2023, https://www.afp.gov.au/news-centre/media-release/pacific-police-leaders-reaffirm-commitment-combat-transnational-crime.

activities to facilitate transnational financial and child exploitation crimes. Regional police leaders recommitted to prioritising cyber safety by signing the Cyber Safety Pasifika (CSP) Declaration of Partnership during the PICP conference. The training programme associated with this has been provided to more than 365 police officers over the past five years.

AFP Commissioner Reece Kershaw stated at the conference that "Enhancing cyber capability in the region is more important now than ever. With the increase of internet connectivity throughout the Pacific, cybercrime has become a greater risk .... The success of CSP ... is recognised across the region, with a key driver of that success being the 'by the Pacific, for the Pacific' approach".[162]

Focused professional regional conferences like this can help empower and uplift police forces faced with technology challenges. At the 2023 conference, international input on countering child exploitation was contributed by the FBI, US Department of Homeland Security, International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, Royal Canadian Mounted Police and United Kingdom National Crime Agency. The PICP is also connected with many partner organisations such as UNDP, UNODC and Interpol. PICP Chair and Tonga Police Commissioner Shane McLennan made the key point that "Now, more than ever, in this digital age of advancing technologies, we need to be pulling together to make the best use of our resources and skill-sets, to help one another and grow our collective capability in the cybercrime space".[163]

This is critical to peace and stability in the Pacific, because only a handful of countries have military forces, and so using technology to enable capable police forces is important, but technology must also be bent towards ensuring efficacy and public confidence. In fact, encouraging a "police only" model in nations with troubled security sector dynamics might often be a good model to pursue. A prime candidate, for example, for this policy goal would be the Palestinian state that could emerge from an agreed peace process.

The Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission that has been approved for deployment to Haiti (if a contributing police contingent can be assembled) raises similar issues.[164] Like the UN-acknowledged Pacific regional RAMSI mission in 2003 to the Solomon Islands, this would be a police-focused operation. As we are seeing in the current tribal clashes in Papua New Guinea, the Haiti National Police (HNP) force is struggling to deal with rampant gang violence. The scale of the challenge, the need to ensure standards, and the need to promote public confidence, given the troubled history of international police and personnel in Haiti, all point to the importance of having a broader mission technology that can bring together all sources of information and criminal intelligence. The ability to track and inform public sentiment and sensibilities along with the implications of political dynamics in order to get to the goal of free and fair elections and a rehabilitated HNP will require a joined-up common operating picture and source of truth.

162 Ibid.

163 Ibid.

164 J.D. Ciorciari, "Policing Without a Political Plan? The New UN-Backed Mission in Haiti", *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, 18 December 2023, https://gjia.georgetown.edu/2023/12/18/policing-without-a-political-plan-the-new-un-backed-mission-in-haiti/.

The future of missions, such as is now being pursued for Haiti, and the global cooperative and policing and technology effort might best be pursued through bespoke multilateral collaborations of private industry, donor and contributing nations, and the UN. In this respect the UN's enduring capability to underpin such missions might be through maintaining a host technology platform through which to onboard mission participants. The UN would also set standards and frameworks to underpin efficacy, accountability and political coordination/planning. This would include equipping individual police officers (IPOs) at the UN and Formed Police Unit (FPU) commanders with the requisite ability to effectively and properly utilise AI/ML and the guidelines for their use. This would include risk/reward analysis skills and sensitivity awareness.

There is an urgent need for a guiding document on the use, legal framework and "ownership" of any information received and/or used within UN missions (both peace operations and special political missions) in relation to AI/ML. Member states are responsible for pre-deployment training of IPOs and FPUs and need to have guidance to be able to train the officers so they are well prepared when they deploy.[165]

The base skills of community policing, in terms of the protection of civilians, will remain perpetually and universally applicable. The choice that confronts UN and international policing is whether to invest in and leverage technology or be utterly subverted and defeated by it. If we do not enable police services to confront the wrong side of the digital divide it will be a fertile field of exploitation for techno armed crime. This will rebound on all countries. That is to say, there is really no choice if we are to safeguard our people and basic standards of civilisation, always provided that these technologies remain subject to proper regulatory standards and regimes.

