

Global _____
Peace Operations
_____ *Review*



JANUARY 2017

A monthly newsletter from the Center on International Cooperation

GLOBAL PEACE OPERATIONS REVIEW

The **Global Peace Operations Review** is an interactive web-portal presenting in-depth analysis and detailed data on military **peacekeeping operations** and civilian-led political missions by the United Nations, regional organizations, and ad-hoc coalitions. The web-portal is a product of the **New York University Center on International Cooperation (CIC)** and a continuation of its long-standing print publications the *Annual Review of Global Peace Operations* and the *Review of Political Missions*.

Providing the most comprehensive overview of multilateral contributions to **peacekeeping, conflict prevention, and post-conflict peacebuilding**, the *Review* aims to initiate and inform discussions on the comparative advantages and appropriateness of different missions, and through constructive analysis to further strengthen existing partnerships necessary for them to succeed.

Through the **Country & Regional Profile pages**, the *Review* provides background information and regularly updated key developments on peace operations and the contexts in which they operate. The analysis is further enhanced by the provision of detailed data on each of the UN's peace operations, and headline data on missions fielded by regional organizations and ad hoc missions, which can be accessed in full through the **Data & Trends** section. Data on non-UN peace operations was compiled by the **Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)**. For more details, please see our **Data guide**. The **Strategic Summary** provides an overview of main developments in mission settings over the past year and presents analysis on trends and the impact these may have on shaping peace operations of the future. Thematic essays presented in the In Focus section unpack issues critical to peace operations, providing analysis and guidance on possible approaches.

The Library section enables readers to download full text .pdf files of past editions of the *Annual Review of Global Peace Operations* (2006-2012) and the *Review of Political Missions* (2010-2012). For those interested in conducting their own analysis using the data generated for these publications, we have provided spreadsheets of all the **statistics** used to compile these reports.

Scope of the Global Peace Operations Review

The *Review* covers more than one hundred multilateral peace operations active in the previous year including missions fielded by the UN, AU, EU, ECOWAS, OSCE, OAS and coalitions. It uses a **broad definition of peace operations** that includes multilateral and ad hoc military and police missions, as well as civilian led political missions. Neither type of mission has a simple definition. Alongside more straightforward peacekeeping missions, the *Review*, mindful of the need for peace operations to adjust to the changing nature of conflict, also includes peace enforcement operations that employ the use of force and engage in active combat.

Under political missions, we include multilateral civilian-led missions that have political engagement in the form of launching and supporting political processes at their core. This includes, for example, the EU's Special Representatives and the African Union Liaison Offices that support the implementation of peace agreements and accompany political processes. We have excluded missions, such as EU delegations and other liaison offices that may engage in political activities, but as their core function serve more as regular diplomatic or developmental presences. Along the same reasoning, we have also excluded election observer and human rights monitoring missions.

Disclaimer

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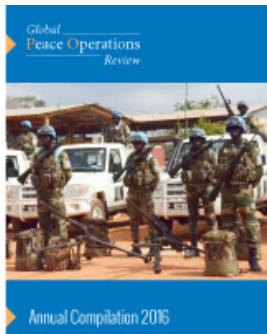
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THEMATIC ESSAYS



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January 26, 2017

GPOR ANNUAL COMPILATION

Center on International Cooperation

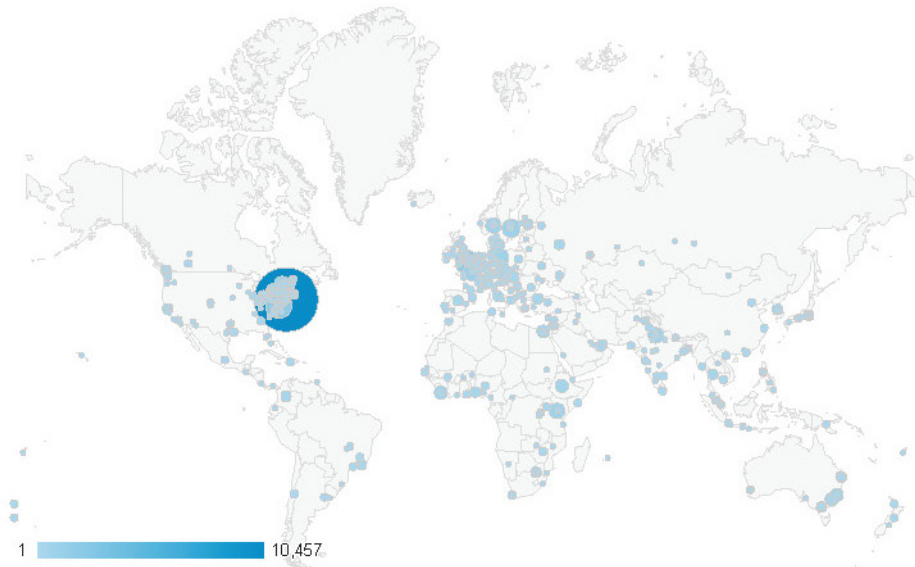
SINCE ITS LAUNCH IN JUNE 2015, THE GLOBAL PEACE OPERATIONS REVIEW HAS SHOWN THAT MANY OF THE ISSUES WE ARE DEBATING DO IN FACT RESONATE WITH LARGER AND WIDER AUDIENCES. OUR ANALYTICS HAVE IDENTIFIED MORE THAN 36,000 USERS WHO HAVE VISITED THE SITE MORE THAN 55,000 TIMES TO READ MORE THAN 88,000 PAGES OF CONTENT.

