

How Not to Do UN Peacekeeping

Avoid the Stabilization Dilemma with Principled and Adaptive Mandating and Leadership

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Abstract

Looking back over the past seventy-five years of UN peacekeeping, the most enduring question has been: Is peacekeeping effective? Historically, most peacekeeping operations have been. However, peacekeeping is currently suffering from a significant trust deficit. One important factor that differentiates contemporary peacekeeping operations with a stabilization mandate from the historic record is the absence of a viable political or peace process. When security is not directed to serve a peace process, it produces a stabilization dilemma: the more effectively a peace operation protects and achieves stability, the less incentive there is for ruling political elites to find long-term political solutions. This dilemma generates several perverse effects, including prolonging the conflict, trapping operations in place with no exit options, increasing the resilience of armed groups, and embedding peacekeeping in the local political economy. The article identifies five factors that help prevent the stabilization dilemma and influence the effectiveness of peace operations.

Keywords

peacekeeping – stabilization – protection – resilience – adaptation – Security Council

1 Introduction

Looking back over the past seventy-five years of UN peacekeeping, the most enduring question is: Do peace operations work? Lise Morjé Howard argues that the majority of quantitative studies of UN peace operations have come to a similar conclusion: “UN peacekeeping has a positive and statistically significant effect on containing the spread of civil war, increasing the success of negotiated settlements to civil wars, and increasing the duration of peace once a civil war has ended.”¹

Howard found that since the end of the Cold War, two-thirds, or eleven out of sixteen UN peacekeeping operations, successfully ended and withdrew.² Despite this historic record, peacekeeping is currently experiencing a significant trust deficit, largely because the multidimensional stabilization operations in Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Mali are not meeting the expectations raised by their mandates when it comes to protecting civilians, helping host states to counter insurgents, and to end conflicts. At least partly as a result of the perception that these missions are not achieving their mandates, and under financial pressure, the UN Security Council has not deployed any new UN peacekeeping operations since 2014.

The new peace operations that have been deployed since 2014—for example, the UN Verification Mission in Colombia, the UN Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement (UNMHA) and its cease-fire, and the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS),—have all been deployed as special political missions.³ These political missions have no armed uni-

1 Howard 2019. See also Di Salvatore and Ruggeri 2020.

2 These sixteen missions are Namibia, El Salvador, Cambodia, Mozambique, Eastern Slavonia/Croatia, Guatemala, Timor Leste, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, and Liberia. Howard (2019) judges that the following missions have failed: Somalia in 1993; Angola in 1993; Rwanda in 1994; Bosnia (Srebrenica) in 1995; and Haiti in 2017. Since then, the hybrid African Union (AU)–UN mission in Darfur has also been withdrawn with mixed results, bringing the total to seventeen.

3 In the UN context, there is a spectrum of peace operations, which include special political missions and peacekeeping operations. The differences between the two are somewhat political and budgetary, as there has been civilian only peacekeeping missions, but in general peacekeeping operations include armed or unarmed uniformed personnel, and multi-dimensional operations typically imply military, police and corrections, and various civilian functions, including political, civil affairs, human rights, and so forth. Special political missions are backstopped by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and peacekeeping operations by the Department of Peace Operations (DPO), but the personnel responsible for these missions are collocated in regional desks. For example, there is a UN

formed personnel, although some have guard units whose role is limited to protecting the mission's premises, equipment, and personnel. They are significantly smaller and are thus less costly than peacekeeping operations. Because of their lighter footprint and less intrusive mandates, they are seen as less of an imposition on the sovereignty of the host state. There is also less risk of reputational harm because they are not mandated to protect civilians or otherwise provide security guarantees to a peace process. As they do not have large numbers of personnel, there is less risk of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and other forms of misconduct. Should the peace process or cease-fire fail, the blame is more squarely on the parties to the conflict as the UN presence is small and mandated only to support the process. The combination of these factors—and taking into consideration the perceived ineffectiveness, cost, and reputational damage caused by, for example, the SEA associated with the large peacekeeping operations—meant that it has been easier for the members of the Security Council to find agreement to deploy special political missions rather than UN peacekeeping operations.⁴

This may be a temporary period of contraction and moderation for peacekeeping operations, but it does signal a tension between the overall evidence that UN peacekeeping works, and the perception that contemporary multidimensional UN peacekeeping operations are problematic. This article analyzes the effectiveness of these peacekeeping operations—UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), and UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)—to understand the sources of this tension. Based on this analysis, I then offer recommendations about what can be done to guide and improve the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping operations in the future.

peacekeeping operation in the DRC (MONUSCO) managed by DPO, but there is also a special envoy for the Great Lakes Region managed by DPPA, and the personnel overseeing these missions would all report to the same director responsible for missions in this part of Africa. There is a variety of both types of missions and sometimes a combination of aspects of both; for example, special political missions that include a rule of law component, including with police and corrections officers, supported by the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions (OROLSI) of DPO. All mission are supported by civilian mission support staff (finance, logistics, engineering, information technology, etc.) backstopped by the Department of Support (DOS).

