The Security Council's peacekeeping trilemma

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United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations often produce positive effects and are comparatively cheap international instruments for managing armed conflicts.[1] However, they usually deploy to theatres that are not a first-order strategic priority for the permanent members of the Security Council (P5) or the major financiers of peacekeeping; and numerous studies have highlighted multiple operational failings and limitations in these missions.[2]

The strategic limitations and weaknesses of UN peacekeeping stem from two principal sources. The first problem arises at the strategic level. Peacekeeping and peacemaking are distinct activities; it is belligerents that end wars, and if they refuse to do that, peacekeepers cannot force them to make peace.[3] UN peacekeepers are thus heavily constrained by domestic politics in the host state(s). The second problem is that the international political environment places contradictory pressures on the design of UN peacekeeping operations and significant constraints on their likely impact.[4]

This article develops the strand of literature analysing how the international environment shapes UN peacekeeping by suggesting that the Security Council is one important source of such contradictory pressures. This is because the Council faces a peacekeeping trilemma—a situation in which three strategic goals coexist but cannot be achieved simultaneously for logical and practical reasons.

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1 See e.g. Lisa Hultman, Jacob Kathman and Megan Shannon, 'Beyond keeping peace: United Nations effectiveness in the midst of fighting', *American Political Science Review* 108: 4, 2014, pp. 737–53; Andrea Ruggeri, Han Dorussen and Theodora-Ismene Gizelis, 'Winning the peace locally: UN peacekeeping and local conflict', *International Organization* 71: 1, 2017, pp. 163–85; Havard Hegre, Lisa Hultman and Havard Mokleiv Nygard, 'Evaluating the conflict-reducing effect of UN peacekeeping operations', *Journal of Politics* 81: 1, 2018, pp. 215–32; Hanne Fjelde, Lisa Hultman and Desiree Nilsson, 'Protection through presence: UN peacekeeping and the costs of targeting civilians', *International Organization* 73: 1, 2019, pp. 103–31.

2 See e.g. Severine Autesserre, *Peaceland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), and 'The crisis of peacekeeping', *Foreign Affairs* 98: 1, 2019, pp. 101–16; CIVIC, *Under fire: the July 2016 violence in Juba and UN response* (Washington DC: Center for Civilians in Conflict, 2016).

3 See e.g. J. Michael Greig and Paul Diehl, 'The peacekeeping-peacemaking dilemma', *International Studies Quarterly* 49: 4, 2005, pp. 621–45.

4 See e.g. Roland Paris, 'Peacekeeping and the constraints of global culture', *European Journal of International Relations* 9: 3, 2003, pp. 441–73, and 'International peacebuilding and the "mission civilisatrice"', *Review of International Studies* 28: 4, 2002, pp. 637–55; George Downs and Stephen John Stedman, 'Evaluation issues in peace implementation', in Stephen J. Stedman, Donald Rothchild and Elizabeth Cousens, eds, *Ending civil wars* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2002), pp. 43–69.

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Specifically, Security Council resolutions oblige peacekeepers to implement broad mandates (often in high-threat environments), yet the Council designs missions to be much smaller than relevant military doctrine suggests in order to save money. Furthermore, the Council prioritizes the safety and security of UN peacekeepers to avoid alienating the states that provide most of the field personnel. The Council's strategic objectives for peacekeeping can thus be summarized as the successful implementation of broad, multidimensional mandates, minimizing peacekeeper casualties, and maximizing cost-effectiveness.

The concept of a trilemma offers a useful way to think about how these international political dynamics influence the design of UN peacekeeping operations. The Council's peacekeeping trilemma is not new; arguably, it dates back to the 1960s and the Congo-related debates over the costs, legitimacy and effectiveness of multidimensional mandates that potentially involved the use of force beyond self-defence. The major new elements in the twenty-first century revolve around mandates related to civilian protection and the extension of state authority and stabilization. The three competing pressures on the Council continue to affect all multidimensional UN missions because each one has to be generated from scratch from unpredictable and fluid partnerships between member states, the UN Secretariat and private contractors. Overall, the trilemma has constrained the design of peacekeeping operations and set them up for failure. Yet the Council regularly criticizes troop- and police-contributing countries (T/PCCs) and the Secretariat for not delivering the desired results in the field without acknowledging its own responsibility for this.

Fortunately, the trilemma is not immutable; policy-makers could mitigate and perhaps even transcend its most negative consequences. Mitigation requires the Council to champion and implement four main reforms to improve how missions are mandated, financed and generated: improving peacekeeper performance; holding peacekeepers accountable for misdeeds; adopting prioritized and sequenced mandates; and strengthening the financial basis for UN peacekeeping. Transcending the trilemma entirely is highly unlikely to be achieved, because this would require a fundamental reconfiguration and convergence of the three main stakeholder groups in UN peacekeeping—the states that, respectively, write the mandates, provide the personnel and pay the bills—in order to create much greater international unity of effort behind a re-envisaged peacekeeping enterprise.[5] Current priorities and conflict among the world's Great Powers suggest that neither the required unity of effort nor the sustained, senior political leadership necessary to attain this outcome is likely to be forthcoming.

[5] A fourth set of actors—the governments of states hosting UN peacekeeping operations—are important in many respects, but they respond to rather than determine the UN's strategic imperatives in this area. Similarly, although the UN Secretariat has some autonomous power related to peacekeeping, it is not the ultimate decision-maker on mandates, contributions or assessed rates. See Thorsten Benner, Stephan Mergenthaler and Philipp Rotmann, *The new world of UN peace operations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Silke Weinlich, *The UN Secretariat's influence on the evolution of peacekeeping* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); John Karlsrud, *Norm change in international relations: linked ecologies in UN peacekeeping operations* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015).

To substantiate this argument, the article first describes the Security Council's peacekeeping trilemma and its effects on the design of UN operations, before outlining the prospects for mitigating and transcending it.

The Security Council's peacekeeping trilemma

A trilemma refers to a situation in which an actor wants to pursue three desirable goals but for logical and practical reasons can achieve only two of them simultaneously.[6] For the purposes of this article, the concept helps to illuminate how the Security Council's preferences influence the design of UN peacekeeping operations. The Council's three strategic objectives for peacekeeping can be summarized as follows:

- Maximizing success: enabling UN peacekeeping operations, if necessary, to fulfil broad, multidimensional mandates, even in high-threat environments.
- Minimizing risk: improving the safety and security of UN peacekeepers to avoid casualties.
- Maximizing cost-effectiveness: keeping financial costs down and using available resources efficiently.

However, the Security Council is not the only important actor in the conduct of UN peacekeeping operations. Other stakeholders also weigh these objectives and, according to the relative priorities they attach to them, adopt negotiating positions in other institutional forums that the Council's members are unable to control. While the General Assembly's Fifth Committee on administrative and budgetary matters handles finances, its Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C34) provides the main arena in which T/PCCs can articulate their positions. The bureaucratic dynamics and organizational cultures that emerge in these distinct institutional forums intensify the Council's trilemma.

