operations in Kosovo, Afghanistan, Burundi, Côte d’Ivoire, and Darfur. And they are likely to arise again as long as peace operations continue to be tasked with performing two functions: protecting civilians and providing public security. These mandates create conceptual and operational challenges for peacekeeping, with not only military but also political, humanitarian, human rights, and normative implications.

Protection of Civilians
Since late 1999, no less than ten peace operations—both UN and non-UN—have been authorized under Chapter VII “to protect civilians under the imminent threat of physical violence,” often qualified by the words, “within capabilities and areas of deployment.” This builds on practice that began in the early post–Cold War operations and gained momentum after the tragedies of Rwanda and Srebrenica. While the term “protection of civilians” was not used for the earlier operations, the mandate was implicit. Today, it is standard language in every Security Council resolution that authorizes an operation where civilian lives are likely to be in danger.

This mandate for protection of civilians is part of a normative shift reflected in general statements by the Security Council and the Secretary-General. The Brahimi panel argued that “UN peacekeepers who witness violence against civilians should be presumed to be authorized to stop it, within their means, in support of basic UN principles.” The normative shift is also reflected in the report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, which introduced the “responsibility to protect” principle, later picked up by the High-level Panel in its report, and by the Secretary-General in his. The reference to a “responsibility to protect” at the 2005 World Summit was an important step in this evolution, marking the first time it was endorsed in a universal

Box 1.1 The 2005 World Summit and Peace Operations

The 2005 World Summit adopted (and in some cases adapted) a number of recommendations made by the Secretary-General’s High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change and by the Secretary-General himself in his report In Larger Freedom, which was designed to build on previous reforms of peacekeeping. Among the main conclusions of the summit were:

- Recognition of the “vital role” played by peacekeeping in helping parties to end conflict.
- The need to mount operations with adequate capacity to counter hostilities and fulfill effectively their mandates.
- Endorsement of the creation of an initial standing policy capacity to provide coherent, effective, and responsive startup capability for the policing component of UN peacekeeping missions.
- Support for the European Union and other regional entities’ efforts to develop capacities for rapid deployment and standby arrangements.
- Support for the development and implementation of a ten-year plan for capacity building with the African Union.
- A call on regional organizations with capacity for the prevention of armed conflict or peacekeeping to consider placing these capacities in the framework of the UN Standby Arrangements System.
- A reaffirmation of the commitment to the protection of children in situations of armed conflict.

The summit did not adopt in whole the High-level Panel’s recommendation that the UN establish a strategic reserve for peacekeeping—an idea designed to address the recurrent problem of the need to bolster the defensive and offensive capacity of peacekeeping forces in the face of hostility. The design of a strategic reserve is similar to that of “over-the-horizon” reserve forces commonly used in national deployments. However, the summit did urge further development of “enhanced rapidly deployable capacities to reinforce peacekeeping operations in times of crisis.”

The summit also adopted a carefully but strongly worded “responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.”