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2 Emerging Findings from the Research of the Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network

To assess the effectiveness of these operations, this article primarily draws on the studies of the Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON) as it uses a comparative methodology that makes it possible to assess multiple operations using the same criteria.⁵ EPON is an informal network of researchers and research institutions with an interest in researching peace operations' effectiveness. The network forms multidisciplinary and multinational teams that undertake qualitative studies into the effectiveness of specific contemporary peace operations. The members of the network have developed a theoretical framework and a shared methodology that are used as a baseline across the studies to enable comparative and longitudinal analysis.

EPON defines *effectiveness* as the overall strategic impact of a peace operation, understood as reducing conflict dynamics in the area of operation over a particular period of time, in the context of its mandate and resources. The network's studies employ three analytical tools: a context analysis, an assessment of effects, and a review of explanatory factors.⁶

Since 2018, EPON has undertaken fourteen studies employing this methodology, including studies of the peace operations in CAR, Cyprus, the DRC, Lake Chad, Mali, the Sahel, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan, as well as a thematic study of the protection of civilians mandate implementation across three of these operations.

In the next section, I summarize and analyze the findings of the EPON studies, including especially those of the operations in CAR, the DRC, Mali, and South Sudan. It needs to be emphasized that this analysis does not represent the views of the authors of these studies nor of the EPON network.

2.1 *Prevention of Large-Scale Violent Conflict*

Most of the peace operations studied by EPON so far have made significant contributions to preventing the outbreak of large-scale conflict. A broad range of stakeholder communities in CAR, the DRC, Lake Chad, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan are of the opinion that the level of violent conflict in these

⁵ EPON 2018.

⁶ The six explanatory factors were developed and discussed at an EPON methodology working group and validated through multiple consultations. They are based on factors widely held to contribute to effectiveness in policy documents such as the UN Capstone Doctrine (UN 2008) and the report of the UN High Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (UN 2015).

countries or regions would have been significantly worse if these peace operations were not present. Their presence and actions are thus widely understood by those communities to have a deterrent effect that contributed to preventing large-scale violent conflict.

Despite the role of the UN peacekeeping operations in CAR, the DRC, and Mali in contributing to preventing large-scale violent conflict, the security situations in each of these countries has deteriorated over the past few years. The capabilities and activities of these operations, despite the expectations raised by their mandates, were not sufficient to prevent ongoing low-level violent conflict. In all three of these countries there have been civilian massacres that involved the brutal killing of dozens of civilians, and there has been an overall increase in civilian and combatant casualties and deaths despite the protection of civilians and stabilization mandates of the UN peacekeeping operations.

2.2 *Ending Violent Conflict*

In none of the contemporary operations studied by EPON have the peacekeepers been able to bring about an end to violent conflict in the countries where they are deployed. EPON has chosen to study ongoing peace operations, rather than those already concluded. As pointed out earlier, of the seventeen operations that have ended and withdrawn to date, Howard regards eleven as having successfully contributed to bringing an end to the violent conflict in those countries.⁷ One significant factor that differentiates the remaining or contemporary UN peacekeeping operations from the historic record, perhaps with the exception of the operation in South Sudan (UNMISS), is the absence of a viable political or peace process that realistically can be expected to represent a road map for bringing about an end to the violent conflict. Without a peace process in place, these peace operations cannot be expected to end the conflict in these countries on their own. Peace cannot be imposed; it can only be achieved politically.