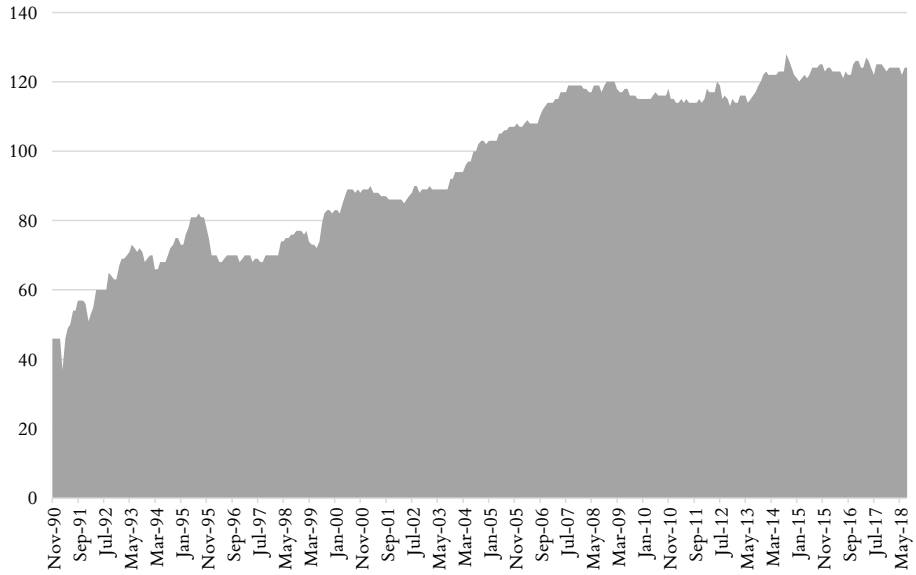
The Council plays the central role in designing peacekeeping missions and their mandates.[7] It also sets the terms for the force requirements from which each mission budget is subsequently determined. Despite comprising 15 states, the Council operates as what psychologists call a 'group-preserving' collective by consistently authorizing broad Chapter VII peacekeeping mandates to maintain its own status and legitimacy as the key international forum for addressing the international use of force beyond self-defence.[8] Since the end of the Cold War, the

[6] This follows Nicholas D. Anderson, 'America's North Korean trilemma', *Washington Quarterly* 40: 4, 2018, pp. 153–64. International economists have frequently used the idea of a trilemma, in contexts including the diagnosis of exchange rate problems—specifically, the impossibility of having a fixed foreign exchange rate, free capital movement and an independent monetary policy at the same time. See e.g. M. Obstfeld, J. C. Shambaugh and A. M. Taylor, 'The trilemma in history: tradeoffs among exchange rates, monetary policies, and capital mobility', *Review of Economics and Statistics* 87: 3, 2005, pp. 423–38; Michael Bordo and Harold James, 'How to understand policy trilemmas', *World Economic Forum* blog, 8 April 2015, https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/04/how-to-understand-policy-trilemmas/. (Unless otherwise noted at point of citation, all URLs cited in this article were accessible on 22 Sept. 2019.)

[7] See Security Council Report, *Is Christmas really over? Improving the mandating of peace operations* (New York: Security Council Report, Feb. 2019).

[8] Lise M. Howard and Anjali K. Dayal, 'The use of force in UN peacekeeping', *International Organization* 72: 1,

Figure 1: Number of countries contributing UN uniformed peacekeepers, 1990–2018



Source: *Providing for Peacekeeping* dataset, http://www.providingforpeacekeeping.org/contributions/.

'P3' of the United States, France and the United Kingdom have most frequently been 'pen-holder'—the actor that leads in drafting Security Council resolutions—for particular missions and thematic areas.[9] This has created a dilemma whereby, 'if [the UN] is seen to be just the agent of big powers, it loses its credibility, while if big powers make clear that they will not support the UN effort, it will also fail'.[10] The Council seeks broader support for these mandates through so-called 'triangular cooperation' with the major T/PCCs and the Secretariat.[11]

The T/PCCs that provide most of the personnel and other field capabilities for UN peacekeeping form a second group of key stakeholders. Their number grew consistently from approximately 80 in 2000 to approximately 120 by 2007 and has remained fairly constant since then (see figure 1). Nevertheless, UN force generation has remained highly unevenly distributed during the twenty-first century, with the overwhelming majority of peacekeepers provided by developing countries in Asia and Africa.[12] On average, since 2000, about 40 per cent

2018, pp. 71–103.

[9] See Stephen John Stedman, 'The United States in the Security Council'; Thierry Tardy and Dominik Zaum, 'France and the United Kingdom'; and Richard Gowan, 'The Security Council and peacekeeping', all in Sebastian von Einsiedel, David Malone and Bruno Stagno Ugarte, eds, *The UN Security Council in the 21st century* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2015).

[10] Jean-Marie Guehenno, 'The United Nations and civil wars', *Daedalus* 147: 1, 2018, p. 188.

[11] Alexandra Novosseloff, 'Triangular cooperation: key to all', *Global Peace Operations Review*, 10 Nov. 2015, https://peaceoperationsreview.org/thematic-essays/triangular-cooperation-key-to-all/.

[12] Alex J. Bellamy and Paul D. Williams, eds, *Providing peacekeepers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013);

of the UN's uniformed peacekeepers have been provided by the top six T/PCCs: with India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Nigeria and, more recently, Ethiopia and Rwanda particularly prominent. By comparison, the P5 collectively provided consistently less than 5 per cent of uniformed UN peacekeepers over this period. Only China has significantly increased its total since 2008, so that by the end of 2018 the P5 were providing about 7 per cent of the total.

The third group of key stakeholders are the main financiers of UN peacekeeping. The financial burden, like the personnel burden, has also been distributed highly unevenly since the system for financing UN peacekeeping operations was established in the 1970s.[13] During the twenty-first century, the 36 OECD countries have provided the vast majority of peacekeeping financing, with the P3 providing about 40 per cent. With the addition of China—which has increased its share from less than 2 per cent to more than 15 per cent since 2000—the top ten financial contributors pay approximately 80 per cent of the total (see table 1).[14] This has created greater overlap between those who mandate missions and those who finance them. However, the decision-making structure in the General Assembly

Table 1: Top ten financial contributors to UN peacekeeping operations, 2018 and 2019

2018		*2019*	
Country	*Effective rate (%)*	*Country*	*Effective rate (%)*
United States	28.43	United States	27.89
China	10.24	China	15.22
Japan	9.68	Japan	8.56
Germany	6.39	Germany	6.09
France	6.28	United Kingdom	5.79
United Kingdom	5.77	France	5.61
Russia	3.99	Italy	3.31
Italy	3.75	Russia	3.05
Canada	2.92	Canada	2.73
Spain	2.44	South Korea	2.27

Source: UN Doc. A/70/331/Add.1, 28 Dec. 2015; UN Doc. A/73/350/Add.1, 24 Dec. 2018.

Jacob D. Kathman and Molly M. Melin, 'Who keeps the peace? Understanding state contributions to UN peacekeeping operations', *International Studies Quarterly* 61: 1, 2017, pp. 150–62. See also monthly contributions data from the *Providing for Peacekeeping* dataset at http://www.providingforpeacekeeping.org/contributions/.

[13] Budgets for UN peacekeeping operations have three major categories of appropriations: for civilian personnel and individual experts; for uniformed contingents (military and police); and for operational requirements. In general, the latter two categories account for approximately 75% of the total. See 'UN peacekeeping budgets by component', *CIC Data in Focus*, 2 Oct. 2018, https://medium.com/cic-international-insights/cic-data-in-focus-un-peacekeeping-budgets-by-component-part-i-77ec0d234081.

[14] See Katharina P. Coleman, *The political economy of UN peacekeeping* (New York: International Peace Institute (IPI), May 2014).

means that there is no direct relationship between a country's own annual assessed rate and its ability to determine that rate.[15] Moreover, the methodology for determining peacekeeping assessed rates has not changed since 2000, showing how difficult it is to find consensus on this issue in the Fifth Committee.[16]

Although there is some overlap of membership in the three groups, enough divergence persists to generate significant arguments between them. In 2011, the then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon warned that the unity of purpose behind these groups was fraying: 'If these groups remain distinct even as mandates become more demanding, tensions and divisions are inevitable, with potentially negative impacts on our operations.'[17] These tensions and divisions have resulted in unequal support for the Security Council's three strategic peacekeeping goals, the components of today's trilemma.

Objective 1: Maximize success

As recently noted in relation to the UN's Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), 'the Security Council expects full delivery of the mandates it authorizes'.[18] While member states volunteer to deploy personnel for peacekeeping, resolutions adopted by the Council under Chapter VII of the Charter are considered binding on all member states, and the Secretariat is obligated to implement tasks set out in Council resolutions. It is therefore imperative that peacekeepers are capable of successfully implementing the Council's broad, multidimensional mandates, even in high-threat environments. This became increasingly difficult as the Council established an unprecedented number of peacekeeping operations with multidimensional mandates, most of which deployed into active war zones (see figure 2).