165 UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/49/37 (1995).

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10. Addressing the Elephant in the Room: Peace Operations and the Threat of Organized Crime

Walter Kemp, Dawit Yohannes and Meressa Kahsu Dessu

The nature of violent conflict is changing. While inter-state conflicts are making a comeback, intra-state conflict driven by multiple factors, including competition over illicit economies and organised criminal activities, is becoming a growing concern. Haiti and Ecuador are two recent examples, demonstrating the effects of the failure to address systemic problems underlying extreme socio-economic inequality and endemic political and gang violence.[166] The problem is evident on almost every continent, including in Africa, where more than half of the 71 UN peacekeeping missions have been hosted over the past decades.[167]

The United Nations is aware of the problem. Organised crime and illicit markets were mentioned in 55% of all UN Security Council resolutions in 2022,[168] and the Council also held an open debate on transnational organised crime on 7 December 2023. This indicates that organised crime is recognised as a threat to peace, security and development.

However, the UN and regional organisations, such as the EU and AU, seem unsure of how to deal with the problem operationally. Ten years ago, in a report published by the International Peace Institute, it was pointed out that organised crime in theatres where there are peace operations "is like the elephant in the room that is impossible to overlook but no one wants to acknowledge".[169] The problem of transnational organised crime has become worse in the past decade, but the international community still lacks the political will as well as a toolbox and carpenters to deal with it. In Africa, for example, while organised crimes, including human trafficking, smuggling in person, and arms trade and trafficking, steadily increased over the past five years, the resilience to respond to this surge of insecurity remains low and inadequate.[170]

10.1 Conflict and organised crime nexus

Conflict and organised crimes are intimately linked. War zones and protracted conflicts are permissive environments for criminal activities both by armed non-state actors and state-embedded actors. They enable illicit economies for smuggling weapons, drugs, antiquities and fuel, circumventing sanctions and profiteering through exploiting finite resources (such as wood, gold and other minerals) as well as for human trafficking. Intra-state conflicts often become internationalised as a result of foreign actors seeking to exploit resources in conflict zones, or criminal actors seeking external partners for transnational transactions.

166 For Haiti, see https://www.crisisgroup.org/latin-america-caribbean/haiti.

167 UN, "Global Issues, Africa", n.d., https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/africa#:~:text=In%201960%20the%20first%20peacekeeping,peacekeeping%20operations%20in%20African%20countries.

168 Global Initiative, "2000-2023, Charting Organized Crime on the UN Security Council Agenda", Interactive Tool, March 2024, https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/scresolutions/.

169 Walter Kemp et al., "The Elephant in the Room: How Can Peace Operations Deal with Organised Crime?", International Peace Institute, 2013, https://www.ipinst.org/2013/06/the-elephant-in-the-room-how-can-peace-operations-deal-with-organized-crime.

170 Enact, "Africa Organised Crime Index 2023: Increasing Criminality, and Growing Vulnerabilities", 2023, https://enact-africa.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/pages/1708078753063-2023-11-24-oci-africa-final.pdf.

If armed groups control a particular territory and/or strategically significant corridors – such as ports, key border crossings or roads – they can extract revenue from effectively "taxing" goods moving in and out. They can also effectively tax populations in areas that they control, either by extortion or imposing a de facto form of governance. The Al-Shabaab extremist group in Somalia is a good example.

Conflicts both enable new illicit economies to emerge – such as the trafficking of weapons and people into fragile regions and the exploitation of natural resources – and amplify existing illicit economies. In his New Agenda for Peace, UN Secretary-General António Guterres underlines the close links between non-state armed groups and criminal interests. He indicates that "these groups often engage in illicit trafficking and diversion of small arms and light weapons and have access to the latest technology, as well as military-grade weapons acquired from poorly secured stockpiles and transfers from the illicit market, or from States themselves".[171]

The situation is seldom black and white with "good guys" in the government and police and "bad guys" engaged in criminal activity. Conflict settings are often characterised by shifting alliances between extremist or terrorist groups, armed groups, private security companies, criminal groups and state-embedded actors, who compete or collude for control of illicit economies. In many cases, violence regulates a market for protection where the state is a player rather than an innocent bystander. Rather than preventing violence, the state may seek to regulate, instrumentalise or outsource it for political and financial gains.[172] This is closely linked to situations where, instead of stamping out illicit markets, the state seeks to control them or at least get a piece of the cake. The fog of war becomes denser when the "bad guys" enjoy a degree of local support by protecting local economies that are vital for survival, even if such activities are labelled as "illegal" by outsiders and those engaged in them are branded as "criminals".