2.3 *Protection of Civilians*

As recent protests against peacekeepers in the DRC and Mali have demonstrated, the UN peacekeeping operations in CAR, the DRC, and Mali have not met the local and international expectations raised by their mandates, when it comes to protecting civilians, helping host states to counter insurgents, and to end conflicts. As the EPON studies document, the operations in CAR, the DRC, Mali, and South Sudan have successfully protected many thousands of civilians

⁷ Howard 2019.

directly and indirectly, but they do not have the political backing, resources, and capacity to protect all the civilians at risk in these countries. Unfortunately, it is difficult to prove that someone has been protected if one has successfully prevented violence from happening. However, when civilians are harmed and killed that does, rightfully so, generate a lot of publicity. These missions thus suffer from an expectation gap created by a mismatch between the protection of civilians and stabilization mandates given to them by the Security Council, and the capabilities and resources given to them by the Security Council and the General Assembly.⁸ It also should be noted that even if these missions had significantly more resources and capabilities, they would at best be able to save more lives in the short term, but peace still cannot be imposed: ultimately, the only sustainable form of protection and stability is a peace process that ends the violence.

The inability of these operations to protect civilians at a scale matching the expectations raised by their mandates has contributed significantly to the perception in the Security Council and elsewhere that these operations are ineffective. It is ironic that the Security Council is losing trust in these operations, when it is the Council that has deployed and tasked these operations with protection of civilians and stabilization mandates despite the absence of a peace process or viable political project, and when it is the Council that determines the mandated tasks, the overall size, the use of force posture, and the scope of the capabilities of these operations.

3 The Stabilization Dilemma

Protection and stabilization mandates in a context where there is no cease-fire, peace agreement, or viable political project produce a dilemma: the more effectively a peace operation protects civilians and helps to achieve stability, the less incentive there is for ruling political elites to find long-term political solutions.

This stabilization dilemma generates several perverse effects. Stabilization is inherently a state- and institution-building set of activities. The Weberian assumption is that the state apparatus is politically impartial, but the reality in these settings is that one set of elites has captured the state, and others contest their exclusion and marginalization. If the UN is perceived to be enhancing the capacity of one party to the conflict against others, then it becomes a part of the

⁸ Vermeij et al. 2022.

conflict and loses its impartiality.⁹ Sarah von Billerbeck and Oisín Tansey argue that another unintended consequence of these mandates is that they unintentionally enable authoritarianism by building the capacity of incumbent authoritarian leaders and by signaling a permissive environment for authoritarian behavior.¹⁰ Adam Day and Charles Hunt point out that a preoccupation with protection distracts from the primacy of politics and other interdependent priorities.¹¹

A further perverse effect is that it traps peacekeeping operations in place because they lack a viable exit strategy or end-state. The level of violence is often at a scale that is not sufficient to threaten the survival of the state as long as the peacekeeping operation protects it. In places like CAR, the DRC, Mali, and Somalia, the perception is that the state is likely to collapse, or to lose significant parts of its territory to armed groups, should the peacekeeping operation withdraw. As a result, the Security Council keeps these operations in place because its presence contributes to preventing large-scale violence and the protection of civilians, and the overall collapse of the state, which would make the situation even worse.

At the same time, except for the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) of MONUSCO,¹² these peacekeeping operations do not have the mandate or capabilities to neutralize the armed groups against which they are protecting the state and people. This means that the types of actions these peacekeeping operations undertake put armed groups under pressure, but are not sufficient to defeat them. When you disrupt armed groups, but do not defeat them, you can make them stronger. The actions taken can serve to stimulate the armed groups to adapt and improve their tactics, and to diversify their operations and their means of income and support locally and internationally. The net result is more resilient armed groups.

An additional perverse effect is that the longer these operations stay in place, the more they become part of the local political economy.¹³ The political and economic elites that have captured the state are extracting a rent from the peacekeeping operations and the international presence they enable, through the renting of properties, the provision of private security and other services, and the retail and entertainment sectors. They thus have an incentive not to create the conditions that will interrupt their ability to sustain this rent econ-

9 Day and Hunt 2022b. See also Bennet et al. 2022.

10 von Billerbeck and Tansey 2019. See also Day et al. 2021.

11 Day and Hunt 2022a.

12 Novosseloff et al. 2019.

13 Berdal and Sherman 2023.

omy. The compounded result of all these perverse effects is a prolongation of the conflict and, thus, also a continuation of the risk of violence for the civilian population.¹⁴

The stabilization dilemma therefore generates several perverse effects that not only undermine the credibility of these specific UN operations, but also the credibility of UN peacekeeping as an instrument, as the recent decline in its use demonstrates. Overall, it has contributed to a decline in public trust in the Security Council's ability to maintain international peace and security.