Nowadays, UN 'peacekeeping' mandates are broken down into twenty-one distinct components, highlighting the daunting range of tasks peacekeepers are expected to perform.[19] Since the 1990s, the Council has considered a lengthening list of mandated tasks necessary ingredients in building stable peace in war-torn territories.[20] As a result, the Brahimi Report's call for the Council to

[15] The UN's financial system for peacekeeping is based on annual rates of assessment for each member state that are negotiated in the General Assembly every three years.

[16] See Wasim Mir, *Financing UN peacekeeping* (New York: IPI, April 2019), p. 9.

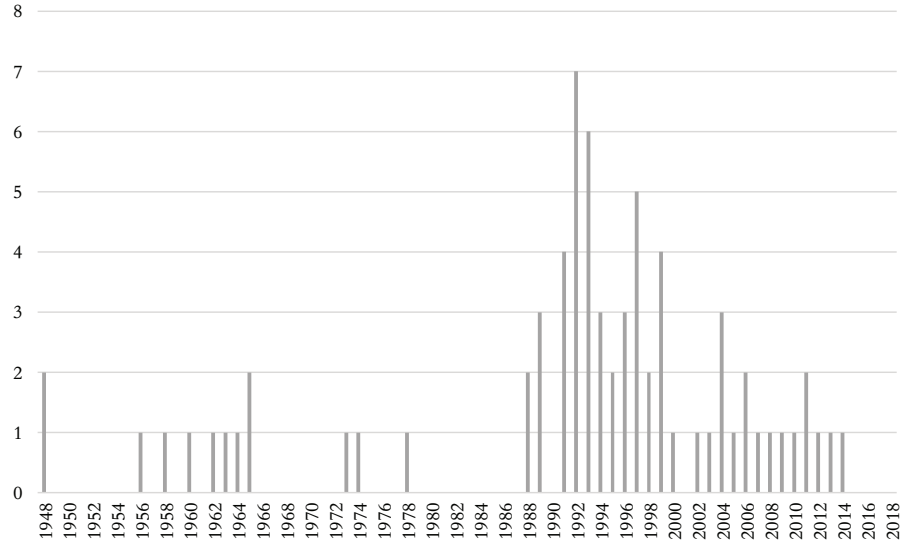
[17] Ban Ki-moon, 'Remarks at Security Council debate on peacekeeping', New York, 26 Aug. 2011, https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2011-08-26/remarks-security-council-debate-peacekeeping.

[18] UN Doc. S/RES/2406, 15 March 2018, p. 11.

[19] These comprise: supporting local police and military forces; ceasefire monitoring; maritime security; security monitoring, patrolling and deterrence activities; protection of humanitarian and UN personnel and facilities, including free movement of personnel and equipment; security sector reform (SSR); demilitarization and arms management; humanitarian support; human rights, women and peace and security, and children and armed conflict; rule of law and judicial matters; political process; electoral assistance; support to state institutions; international cooperation and coordination; support to sanctions regimes; public information; civilian–military coordination; contingency planning; mission impact assessment; and (since 1999) protection of civilians, including refugees and internally displaced persons. In addition, in the twenty-first century, most UN peacekeeping operations were also authorized to use force in defence of their mandate under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Information supplied by the UN's Security Council Affairs Division, 1 Nov. 2018.

[20] See e.g. the growing list of essential peacebuilding tasks as set out in *Report of the Panel on UN Peace Operations* (the Brahimi Report), UN Doc. A/55/305-S/2000/809, 21 Aug. 2000; UN Secretary-General, *Peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict*, UN Doc. A/63/881-S/2009/304, 11 June 2009; UN Secretary-General, *Peacebuilding in the aftermath of conflict*, UN Doc. A/69/399-S/2014/694, 23 Sept. 2014.

Figure 2: New UN peacekeeping operations, 1948–2018



Source: Compiled by author from https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/department-of-peacekeeping-operations.

adopt 'clear, credible and achievable mandates' was frequently ignored.[21] Instead, broad 'Christmas-tree mandates' became standard practice, with Security Council resolutions frequently running to more than a dozen pages.[22] To take one prominent example, when UNMISS was established to support the newly independent state of South Sudan in July 2011, the Security Council gave it over 40 mandated tasks but little guidance on how they should be prioritized.[23] By 2018, the UN Secretary-General was telling the Council that UNMISS 'cannot possibly implement 209 mandated tasks'.[24]

Arguably the most crucial expansions of peacekeeping mandates have been those to encompass the protection of civilians—featured in the mandate of every multidimensional UN peacekeeping operation since 1999—and what the UN calls 'stabilization' tasks, usually related to the extension and consolidation of state authority in Haiti (MINUSTAH), the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), Mali (MINUSMA) and the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).[25] The Security

[21] Brahimi Report, p. 10.

[22] To my knowledge, the phrase was first used in mid-2008 by Richard Grenell, spokesman for the US mission to the UN. See Neil MacFarquhar, 'UN to keep Darfur force, but US withholds its vote', *New York Times*, 1 Aug. 2008.

[23] UN Doc. S/1996/2011, 8 July 2011.

[24] UN Doc. S/PV.8218, 28 March 2018, p. 3.

[25] On civilian protection, see Victoria K. Holt and Glyn Taylor with Max Kelly, *Protecting civilians in the context of UN peacekeeping operations* (UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO)/Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2009); Haidi Willmot, Ralph Mamiya, Scott Sheeran and Marc Weller, eds, *Protection of civilians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). On stabilization, see Mateja Peter, 'Between doctrine and practice: the UN peacekeeping dilemma', *Global Governance* 21: 3, 2015, pp. 351–70; Aditi Gorur, *Defining the boundaries of UN stabilization missions* (Washington DC: Stimson Center, Dec. 2016); Cedric de Coning,

Council did not always develop 'Christmas-tree mandates' in a deliberate fashion, but often added tasks in response to the demands of specific interest groups or to crises in the field.[26]

It remains the subject of considerable debate whether UN peace operations can successfully build stable peace in situations of active armed conflict. But the expansion of mandated tasks given to UN peacekeepers from the 1990s clearly stemmed from the Council's assumption that stable peace required missions to influence domestic governance structures in order to facilitate an effective exit strategy.[27] This assumption, pushed most forcefully by the P3, hinged on a connection between liberalism and peace, with illiberal forms of governance and commerce thought to increase the risk of instability and recurrent conflict.[28] The implementation of this 'liberal peace agenda', in turn, required larger, more robust and multidimensional (civilian, police and military) missions, and in its extreme form entailed the transformation of local polities, economies and even societies in host states.[29] Today, as former head of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Marie Guehenno has observed, this agenda 'may be under attack and fading, but the question of how to stabilize countries emerging from conflict remains, and there is no genuine agreement in the Security Council on what the answer should be'.[30]

Not only were many of the tasks assigned to them inherently difficult, UN peacekeepers were expected to achieve them in complex, high-threat environments characterized by active, usually regionalized, armed conflicts involving numerous armed groups using asymmetric and/or terrorist tactics, with significant participation by transnational criminal actors. Such environments have long been recognized as being among the most challenging for building stable peace.[31]

Some experts have called for a scaling back of 'Christmas-tree mandates'—indeed, the Secretary-General recently declared that 'Christmas is over'.[32] The

Chiyuki Aoi and John Karlsrud, eds, *UN peacekeeping doctrine in a new era* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017).

[26] Gowan, 'The Security Council and peacekeeping'.

[27] Alex J. Bellamy and Paul D. Williams, *Understanding peacekeeping*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Polity, 2010), ch. 4; Richard Caplan, ed., *Exit strategies and state building* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[28] See Roland Paris, *At war's end: building peace after civil conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, 'Neotrusteeship and the problem of weak states', *International Security* 28: 4, 2004, pp. 5–43.

[29] See e.g. *An agenda for peace*, UN Doc. A/47/277 (New York, 17 June 1992); Paris, *At war's end*; and Roland Paris, 'Saving liberal peacebuilding', *Review of International Studies* 36: 2, 2010, pp. 337–65. For an overview of the subsequent debates, see Oliver Richmond and Roger Mac Ginty, 'Where now for the critique of the liberal peace?', *Cooperation and Conflict* 50: 2, 2015, pp. 171–89.

[30] Guehenno, 'The United Nations', p. 190.