While organised crime is seldom the trigger for a violent conflict, it can contribute to the escalation of conflict and act as a disincentive to peace. This makes many conflicts protracted if not intractable as certain groups of influential actors who profit from the illicit economies perceive peace or any change in the status quo as a threat to their base of power and wealth.

10.2 Violence and instability

Conflict zones are not the only places where criminal groups threaten peace and security. In some areas – such as Ecuador, Haiti or Mexico – the violence that they generate resembles or even surpasses that of a war zone. Indeed, deaths caused by organised crime – particularly homicides – often exceed those caused by war. As pointed out in the New Agenda for Peace, from 2015 to 2021 an estimated 3.1 million people died as a result of intentional homicides,

171 Ibid.; UN, "Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace", 2023, p.5, https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-new-agenda-for-peace-en.pdf.

172 Mark Shaw, "'We Pay, You Pay': Protection Economies, Financial Flows and Violence", in Hilary Matfess and Michael Miclaucic (eds), *Beyond Convergence: World Without Order*, Center for Complex Operations, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, Washington, DC, 2016.

a shocking figure that dwarfs that of the estimated 700,000 people who died in armed conflicts during the period.[173]

Violence is a common feature of unstable regions where the uneven rule of law is replaced by criminal governance as state or public institutions such as the police and other criminal justice institutions collapse in the conflicts. In such environments, armed criminal groups control communities through fear and intimidation. In such situations, interlocutors considered illegitimate by national authorities or the international community may nevertheless enjoy a degree of support from local populations. There are also cases in different parts of the world where civilians have reacted to predatory groups by taking up arms and forming self-defence groups. This can trigger a further cycle of violence and fear, and in time such self-defence groups may themselves become engaged in the same criminal markets that they were established to quash.

10.3 Shortcomings of the current approach

Although organised crime poses a serious threat in so many theatres where there are peace operations, the UN and regional organisations are poorly equipped and prepared to deal with this threat – Haiti being the most recent and glaring example. Several shortcomings of the current approach should be highlighted:

- **Mediators, peacemakers and peacebuilders lack guidance:** At the moment, there is no guidance for peacemakers and peacebuilders involved in violent conflicts or peace processes where one or another of the parties is involved in organised crime. As a result, these actors are often unable to spot potential spoilers or to understand the incentives of some of the parties or the ecosystem in which peace is supposed to be built. This increases the risk of failure and the emergence of criminal governance.
- **Insufficient analysis:** At the moment, there is insufficient information about organised crime both at the operational and the strategic levels. This can create blind spots which lead to bad political or operational decisions.
- **Too few contributing countries:** When crises occur that involve serious organised crime, there are too few countries with police, gendarmerie, military or criminal justice experts with experience and skill-sets in counteracting organised crime or which are willing to send their experts to assist a UN mission.
- **Narrow law enforcement perspective:** There is a tendency to look at organised crime from a law enforcement perspective. This is necessary but insufficient. Tackling organised crime also requires looking at the criminal justice system more broadly as well as enabling factors for illicit activity such as corruption, weak governance and social inequality.
- **Divorced from development:** While organised crime usually causes harm to society and governance, for some people it is a means of survival. Yet too often, organised crime is considered purely a law enforcement issue rather than a development challenge. The role of illicit economies in providing a livelihood for marginalised populations, including in fragile, conflict

173 UN, 2023, p.5.

and post-conflict settings, is often overlooked in designing stabilisation operations and peacebuilding interventions.