4 Key Factors That Influence Effectiveness of Peacekeeping Operations

Based on this analysis of the findings of the EPON studies undertaken to date, I identify five factors that are critical for the effectiveness of a specific peacekeeping operation. While some of these factors may be relevant for the whole spectrum of peace operations, in this section the focus is on UN peacekeeping operations.

4.1 *Ripeness*

There are a few widely agreed-on prerequisites for effective conflict resolution. The first is that the parties to the conflict must have arrived at a point where they have recognized the need to seek a negotiated solution and where they themselves choose to enter a cease-fire or peace process. This implies that they have reached what William Zartman has termed a *mutually hurting stalemate*.¹⁵ This is a point in the conflict where neither party can achieve victory over the other(s) through violence or other coercive means, and the positions they are in are untenable. Zartman uses the mutually hurting stalemate analysis to assess the degree to which a conflict is ripe for resolution.

The ripeness argument resonates with what is a widely agreed principle in conflict resolution; namely, that peace needs to emerge from, and be sustained by, the people engaged in and affected by conflict. Peace cannot be imposed. The implication for peacekeeping is a validation of the principle of consent as a prerequisite for the deployment of a peacekeeping operation.

What options does the UN have when a conflict is not yet ripe for resolution and peacekeeping? Attempting to manage an ongoing conflict while

¹⁴ Pospisil 2019.

¹⁵ Zartman 2001.

nudging it to ripeness, with the objective to protect civilians, protect humanitarian workers, and ultimately bring an end to the violent conflict, requires a range of initiatives and interventions, including perhaps a combination of preventive diplomacy, humanitarian diplomacy, peacemaking and mediation, humanitarian assistance and, in some cases, peace enforcement to prevent war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. However, the stabilization dilemma highlighted earlier cautions against a theory of change that assumes that security generates ripeness. The evidence cited finds that security on its own, when not directed by a viable political project, produces the opposite effect—it disincentivizes political settlement and enables authoritarianism. The implication for the Security Council is that the UN should not do stabilization, counterinsurgency, or counterterrorism operations with the intent to induce ripeness.

If there is a need to use force to protect civilians outside of a peace process—for example, in cases of a gross violation of human rights, war crimes, or genocide—then the Security Council needs to authorize a coalition of the willing or a regional organization that is willing and able to perform such a role. All the high-level strategic reviews of UN peacekeeping, including the 2000 Brahimi panel and the 2015 High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) found that UN peacekeeping is not the right tool for peace enforcement.¹⁶ The advice to the Security Council has been clear and consistent; UN peacekeeping operations should not—not even as a last resort—be deployed for peace enforcement.

4.2 *A Viable Political Project*

Both the Brahimi Report (deploy only when there is a peace to keep) and the HIPPO Report (the primacy of politics) emphasized that UN peacekeeping operations can be effective only when there is a viable political project they can support and protect. This implies a cease-fire agreement, a peace agreement, or a peace process to which the major parties to the conflict have committed themselves, or a clear political road map toward such a peace process that is realistically achievable. A viable political project should thus be a prerequisite for the deployment and continuation of a UN peacekeeping operation.¹⁷

The point is not that the Security Council should shirk its responsibility, but rather that it should not turn to UN peacekeeping operations out of habit, ignorance, or political expediency. The Security Council has a range of tools at its

16 UN 2000 and UN 2015.

17 See Day et al. 2020 for case studies and a tool for assessing the political strategy of the missions in CAR, Darfur, the DRC, Mali, and South Sudan.

disposal and a spectrum of peace operations to consider. UN peacekeeping operations is one of these tools. It is effective in certain contexts, but performs poorly in others, and one of the key factors that influences its effectiveness is whether there is a viable political project in place. If not, then the consistent advice to the Council from the various expert commissions it has authorized over the years, and confirmed by the research of the EPON network and others, is that it should look beyond peacekeeping to the other tools at its disposal.

4.3 *Coherent and Accountable Political and Material Support*

It is necessary that a UN peacekeeping operation has the consent of the parties and that there is a viable political project to support and protect, but that is not sufficient. The effectiveness of peace operations is closely linked to the extent they enjoy coherent political support from the widest possible set of stakeholders. In addition to the support of the major parties to the conflict, the support of the broader population in the country or region where the operation is deployed, and their diaspora communities, is critical. Also crucial is the support of the countries and multilateral institutions in the region and within international partners, and among the members of the Security Council.