[31] One useful framework for evaluating the difficulty of the strategic environment facing peace operations identifies the key factors as: a high number of warring parties; absence of a peace agreement signed by all major warring parties before intervention and with a minimum of coercion; a high likelihood of spoilers; a collapsed state (i.e. lack of functioning state institutions); a high number of armed fighters (cases with over 50,000 armed actors are considered particularly difficult); relatively easy access to disposable natural resources; presence of hostile neighbouring states or networks; wars of secession (since these can frequently become all-or-nothing struggles); unwillingness of major or regional powers to engage in conflict management and peacemaking; and operations conducted in remote areas with harsh physical terrain and a lack of basic infrastructure. See Downs and Stedman, 'Evaluation issues', pp. 43–69.

[32] See e.g. *Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peacekeeping Operations* (HIPPO Report) (New York: UN, 2015); António Guterres, 'Remarks to Security Council High-level Debate on Collective Action to Improve UN Peacekeeping Operations', 28 March 2018, https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2018-03-28/collective-action-improve-un-peacekeeping-operations-remarks.

preferred approach currently seems to be sequenced mandates that initially focus on a limited number of immediate stabilization priorities, with additional priorities determined once the mission has had time to realistically assess local circumstances.[33] Nevertheless, broad mandates remain the rule, not the exception.

Objective 2: Minimize risk

The Council also wants to enhance the safety and security of UN personnel and minimize peacekeeper casualties. Peacekeeping inevitably involves some degree of life-threatening risk, and T/PCCs naturally want to avoid casualties wherever possible. But concerns about the safety and security of peacekeepers have intensified as more have been deployed into high-threat environments and because of a rise in the absolute numbers of malicious attacks on them (see figure 3 overleaf).[34] This question has, moreover, raised a significant ethical issue for the Council: the fact that since 2000 most peacekeeper fatalities have been from poorer countries, comprising what one respected commentator described as 'the blue helmet caste system'.[35] In fact, UN peacekeeper fatalities from malicious attacks were proportionally much higher in the mid-1990s than they have been in the 2010s (see figure 4 overleaf), and more UN peacekeepers have died from accidents and illness than malicious attacks.[36]

Apart from the human cost, the Council's concern appears to have been the negative 'body-bag effect'[37]—reduced public support for deployments following peacekeeper fatalities—on the UN's force generation efforts, especially for deployments where T/PCCs did not consider their core national security interests to be involved. In practice, however, the 'body-bag effect' on UN peacekeeping from malicious attacks has been minimal, and largely concentrated in rich democracies, which are generally more likely to reduce their contingents after suffering fatalities while poorer and non-democratic states are likely to increase theirs.[38]

[33] See HIPPO Report, p. 10, and three IPI reports on *Prioritizing and sequencing peacekeeping mandates*: *The case of MINUSMA* (New York: IPI, May 2018); *The case of MINUSCA* (New York: IPI, Oct. 2018); *The case of UNMISS* (New York: IPI, Feb. 2019).

[34] See e.g. Haidi Willmot, Scott Sheeran and Lisa Sharland, *Safety and security challenges in UN peace operations* (New York: IPI, July 2015); Lt-Gen. Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz, William Phillips and Salvator Cusimano, *Improving security of United Nations peacekeepers* (New York: UN, 19 Dec. 2017), https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/improving_security_of_united_nations_peacekeepers_report.pdf. It is also one of the seven thematic areas of the UN's current 'Action for Peacekeeping' initiative.

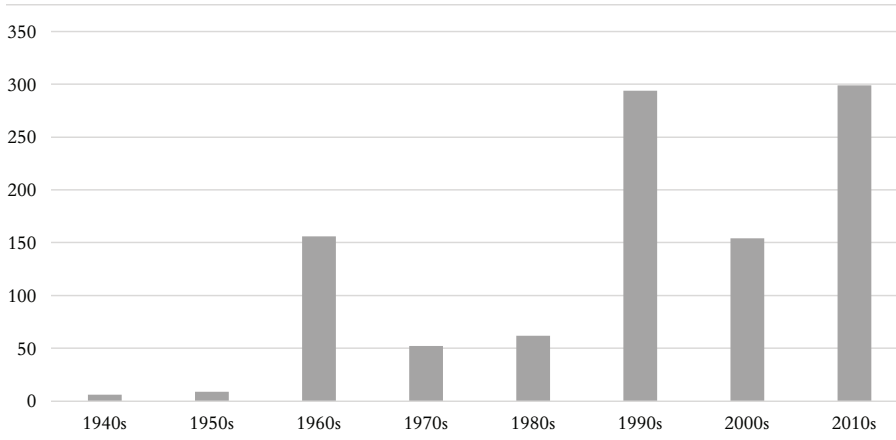
[35] Colum Lynch, 'The blue helmet caste system', *Foreign Policy*, 11 April 2013, https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/04/11/the-blue-helmet-caste-system/.

[36] By 31 July 2019, there had been 3,868 UN peacekeeper fatalities: 1,339 in accidents, 1,233 through illness, 1,031 by malicious acts and 265 by other causes (self-inflicted, to be determined and unknown). See Marina E. Henke, *Has UN peacekeeping become more deadly? Analyzing trends in UN fatalities* (New York: IPI, 2016); Jair van der Lijn and Timo Smit, *Peacekeepers under threat? Fatality trends in UN peace operations*, SIPRI policy brief (Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Sept. 2015).

[37] Lawrence Freedman, 'Victims and victors: reflections on the Kosovo war', *Review of International Studies* 26: 3, 2000, p. 337.

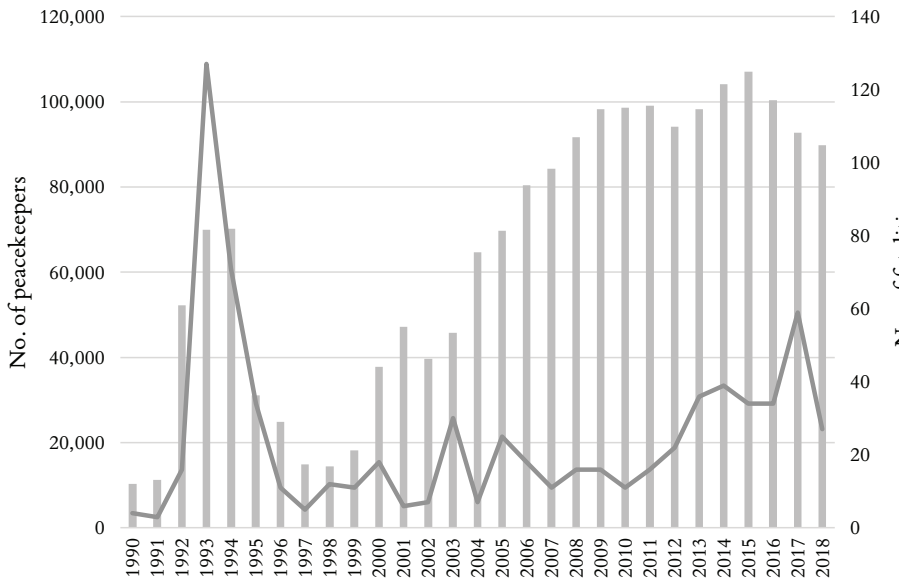
[38] See Steffi Raes, Cind du Bois and Caroline Buts, 'Supplying UN peacekeepers: an assessment of the body bag syndrome among OECD nations', *International Peacekeeping* 26: 1, 2019, pp. 111–36; Andrew Levin, 'Peacekeeper fatalities and force commitments to UN operations', *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, forthcoming 2019.

Figure 3: UN peacekeepers killed in 'malicious acts', by decade (1948 to June 2019)



Source: UN Peacekeeping, https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/peacekeeper-fatalities.

Figure 4: UN peacekeepers and fatalities from malicious acts, 1990–2018



Source: UN Peacekeeping, https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/statsbyyearincidenttype_5_20.pdf; *Providing for Peacekeeping* dataset, http://www.providingforpeacekeeping.org/contributions/.