- **State-embedded actors are often part of the problem:** All too often, people who should be part of the solution – in the government or the security sector – are part of the problem, working in collusion with criminal groups or even engaging in illicit activities themselves. The Global Organized Crime Index (2023) shows how, in many countries wracked by crime-related instability, state-embedded actors are the most dominant agents in facilitating illicit economies.
- Unregulated **private security agencies exacerbate the problem:** Mercenaries and private military and security companies (PMSCs) are often active in conflict theatres where there are illicit economies. In some cases, they are paid to provide protection, but in others, they are involved in smuggling and trafficking as well as misinformation campaigns. Indeed, in some cases, these companies act like criminal groups. Although mercenary groups are illegal in many countries, PMSCs are a multibillion-dollar global industry with close ties to governments. Despite codes of conduct and good practices, the industry is poorly regulated. Furthermore, bringing cases against individuals in such companies who break the law is difficult, and in some instances, accountability is unclear in terms of international humanitarian law.

10.4 How to deal with the elephant in the room

To address the above shortcomings and to better equip police and peacekeeping operations to deal more effectively with organised crime, in addition to mainstreaming anti-organised crime mandates and measure into peace operations and peacebuilding, the following policy recommendations should be considered:

- **Acknowledge the elephant in the room:** Policymakers must not ignore the challenges posed by organised crime to peace processes, peace operations and peacebuilding. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the complexity and dangers of the problem and to ensure that mandates and expectations are realistic. As a priority, UN peace and police operations should look at how civilians can be protected from predatory criminal groups and state-embedded criminal actors. Peace operations and monitoring missions – both mandated by the UN and regional organisations – should have sufficient tools, analysis capacity, and experts to assess and address illicit economies and organised crime and their impact.
- **Rethink and shift approach of peace interventions:** Responding to the threat of organised crime should be embedded in a comprehensive governance approach. Sustainable peace and development can only be created by addressing the root cause of the problems. It is also imperative now more than at any other time to strengthen policing in the UN and regional peace interventions, among others, to help combat organised crime.
- **Provide guidance to peacemakers and peacebuilders:** Guidelines on the crime-armed conflict nexus should be developed for peacemakers to navigate the potential pitfalls in dealing with actors (state-embedded and as part of criminal groups) involved in illicit economies and use these in

briefing and training procedures. More work is also needed to collect and learn lessons from negotiation processes that have involved criminal groups. Organised crime should be included in a conflict-sensitive approach.

- **Use your intelligence:** The culture of using a political-economy lens to undertake threat assessments within UN peace operations, including serious organised crime, should be strengthened, particularly in UN Joint Mission Analysis Centres (JMACs) or their equivalent in regional arrangements. This can enhance force protection, increase situational awareness, and include an overview of illicit economies and key actors into integrated information and predictive assessments to enhance decision-making and strategic planning.[174] While the UN is not an intelligence-gathering agency, steps could be taken at headquarters to more effectively analyse and retain information on illicit economies that have an impact on international peace and security, including from peace operations, UN panels of experts and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.
- **Prepare a criminal justice surge capacity:** It is essential to create a network of law enforcement, financial intelligence and criminal justice experts with experience in dealing with organised crime who can be rapidly deployed to peace operations (both for the UN and its agencies, and regional organisations) to carry out serious organised crime threat assessments and support mediation processes (both UN-led and regional) and UN panels of experts dealing with illicit economies. These experts should be trained according to common standards, including crime intelligence gathering and carrying out serious organised crime threat assessments. There is also scope for creating more specialised police teams (particularly from the Global South) with experience and skills in dealing with serious organised crime (as has been implemented in MINUSMA and MONUSCO).[175] At the same time, it is vital to build the capacity of national and local police to counter organised crime to ensure successful mission drawdowns and reduce the risk of relapse into instability when the UN mission leaves.
- **Dismantle rather than displace illicit economies:** There is a risk that responses tailored to a particular region of a country, or even at the national level, can displace the problem somewhere else in the country or to a neighbouring state. This simply shifts the problem without solving it. Therefore, interventions should be planned more holistically and strategically to address the ecosystem, vulnerabilities, drivers and enablers of illicit markets rather than just arresting or pushing out criminal groups. Furthermore, the incentives of those engaged in illicit economies should be understood so that responses are sustainable and underlying or structural vulnerabilities are addressed.
- **Build peace by strengthening community resilience:** Initiatives designed to strengthen resilience in conflict-affected communities should be prioritised to reduce the likelihood of relapses into violence and armed conflict, particularly ones that work with women, youth and the business community. This can be done by identifying communities particularly vulnerable to

174 For more on JMACs, see Sarah-Myriam Martin-Brûlé and Nadia Assouli, *Joint Mission Analysis Centre Field Handbook*, United Nations, 2018.