Achieving and sustaining support for the mandate, role, and actions of a UN peacekeeping operation does not happen automatically. Coherent political support is thus something that the penholder(s) and other members of the Security Council, the Secretary-General, and international, regional, and national stakeholders need to work to sustain and enhance. While the mission leadership has a role to play in this process, the high-level diplomatic investment needed to sustain such support must be driven by the Security Council, Secretary-General, other international and regional partners, and the parties to the conflict.

If international and regional support can be thought of at a vertical scale, then a horizontal level of support in which a UN peacekeeping operation needs to invest is that of the people in the country or region. This implies support for the peace process or political project that an operation has been mandated to support and protect, and for the role of the UN peacekeeping operation in that process. UN peacekeeping operations are still too state-centric. They need to become more people centered, which implies that they need to engage closely with, and make themselves accountable to, the people most immediately affected by the conflict.¹⁸

18 de Coning, Karlsrud, and Troost 2015.

Another type of support that a UN peacekeeping operation needs to build and sustain is the partnerships required to generate systemwide comprehensive momentum in support of the peace process. A peacekeeping operation is just one actor among many actors working toward supporting a peace process, and its impact is limited to a few peace, security, governance, and social domains. There are other actors, nationally, locally, and internationally that need to be coordinated and integrated to ensure accountable and coherent support across the wider political, security, social, economic, justice, environment, and other dimensions necessary to sustaining peace.

Finally, a peacekeeping operation must have sufficient material resources to achieve its mandate. Unfortunately, it is rare that UN peacekeeping operations receive adequate and appropriate material resources. It seems as if the diplomatic and bureaucratic processes that generate peacekeeping finances and resources are designed to provide UN peacekeeping operations with the minimum level of resources needed to remain operational, rather than with the resources to achieve the mandates with which they have been tasked. Raising expectations that UN peacekeeping operations will, for example, protect civilians, and then not providing those missions with the human and material resources and political backing to do so is immoral and irresponsible. At the same time, it should be noted that resources and capacity are not a substitute for a viable political project. Too often more effort is invested in increasing peacekeeping capacity when the real challenge is political.

4.4 *Principled but Adaptive Mandating and Leadership*

For the functional, moral, and legal reasons laid out earlier, and for the sustained legitimacy and credibility of specific UN peacekeeping operations, the Security Council needs to be guided by the principles of peacekeeping—consent, impartiality, and the nonuse of force—when it considers when and where to deploy a peacekeeping operation, and what kind of mandated task to authorize.

While the principles remain constant, how they are applied in each context requires that those who lead and command peacekeeping operations employ an iterative, adaptive mission management approach¹⁹ based on the feedback generated by a proactive, experiential learning, and performance assessment process.²⁰

19 de Coning 2020.

20 In this regard, the implementation of the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System (CPAS) in UN peacekeeping operations represents a positive development. See Forti 2022.

Consent implies that the UN is requested to support the implementation of a cease-fire or peace agreement by the parties to those agreements, or that the UN obtains the consent of the parties to the conflict for a peace operation. The consent of the host state is necessary, but not sufficient on its own. When consent is obtained from only one party to a conflict—which is the case in the contemporary operations in CAR, the DRC, and Mali—it undermines both the consent and impartiality principles, which makes the use of force more likely as other parties may feel marginalized and excluded.

When it is not possible or feasible to obtain consent from all of the parties to the conflict, then it implies that such a conflict is not ripe for a peacekeeping operation. In such a context, the Security Council needs to look to the other instruments at its disposal.

These three principles, applied together, have been critical for the effectiveness and resilience of UN peacekeeping over the past seventy-five years.²¹ The operations that have been successful have all been based on these principles. Peacekeeping's greatest failures—the UN mission in the Congo in the 1960s, and Somalia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Rwanda in the 1990s—have all been associated with mandates and contexts where these principles have been eroded or misapplied.

The mandates of the contemporary “stabilization” operations in CAR, the DRC, and Mali all have departed significantly from the principles of peacekeeping.²² This gap between what the peacekeeping instrument is intended to do, and how it has been applied in practice in these three contexts, helps to explain the ineffectiveness of these operations. Leaving aside the high number of peacekeeping deaths in these operations, especially in Mali, the result has been a significant loss of credibility for the UN, and especially the Security Council, as well as a loss of credibility in the utility of peacekeeping as a conflict management and conflict resolution instrument. The reputational damage from this gap also has contributed to the overall decline in trust in UN peacekeeping as an effective instrument, and to no new peacekeeping operations being authorized since 2014.