In absolute terms, more peacekeepers were killed by acts of violence between 2013 and 2017 than in any other five-year period in UN history, the highest concentration being in MINUSMA (with 123 fatalities and 385 cases of serious injury from malicious acts as of 1 June 2019).[39] The former UN force commander in Haiti and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), General dos Santos Cruz, concluded this was because the UN flag no longer offered natural protection and also because many peacekeeping contingents suffered from 'Chapter VI syndrome', a mentality that produced deficiencies in training, equipment and performance and prevented them adapting to new challenges posed by contemporary high-threat environments.[40] Cruz's concerns were echoed by some of the UN's top T/PCCs. India, for instance, emphasized its deep concern about this trend, as 'a country which has sacrificed perhaps the largest number of its nationals' in UN peacekeeping.[41] To better protect peacekeepers, New Delhi also called for a dedicated UN capacity to counter improvised explosive devices, improve security infrastructure at contingent bases, and prevent contributing states adopting caveats that undermined the chain of command.[42] Pakistan's UN ambassador also cautioned that 'the mantra of doing more for less should not be at the cost of safety and security', and lamented: 'If the UN cannot protect itself, how will it be able to protect others?'[43]

The goal of minimizing peacekeeper casualties had three particularly notable consequences. First, force protection became a central factor in planning and conducting UN operations. As the Cruz Report concluded, this led missions to adopt defensive postures and fuelled the mentality that peacekeepers should not use force to defend themselves. In Cruz's view, such actions emboldened spoilers and created incoherent mission footprints that prevented missions from eliminating threats and, ironically, thereby contributed to heightened insecurity.[44] Second, they encouraged contributing countries to employ caveats restricting how, when or where their contingents could operate in a peacekeeping operation, regardless of orders they might receive from the mission's force commander.[45] Such caveats included geographical restrictions on deployment locations, restrictions on the type of operations that could be undertaken and restrictions on activities to be undertaken at night-time. By 2015, the issue was significant enough for the HIPPO Report to recommend that 'any national caveats beyond the national restrictions expressly accepted by the Secretariat at the outset should be treated as disobedience of lawful command'.[46] UN force commanders also complained

[39] Cruz et al., *Improving security*.
[40] Cruz et al., *Improving security*.
[41] Ambassador Syed Akbarrudin, statement to the C34, New York, 12 Feb. 2018.
[42] 'India wants dedicated counter-IED resources for peacekeeping missions under threat', *Economic Times* (India), 9 Nov. 2018, https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/need-for-dedicated-counter-ied-resources-for-peacekeeping-missions-facing-threats-india/articleshow/66554106.cms.
[43] Ambassador Maleeha Lodhi, statement, New York, 9 Feb. 2018, reported in Pakistan Mission to United Nations, 'Pakistan calls for steps to ensure safety of UN peacekeepers', http://www.pakun.org/press-releases/2018/02092018-01.php.
[44] Cruz et al., *Improving security*, pp. 11, 12, 16.
[45] Alexandra Novosseloff, 'No caveats, please? Breaking a myth in UN peace operations', *Global Peace Operations Review*, 12 Sept. 2016, https://peaceoperationsreview.org/thematic-essays/no-caveats-please-breaking-a-myth-in-un-peace-operations/.
[46] HIPPO Report, p. 28.

that caveats undermined effective command and control and unity of effort, and in some missions the Security Council has called on the Secretary-General to reject 'any national caveat that negatively affects the implementation of mandate effectiveness'.[47] The Cruz Report concluded that the use of caveats 'increases the risk of casualties'.[48] A third consequence was a negative impact on force generation, whereby UN missions often suffered significant vacancy rates—that is, gaps between the authorized number of personnel and the number actually deployed.[49] Many NATO countries, for example, have long distrusted UN command and control mechanisms, and have deployed very few uniformed peacekeepers to UN missions during the twenty-first century.[50]

Objective 3: Maximize cost-effectiveness

Reducing the financial cost of UN peacekeeping by limiting the size of missions, maximizing efficiency and minimizing waste is the third dimension of the Council's trilemma. This agenda also attracts a wider group of states, for a variety of reasons; some want to cut peacekeeping bills to fund what they believe are better conflict management mechanisms; some think UN peacekeeping operations are ineffective or too numerous or too large; others promote cuts to placate domestic criticism of such spending.

Whatever the combination of motives, reducing overall peacekeeping costs is inherently complicated, in part because the level of UN peacekeeping required in any particular year is unpredictable, given the possible need to establish new missions and/or respond to escalations in existing crises. In addition, the UN's financial system for peacekeeping is based on rates of assessment that are negotiated in the General Assembly every three years; but states do not always pay their assessed dues in full and on time, thus generating unpredictable arrears.[51] Finally, the UN's assessed peacekeeping contributions could rise owing to unanticipated expenditures, including how often and to what extent they are used to pay for African Union peace support operations authorized by the Security Council.[52]

Although the General Assembly's Fifth Committee finalizes mission budgets, it is the Council's resolutions that determine their size and 'force requirements'. Recommendations on force requirements emerge from the Secretariat but are

[47] See e.g. 'Force commanders outline challenges facing United Nations peacekeeping efforts in briefing to Security Council', New York, 23 May 2017, https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc12834.doc.htm; UN Doc. S/RES/2406, 15 March 2018, on UNMISS, p. 4.

[48] Cruz et al., *Improving security*, executive summary.

[49] For details of the vacancy rates in eight of the largest recent UN peacekeeping operations, see 'Authorized vs deployed personnel', *Global Review of Peace Operations*, 2017, https://peaceoperationsreview.org/featured-data#authorized.

[50] Alex J. Bellamy and Paul D. Williams, 'The West and contemporary peace operations', *Journal of Peace Research* 46: 1, 2009, pp. 39–57. Notably, even when significant numbers of western troops deployed in MINUSMA from 2013, they accounted for only ten (from France, Germany, the Netherlands and Serbia) of the mission's 201 fatalities (as of 31 July 2019).

[51] Peacekeeping arrears reached nearly US$2 billion by the end of 2018: see UN Secretary-General, *Improving the financial situation of the United Nations*, UN Doc. A/73/809, 26 March 2019.

[52] Katharina P. Coleman, 'Extending UN peacekeeping financing beyond UN peacekeeping operations? The prospects and challenges of reform', *Global Governance* 23: 1, 2017, pp. 101–20.

designed to fit with what the Council is likely to accept rather than an objective assessment of needs on the ground. To invert the Brahimi Report's phrase, they reflect the fact that the Secretariat has generally told the Council what it wanted to hear rather than what it needed to know.[53]

Table 2: Calculating force size in the UN's 'big five' operations

Location	*Mission*	*Local population, millions (relevant regions)*[a]	*Method 1: 1:50*	*Method 2: 1:100*	*Mission size (approx. max. no. uniformed)*
Darfur, Sudan	UNAMID	9.2	184,000	92,000	25,000
Democratic Republic of Congo	MONUSCO	20.7 (Kivus, Ituri, Haute Ulele, Tanganyika)	414,000	207,000	21,500
South Sudan	UNMISS	11	220,000	110,000	17,000
Mali	MINUSMA	3.3 (Mopti, Gao, Timbuktu, Kidal)	66,000	33,000	15,000
Central African Republic	MINUSCA	4.7	94,000	47,000	15,000

[a] World Bank data for 2018, for entire countries: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/sp.pop.totl.

Although meeting force requirements alone does not guarantee mission success, the Council consistently designs its missions well below recommended military–civilian ratios. Table 2 compares the size of the UN's 'big five' operations to US counterinsurgency doctrine—which recommends 20–25 military or police personnel for every 1,000 locals in the area of operations (Method 1)—and a US military expert's more modest ratio of deploying 1 peacekeeper for every 100 locals (Method 2).[54] These metrics suggest the UN's 'big five' missions should have 978,000 or 489,000 uniformed peacekeepers; in fact, their maximum authorized strength was 93,500, less than 10 per cent or 20 per cent, respectively, of those figures. The point here is not that the Security Council should adopt these specific numbers—by 2010, estimates suggested the world's militaries could sustain only about 210,000 troops on peacekeeping operations[55]—but to show

[53] Brahimi Report, p. x.
[54] US Army, *Counterinsurgency*, FM 3-24 (Washington DC: Department of the Army, Dec. 2006), para. 1-67; Michael O'Hanlon, *The science of war* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 109.
[55] Donald Daniel, 'Contemporary patterns in peace operations, 2000–2010', in Bellamy and Williams, eds, *Providing peacekeepers*, p. 28.

that the Council consistently designs missions that are far below what objective military assessments recommend.