175 See Charles T. Hunt, "Specialized Police Teams in UN Peace Operations: A Survey of Progress and Challenges", International Peace Institute, March 2024.

organised crime (hotspots) and developing a targeted set of people-centred approaches with influential members of the community to mobilise economic and political capital and strengthen local institutions, networks and capacity. Such interventions – based as much on promoting development and effective institutions as on fighting crime – should demonstrate viable alternatives to illicit activity. It is also vital to understand the perceived benefits of illicit activities in post-conflict settings and the costs of disrupting them. Where organised crime is a driver of conflict, such an approach should be considered in conjunction with peace operations, like an "ink spots" counter-insurgency strategy aimed at transforming violent local hotspots of illicit economies. Simply "clearing" areas of criminal elements using securitised approaches without filling the vacuum with opportunities for economic growth and good governance, including effective participation, will result in relapses in crime and violence.

- **Tackle gun violence:** In addition to effective law enforcement and limiting the availability of and access to firearms and ammunition, there is a need for non-securitised approaches to tackling gun violence. These should involve active engagement with communities to understand and address the grievances and underlying causes of violence, for example structural inequality and poverty; lack of opportunities, employment and education; juvenile delinquency; and limited provision of security by law enforcement and security personnel. A particular focus should be put on youth, including programmes to enhancing the role of youth as peacebuilders and deter their recruitment by gangs or to provide safe pathways to exit gangs. These should be designed to foster a sense of belonging, change behaviour and spread positive norms, particularly through working with mentors. Social programmes coordinated by youth groups, educational projects and leisure activities such as sports should also be part of the engagement. Such an approach can contribute to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 16.1, namely to "Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere".[176]
- **Strengthen the integrity of institutions:** Organised crime does not operate in isolation; therefore, it cannot be tackled in isolation. A long-term and sustainable solution to the challenges of crime and its impact on governance, security, poverty, equality and development can only be achieved through the development of effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels, as called for in SDG 16.[177] This includes substantially reducing corruption and bribery in all its forms (as called for in SDG Target 16.5). After all, corruption - like violence – is one of the biggest enablers of organised crime. Therefore, fighting crime and corruption must go hand in hand.
- **Hold private actors accountable:** To counteract the complex challenges posed by mercenaries and PMSCs, particularly in regions with illicit economies, a multipronged approach must be adopted. Critically, international regulation and oversight of PMSCs need to be strengthened, with clear legal guidelines and accountability mechanisms. Collaboration between states, international organisations and industry stakeholders should be fostered to develop and enforce globally harmonised codes of conduct. Furthermore,

176 https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16#targets_and_indicators.

177 Global Initiative, *Organized Crime: A Cross-Cutting Threat to Sustainable Development*, January 2015.

steps should be taken in earnest to develop a binding international instrument to regulate PMSCs with a dedicated international body to monitor compliance and investigate allegations.

10.5 Dealing with organised crime should be part of forward thinking

As the UN Secretary-General has said in his New Agenda for Peace, "to keep peacekeeping fit for purpose, a serious and broad-based reflection on its future is required, with a view to moving towards nimble adaptable models with appropriate, forward-looking transition and exit strategies".[178] New types of conflict and instability require new responses and new models for peace operations. With that in mind, a strategic reflection on the future of UN Policing should take a fresh look at the impact of organised crime on peace operations and ensure that the organisation has the right tools, resources, and mandates to deal with one of the most pernicious threats to international peace and security.

178 UN, 2023, p.23.

Building Peace Together

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