4.5 *Avoiding Harm*

A peacekeeping operation is deployed to generate certain intended effects. However, when a peacekeeping operation tries to influence any complex social system, the system will respond in a variety of ways, and some of these will

²¹ de Coning and Peter 2019.

²² Karlsrud, 2018.

also generate unintended effects. Chiyuki Aoi, Cedric de Coning, and Ramesh Thakur argue that peacekeeping operations need to anticipate that they will generate unintended effects, some of which will have perverse consequences that can cause harm to those the missions are meant to protect and serve, and to the credibility and legitimacy of the operations.²³

One of the most obvious examples has been the sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers of the very people they have been mandated to protect. SEA no longer is seen as something that a UN peacekeeping operation has no leverage over, and the UN Secretariat and peacekeeping operations now take a range of actions to anticipate, prevent, and manage SEA. Not all unintended consequences can be foreseen and anticipated as clearly as SEA, but operations can anticipate that their actions will generate unintended consequences and they can proactively monitor for such consequences and respond to them.

Not all unintended consequences are negative. Some create opportunities for positive reinforcement or new courses of action. However, those that cause harm are obviously the most serious, for the victims and for the ability of the operation to achieve its mandate. Avoiding harm should be the fourth principle that guides UN peacekeeping operations because it is critically important for the moral, legal, and functional credibility and legitimacy of peace operations, and thus constitutes a crucial dimension of the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping operations.

5 Conclusion

Looking back over the past seventy-five years of UN peacekeeping, the question that I wanted to contribute to addressing is: What factors influence the effectiveness of peace operations? Historically, most peacekeeping operations have been successful; however, the utility of peacekeeping is currently under pressure, largely because the contemporary multidimensional peacekeeping operations in CAR, the DRC, and Mali are suffering from a significant loss of trust.

The numbers of peacekeeping operations and peacekeepers have declined steadily over the past decade, and no new missions have been deployed since 2014. This may be a temporary period of contraction and moderation, but it does signal a tension between the overall evidence that UN peacekeeping works, and the current perception in the Security Council and elsewhere that

23 Aoi, de Coning, and Thakur 2007.

the remaining large multidimensional UN peacekeeping operations are ineffective and problematic.

One significant factor that differentiates the contemporary UN peacekeeping operations in CAR, the DRC, and Mali from the historic record is the absence of a viable political or peace process. Without such a process in place, peace operations cannot be expected to end the conflict in these countries on their own. Peace cannot be imposed.

The inability of these operations to protect civilians at a scale matching the expectations raised by their mandates has contributed significantly to the perception that these operations are ineffective. Protection and stabilization mandates in a context where there is no cease-fire, peace agreement, or viable political project produce a stabilization dilemma: the more effectively a peace operation protects civilians and helps to achieve stability, the less incentive there is for ruling political elites to find long-term political solutions.

This stabilization dilemma generates several perverse effects, including prolonging the conflict, trapping operations in place with no exit options, increasing the resilience of armed groups, and embedding peacekeeping in the local political economy. The stabilization dilemma not only undermines the credibility of the UN operations in those contexts, but it also undermines the credibility of UN peacekeeping as an instrument. It likewise has contributed to a decline in public trust in the Security Council's ability to maintain international peace and security.

Based on these findings, five key factors have been identified that influence the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations. These factors can be used as a framework for effectiveness that can guide future decisionmaking regarding when—and when not—to deploy UN peacekeeping operations, and what kinds of mandated tasks UN peacekeeping operations can be expected to achieve, provided they have sufficient political and material support. The five factors are: ripeness for resolution, viable political project, coherent and accountable political and material support, principled but adaptive mandating and leadership, and avoiding harm.

Taken together, these five factors all confirm the moral, legal, and functional coherence of the principles of peacekeeping. These principles have been tested, they have adapted to various forms and eras of peace operations, and they have proven to be resilient and relevant. When the Security Council has strayed from the principles, the results have been poor, perverse, and at times disastrous. Staying true to the principles and using these five factors of effectiveness when deciding where and when to deploy peacekeeping operations, and what kind of mandates to give them, will help the Council when it makes choices regarding which of the instruments at its disposal will be

more likely to be effective in a given context. This will help UN peacekeeping operations avoid the stabilization dilemma trap and the perverse effects it generates.

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