Concerns about costs intensified after 2005 when the UN's peacekeeping bill increased dramatically, fluctuating between US$4.7 billion and US$8.1 billion per fiscal year. The 2008 global financial crisis reinforced this growing concern, as did the arrival of Donald J. Trump's administration in the United States in 2017. Trump's initial budget proposal to Congress reduced UN peacekeeping contributions by US$1 billion and refused to pay the United States' full rate of assessment (see table 1), generating annual peacekeeping arrears of about US$250 million.[56] The UN peacekeeping bill was subsequently reduced by several hundred million dollars in 2017 and 2018, largely as a result of winding down three large missions—in Liberia (UNMIL), Haiti (MINUSTAH) and Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI)—and downsizing two more—in the DRC (MONUSCO) and Darfur, Sudan (UNAMID).

It is also important to keep the UN's peacekeeping bill in perspective. Even at its peak it amounts to significantly less than 0.5 per cent of annual global military expenditure, and it is much cheaper than unilateral western and/or NATO or EU deployments.[57] For the US taxpayer, for example, the cost of a UN peacekeeping operation is little more than one-eighth that of a unilateral US deployment.[58] Moreover, efficiency drives and reforms have reduced the UN's average per capita cost of deploying its military peacekeepers by 23 per cent from 2008/9 to 2017/18 (from just under US$90,000 to just under US$70,000)—notwithstanding an increase in the effective reimbursement rate for uniformed peacekeepers from approximately US$1,100 per month to US$1,440.[59]

To summarize the analysis so far, the Security Council's peacekeeping trilemma imposes contradictory pressures on the design of UN operations. Since the Council cannot respond to all three pressures simultaneously, one of them always loses out relative to the other two. This situation generates three broad scenarios (outlined below), depending on which goals are prioritized by the Council and the other main stakeholder groups. At this macro level, the most plausible interpretation of twenty-first-century UN peacekeeping is that the Council has generally prioritized the goals of maximizing mandate implementation and cost-effectiveness over avoiding peacekeeper casualties (Scenario 2 below). The Council is the chief beneficiary of this scenario because it is widely seen to be 'doing something' in response to various crises, whereas the major contributors suffer the consequences in terms of casualties and financial problems when the level of arrears rises to crisis point.

[56] Colum Lynch, 'Trump administration eyes $1 billion in cuts to UN peacekeeping', *Foreign Policy*, 23 March 2017, https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/03/23/trump-administration-eyes-1-billion-in-cuts-to-u-n-peacekeeping/. Congress rejected Trump's proposal and instead appropriated funds very close to the amounts for previous fiscal years. See *How the US funds the UN* (Washington DC: Better World Campaign, n.d.), https://betterworldcampaign.org/us-un-partnership/how-the-us-funds-the-un/.

[57] SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, 1949–2017, https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex.

[58] US Government Accountability Office (GAO), *UN peacekeeping: cost estimate for hypothetical US operations exceeds actual costs for comparable UN operation* (Washington DC, Feb. 2018).

[59] Author's email communication with UN Department of Field Support official, 18 Nov. 2018.

Scenario 1: Success and security … cost money

Here, the Security Council prioritizes empowering peacekeepers to effectively implement broad mandates even in high-threat environments (Objective 1) and minimizing peacekeeper casualties (Objective 2). But for this approach to work, the UN would have to either deploy significantly larger missions to counter local threats or deal with safety and security issues for its personnel by investing in much better-equipped, more mobile and better-protected forces and infrastructure. Doing so, however, would considerably increase the financial costs of missions, thereby preventing the achievement of Objective 3, reducing the UN's peacekeeping bill.[60] Relevant examples of spending more money in the hope of achieving success might include the authorization of an expanded UNIFIL in 2006, and the reinforcement of MONUSCO with the Force Intervention Brigade in 2013 and UNMISS with the Regional Protection Force in 2014.

Scenario 2: Success on the cheap … is risky

Here, the Security Council prioritizes deploying missions capable of implementing broad mandates in high-threat environments (Objective 1) but also keeping their financial costs down (Objective 3). The only practical way to achieve this in high-threat environments is by deploying fewer uniformed personnel. However, for such forces to be effectively threat-oriented requires considerable financial investment in force protection infrastructure, protected mobility, special forces and rapid response units to tackle threats.[61] Without more money, deploying fewer peacekeepers would undermine the mission's ability to implement broad mandates and raise the risks to personnel, especially in missions mandated to confront armed spoilers, thereby undermining Objective 2 (minimizing peacekeeper casualties). As noted above, the Council has consistently authorized far smaller forces than relevant military doctrine suggests, while giving them increasingly forceful mandates including extending state authority, degrading spoilers and protecting civilians.

Scenario 3: Cheap and secure … won't work

Here, the Security Council prioritizes cost-effectiveness (Objective 3)—perhaps by authorizing smaller missions or not deploying missions to the most high-threat environments—and minimizing peacekeeper casualties (Objective 2)—perhaps by strengthening force postures and prioritizing force protection. But this approach

[60] One recent study concluded that an average annual peacekeeping bill between 2001 and 2013 of approximately US$8 billion would have delivered much greater success: Havard Hegre, Lisa Hultman and Havard Mokleiv Nygard, 'Evaluating the conflict-reducing effect of UN peacekeeping operations', *Journal of Politics* 81: 1, 2018, pp. 215–32. Other experts, however, have estimated that a realistic annual budget for properly resourced UN peace operations would be around US$20 billion: e.g. senior military officer, working group, Challenges Forum, Stockholm, 2018.

[61] See Cruz et al., *Improving security*, pp. 15–16, 31.

would risk unhelpful 'bunkerization',[62] making it virtually impossible to achieve a broad set of mandated tasks such as civilian protection, stabilization or the consolidation of state authority, especially in the kind of high-threat environments in which the UN's big missions operate (as called for in Objective 1).

Mitigating the Security Council's peacekeeping trilemma

Fortunately, there are ways to mitigate and perhaps even transcend the current trilemma. Ken Booth and Nicholas Wheeler's work on the security dilemma suggests there are three a priori ways decision-makers could respond, following, respectively, fatalist, mitigator or transcender logics.[63]

Fatalist logic accepts that the trilemma cannot be escaped: all three objectives are worthy and will retain the support of significant stakeholders unwilling to give them up. Policy therefore remains a perpetual struggle where one objective always loses out in comparative terms. In contrast, mitigator logic suggests that the trilemma's worst consequences can be alleviated for a time, if not completely eliminated. Mitigation requires finding alternative ways to meet the objectives or revising them enough to strike bargains between stakeholders that would hold at least temporarily. Finally, transcender logic suggests that the trilemma can be escaped by redefining the relevant goals and national interests, using the influence of epistemic communities and/or the autonomous power wielded by bureaucrats.[64] Structural constraints would remain, but a dramatic reconfiguration—or even disbanding—of the distinct stakeholder groups to generate much greater unity of effort would effectively transcend the current trilemma and change the international pressures dictating the shape of UN peacekeeping.

For our purposes, fatalist policies would oscillate between the Scenarios 1–3 and their respective merits and demerits. If the Security Council accepted as the fundamental purpose of peacekeeping operations the achievement of their mandated tasks, then Scenario 1 would be the most logical to pursue.

Mitigation involves striking bargains to reduce the most negative consequences of current international political divisions. Such a grand bargain would need some UN members to invest more money and provide more peacekeepers or field capabilities, the Council to revise its mandates in exchange for better peacekeeper performance and accountability from T/PCCs, and agreement to revise the formula for determining peacekeeping rates of assessment. What should the essentials of each of these reforms entail?

First, improving the performance of UN peacekeepers is key to mitigating the trilemma because it would make mandate implementation more likely and ultimately lead to better value for money (even bearing in mind that UN peace-

[62] See Mark Duffield, 'Risk-management and the fortified aid compound', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 4: 4, 2010, pp. 453–74.

[63] Ken Booth and Nicholas Wheeler, *The security dilemma* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

[64] See Peter M. Haas, 'Epistemic communities and international policy coordination', *International Organization* 46: 1, 1992, pp. 1–35; Martha Finnemore and Michael N. Barnett, *Rules for the world: international organizations in global politics* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2004). For evidence of the UN Secretariat's potential autonomous power, see n. 5 above.

keeping is already cost-effective compared to other forms of military deployments). The UN has already taken important, albeit incomplete, steps to improve the performance of its peacekeepers, including developing a dozen UN military unit manuals that establish the core tasks peacekeepers should be able to perform.[65] These can inform better training regimes to prepare peacekeepers to perform those tasks effectively in the field. They also enable the UN to develop objective criteria by which to assess peacekeeper performance, instead of the heavily politicized arguments over 'failing contingents' that have been the norm. Furthermore, the Secretariat has developed important policies and frameworks whereby the Inspector-General, force commanders and other senior leaders can assess the preparedness and performance of UN personnel in field missions.[66] This agenda was further strengthened by the unanimous adoption of Security Council Resolution 2436 (21 September 2018), 'aimed at enhancing the performance of peacekeeping personnel at all levels, both at Headquarters and in the field, [and] stressing the need to improve posture, behaviour, leadership, initiative and accountability'.[67]

Mitigation also requires peacekeepers to be held accountable if they violate international humanitarian and human rights law or the UN's conduct and discipline rules, including those relating to harming civilians, trading in illicit commodities, and sexual exploitation and abuse.[68] Accountability is a key part of strengthening the legitimacy of peace operations with both international and local audiences.[69] Operations with international legitimacy are more likely to receive sustained political and financial support, and operations perceived as legitimate by local audiences should be able to enhance their effectiveness, not least by gathering better information in order to understand conflict dynamics and alleviate threats. Or, expressed negatively, 'legitimacy and consent are, to a peace operation, what body armor is to an infantry soldier: something to reduce the probability of catastrophic system failure'.[70] Enhancing accountability should therefore increase operational effectiveness and reduce malicious attacks on peacekeepers, which, in turn, should reduce the cost of force protection.

A third mitigatory reform would be persuading the Security Council to adopt prioritized and sequenced mandates, as recommended by the HIPPO Report.[71] Missions could then focus initially on just a few key tasks and establish

[65] These manuals cover infantry battalions, aviation, engineers, force headquarters support, logistics, maritime, military police, reconnaissance, riverine, signals, special forces and transport units.

[66] See e.g. *Operational readiness assurance and performance improvement* (UN DPKO/DFS, Ref. 2015.16, December 2015) and *Standard Operating Procedure on Force Commander's Evaluation of Subordinate Military Entities in Peacekeeping Operations 2016*, Ref. 2016.02 (UN DPKO/Department of Field Support, Jan. 2016).

[67] UN Security Council, 'Security Council stresses need to improve behaviour, leadership, accountability in peacekeeping, unanimously adopting Resolution 2436 (2018)', press release SC/13518, 21 Sept. 2018, https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/sc13518.doc.htm.

[68] UN statistics on conduct and discipline issues in its field missions are available at https://conduct.unmissions.org.

[69] On how peacekeeping operations generate legitimacy, see Michael Barnett, 'Building a republican peace: stabilizing states after war', *International Security* 30: 4, 2006, pp. 87–112; Sharon Wiharta, 'The legitimacy of peace operations', in *SIPRI Yearbook 2009* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 95–116; Jenni Whalan, *How peace operations work: power, legitimacy and effectiveness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), and 'The local legitimacy of peacekeepers', *Journal of International and Statebuilding* 11: 3, 2017, pp. 306–20.

[70] William Durch and Madeline England, 'The purposes of peace operations', in *Annual Review of Global Peace Operations 2009* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2009), p. 17.

[71] HIPPO Report, pp. viii, xi, 38, 48.

subsequent priorities once they had gained greater awareness of the local situation. This improves upon the existing approach whereby initial mandates are formulated largely on the basis of a technical assessment mission, usually comprising a small team of UN officials who conduct a brief (less than two weeks) visit to the potential area of operations. More focused mandates would raise the prospects for success in the early phase of a mission when questions of how to prioritize relatively scarce resources are critical. It could also improve cost-effectiveness by enabling the UN to stagger the deployment of field personnel according to when appropriate 'benchmarks'—usually referring to conditions on the ground—are met. This would also help reduce force protection costs.

The final mitigatory reform would involve the UN's members investing more money in peacekeeping operations to give them a better chance of success. UN peacekeeping is widely recognized as a cost-effective mechanism of conflict management and would remain so even with some additional funding.[72] Moreover, alongside the other reforms outlined above, better-performing and more accountable peacekeepers with prioritized and sequenced mandates are more likely to deliver positive results. And since effective missions are more likely to develop sound exit strategies than struggling missions, such investment is likely to pay for itself over the longer term. In practical terms, strengthening the financial system to prepare, deploy and sustain peacekeepers would require some states—probably those in the UN's Level B and C assessment categories—to increase their contributions to the overall bill, while the United States' rate should be significantly reduced for political reasons.[73]

Implementing these four reforms would mitigate the trilemma by enabling key stakeholders to strike bargains that would improve the prospects of deploying more effective UN peacekeeping operations. But this reform agenda would not alter the Council's three strategic objectives or the composition of the three main stakeholder groups.

Transcending the Security Council's peacekeeping trilemma

Transcending the trilemma would involve re-envisioning how missions are authorized, designed, generated and financed, and breaking down the distinctions between the existing stakeholder groups. How could this happen? In sum, by creating much greater unity of effort behind a re-envisaged peacekeeping enterprise that is not influenced so strongly by today's stakeholder groups.

[72] See e.g. The White House, *United States support to United Nations peace operations* (Washington DC, 28 Sept. 2015), p. 2; Hegre et al., 'Evaluating the conflict-reducing effect'; US GAO, *UN peacekeeping*.

[73] Since 2001, there are 10 levels in the UN's peacekeeping scale of assessment. They are generally based on average per capita gross national product of member states with some states—the P5—paying a premium and others receiving a discount. Level B includes countries with per capita gross national income above twice the world average, among them Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Spain and Sweden. Level C was defined by UN General Assembly to include the following countries: Brunei Darussalam, Kuwait, Qatar, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates: UN Doc. A/RES/55/235, 30 January 2011, Annex.

First, in the absence of fundamental revision of the UN Charter, the Security Council, especially the P5, will continue to write mission mandates. This would be true even if the Council's membership were expanded, as envisaged in contemporary reform proposals.[74] Nevertheless, the Council's approach could move beyond simply prioritizing and sequencing mandates to take genuine account of other important voices. Better triangular cooperation with the major T/PCCs and the Secretariat, for example, could enhance support for the Council's mandates and increase the likelihood of their being genuinely realistic. So could broadening this process to include the host government(s)—'quadrilateral cooperation'. This was the essence of the HIPPO Report's (unadopted) recommendation to create 'strategic compacts' with host governments.[75] It would also make sense for the Council to engage more systematically in 'quintilateral cooperation' with stakeholders in civil society, including representatives of local populations on the receiving end of UN operations—'the peacekept'[76]—and the broader epistemic community on peacekeeping. Obviously, wider multidimensional engagement would force trade-offs in terms of rapidity of decisions and the specific details of mandates, but it should lay the foundation for more unified and sustained political support for the operation in question, which is ultimately crucial for ensuring success.

In comparison to the Security Council, the second key stakeholder group—the major T/PCCs—is relatively malleable, especially if national interests or the regional focus of UN operations alter. Since 2000, most UN peacekeepers have been Asian or African. During the early 1990s, however, NATO states occupied some of the top positions, mainly through providing UN peacekeepers in the Balkans and Somalia. Two factors could potentially change the composition of the major UN T/PCCs.

One would be a shift in the geopolitical focus of UN peacekeeping operations away from sub-Saharan Africa. Since 1988, 30 out of 59 new UN peacekeeping operations and the overwhelming majority of its peacekeepers deployed to Africa. Since 1999, 15 of the 22 new UN peacekeeping operations deployed to the continent. Significantly, Africa is generally considered the least important geostrategic region for the world's Great Powers, with the partial exceptions of France and, more recently, China. UN peacekeeping has therefore usually been relegated to the realm of third-tier security issues or humanitarian concerns for many potential contributing countries. However, if the Council sent missions to more

[74] See e.g. Report of the Commission on Global Security, Justice and Governance, *Confronting the crisis of global governance* (The Hague and Washington DC: Hague Institute for Global Justice and Stimson Center, June 2015), pp. 84–7.

[75] HIPPO Report, para. 146. The recommendation stated that compacts should be signed before the operation deploys; involve formal agreement on the guiding vision underpinning the peacekeeping operation and the respective roles and responsibilities of the government and the mission; and include agreed time-bound performance benchmarks to facilitate mutual accountability and reporting. See Youssef Mahmoud's remarks in 'New strategic compact', UN press release SC/12969, 29 Aug. 2017, https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc12969.doc.htm; Sofia Sebastian and Aditi Gorur, *UN peacekeeping and host-state consent* (Washington DC: Stimson Center, March 2018), p. 6.

[76] Page Fortna, *Does peacekeeping work?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), ch. 1. This work would need to go well beyond the current 'Arria formula' meetings of the Security Council to include large-scale public opinion surveys and engagement with focus groups.

geostrategically important areas—perhaps including Libya, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen—the list of major T/PCCs might also shift (and might even converge with the other stakeholder groups).[77] The largest UN mission in the Middle East—UNIFIL in Lebanon—is a case in point, attracting several major and sustained European contributions after the 2006 Israel–Hezbollah war. Furthermore, most potential T/PCCs are more likely to deploy to missions in their own regions, especially those potentially involving the use of force. This explains why since 2005 UN peacekeeping contributions by states from the neighbourhood surrounding peacekeeping operations have increased significantly.[78]

The other shift that might transcend current trilemma dynamics would be a major return of NATO states to UN peacekeeping—something frequently called for by senior UN officials. There have been tentative signs of this in UNIFIL and MINUSMA, and the UK has recently deployed small contingents to UN missions for the first time in two decades, in South Sudan (UNMISS) and Somalia (UNSOS), and will soon do so in Mali (MINUSMA).[79] These are clearly limited examples, but they illustrate the point that when major strategic priorities such as the campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq wound down, a return to UN peacekeeping was possible. The Obama administration encouraged this possibility, including via the series of peacekeeping leaders' summits (2014 and 2015) and subsequent defence ministerials (in 2016 and 2017).[80] President Trump has reversed that US position, but efforts to broaden the UN's base of T/PCCs continue, currently spearheaded by the 'Action for Peacekeeping' initiative. Once again, however, a recent study concluded that this initiative 'has not yet translated into concrete action by member states, limiting tangible results for missions on the ground'.[81]

Finally, peacekeeping's principal financiers will also be difficult to change dramatically, in part because it is morally right that the world's richest countries, which benefit most from international peace and security, pay most of the bill. On the other hand, UN peacekeeping is financially vulnerable if it relies so heavily on just a few countries. In particular, the Trump administration's refusal to pay its assessed rate in full and on time has set a bad example, generated substantial arrears, and had negative effects on both field missions and the major T/PCCs.

[77] Following the Stockholm agreement of December 2018, a UN observer mission deployed to Yemen the same month. Contingency planning was conducted for a UN peacekeeping operation in Libya during 2011, but this was rejected by the local authorities. The UN Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS) was deployed (and withdrawn) in 2012; debate continues over whether another mission might be needed. See e.g. Andrew McIndoe, 'Why Syria will need a UN peacekeeping force (called Unshams)', *PassBlue*, 3 May 2018, https://www.passblue.com/2018/05/03/why-syria-will-need-a-un-peacekeeping-force-called-unshams/. On the debates over a potential UN peacekeeping operation in Ukraine, see Richard Gowan, *Can the United Nations unite Ukraine?* (Washington DC: Hudson Institute, Jan. 2018); Ewan Lawson, *Considering a UN peacekeeping mission in the Donbass*, conference report (London: Royal United Services Institute, Feb. 2019).

[78] Paul D. Williams and Thong Nguyen, *Neighborhood dynamics in UN peacekeeping operations, 1990–2017* (New York: IPI, April 2018).

[79] See John Karlsrud and Adam Smith, *Europe's return to UN peacekeeping in Africa? Lessons from Mali* (New York: IPI, July 2015), and the articles in the special issue 'A European return to UN peacekeeping?', *International Peacekeeping* 23: 5, 2016.

[80] On the Obama administration's promotion of UN peacekeeping, see Paul D. Williams, 'Keeping a piece of peacekeeping', *Foreign Affairs*, 6 Oct. 2015, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2015-10-06/keeping-piece-peacekeeping.

[81] Jake Sherman, *Action for Peacekeeping* (New York: IPI, Sept. 2019), p. 1.

By January 2019, the Secretary-General was lamenting a US$2 billion shortfall in peacekeeping finance—one-third of it owed by the United States—that saw UN missions facing a liquidity crisis.[82]

There is, then, a good political case for sharing the UN's peacekeeping expenditures more equitably across the world's richest countries. While not renouncing the general formula that countries with the capacity to pay should pay more, and drawing on previous initiatives, I propose that no UN member state should pay above a ceiling of about 15 per cent of the total peacekeeping bill.[83] This would avoid UN peacekeeping suffering problems generated by the accumulation of arrears from just one or a handful of countries. In the short term, of course, it would leave 13 per cent of UN peacekeeping expenditures unfinanced (the gap between the current US rate of 28 per cent and the proposed ceiling of 15 per cent). This would have to be met by changing the assessed rates of other states—probably those in UN Levels B and C—to plug the gap.

Conclusion

The Security Council's trilemma is one way in which the international political environment places contradictory pressures on the design of UN peacekeeping operations. The Council's desire to have its 'Christmas tree mandates' implemented even in high-threat environments, at low financial cost, and while minimizing peacekeeper casualties, cannot be met in full. Nevertheless, policy-makers at the UN could mitigate the trilemma's worst negative effects by implementing four reforms: improving peacekeeper performance; holding peacekeepers accountable for misdeeds; adopting prioritized and sequenced mission mandates; and (at least for the foreseeable future) investing a bit more money in the peacekeeping enterprise. Transcending the trilemma is a much more daunting agenda. It would require a fundamental reconfiguration of peacekeeping's key stakeholder groups, much greater unity of effort behind a new vision for UN peacekeeping, and radical changes to how missions are authorized, generated and financed. To achieve this, the Great Powers would need to recommit to peacekeeping and lead by example, while some of its stalwart supporters would have to invest significantly more resources. In positive terms, such a radical approach could draw on the skills of a more professional Secretariat, a better-informed epistemic community and at least some representatives of the 'peacekept'. Until then, Security Council members and others who set UN missions up for failure and then complain about those failures should at least acknowledge their responsibility in this process.

[82] Michelle Nichols, 'UN members owe $2 billion in debt to peacekeeping, US owes a third', Reuters, 17 Jan. 2019, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-un-peacekeepers-usa-idUSKCN1PB2OD.

[83] Several older proposals concerning the UN regular budget drew similar conclusions. In 1985, Swedish Prime Minister Olaf Palme proposed a 10% ceiling for any single country's contribution to the UN regular budget to avoid the United States exercising too much leverage over the organization. In 1986 a non-paper by Sadruddin Aga Khan and Maurice Strong made a similar argument. And in 1994, Erskine Childers and Brian Urquhart concluded that 'a 10 or 12 per cent ceiling on the individual share of budget of any member-state is so important to the political health and stability of the world organization that it should be the starting premise of the assessment formula': Erskine Childers with Brian Urquhart, *Renewing the United Nations system* (Uppsala: Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, 1994), p. 154.