This is the second edition of the *Global Peace Operations Review* (GPOR) annual compilation. It is the first to collect a full year's worth of content from the website in a single publication. Using an online platform allows us to constantly innovate, and we plan to continue to evolve between these annual releases. Producing the annual compilation allows GPOR to curate this material thematically in a fully searchable and citable electronic book. If you're reading this in PDF format, any text highlighted in blue is hyperlinked back to the website. Like last year, the book will be available for free online. It will also be available for a modest fee to cover costs as a print-on-demand edition via Amazon.

For those implementing and studying UN peace operations, 2015 was the "year of reviews." In June there was the [High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations](#), formally titled *Uniting Our Strengths for Peace*, but affectionately known as the HIPPO report. In the same month, the [Advisory Group of Experts \(AGE\) for the 2015 Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture](#) delivered its report, *The Challenge of Sustaining Peace*. In October 2015, Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace was the report of the [Global Study on the Implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325](#). 2016 was the year the system digested this vast body of information. These reports identified many complex issues beyond the mandate of the outgoing UN Secretary-General. His so-called implementation report picked the low-hanging fruit from the HIPPO, but much remained to be debated. The content of the Review in 2016 can therefore be regarded as capturing much of this unfinished business. These are the difficult challenges being passed to the new Secretary-General for implementation in 2017 and beyond.

Many, but not all, of these issues made the pages of the *Global Peace Operations Review* in 2016. In the quest for better peacekeeping, the United Nations still struggles with implementing mandates that commit it to protecting civilians in conflict zones such as DR Congo or South Sudan. Too often, when crisis arrives in a UN peace operation, the leadership discovers hidden caveats that expose the gaps between what the Security Council has authorized and what troop contributing countries are willing to implement. Such gaps are defining the limits of usefulness of this tool and raising questions about the conditions under which the UN should walk away from peace operations.

The annual compilation is divided along thematic lines. Starting with our traditional *strategic summary*, we then focus the largest amount of our content on better peacekeeping, in line with CIC's goal in its peace and security programming to support the continuous improvement and effectiveness of peace operations. Conflict prevention, a theme that emerged from all the big reports of 2015, comes next. Our chapter on *Women, peace, and security* then follows. Given the concentration of UN peace operations on one continent, this year we started a thematic page on *African peace operations*. We have replicated this in the annual compilation. We have also expanded our focus on peacebuilding, which now has its own section to emphasize the fluidity of the spectrum of operations and illustrate that there is no distinct place where a peace operation ends and peacebuilding begins. Finally, looking ahead throughout the year we had several pieces that examined the specific challenges facing the next UN Secretary-General.



GPOR READERS BY CITY FROM ITS LAUNCH IN JUNE 2015

For those of us who study peace operations, our New York-centric community can feel like a small and insular group. Since its launch in June 2015, the *Global Peace Operations Review* has shown that many of the issues we are debating do in fact resonate with larger and wider audiences. Our analytics have identified more than 36,000 users who have visited the site more than 55,000 times to read more than 88,000 pages of content.

In 2016, our first full calendar year, GPOR had more than 25,000 unique visitors. The website has significant groups of readers clustered in Washington, London, Stockholm, Paris, and Geneva. Among the top 25 cities in 2016 are growing visitors from Nairobi, Berlin, Ottawa, Monrovia, Oslo, Addis Ababa, Canberra, New Delhi, Cairo, and The Hague. More recent statistics show new cities such as Lagos, Rio de Janeiro and Hong Kong popping up. Besides these numbers, we continue to receive positive and direct feedback from readers in primary target audiences in international organizations, permanent missions, foreign ministries, and peace operations. The growing number of readers in academic institutions is also welcomed.

Such growing support from our readers and contributors is gratifying, but we could not have continued this year without the generous financial and in-kind support from our donors. In particular, we would like to thank the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Carnegie Corporation of New York, the French Ministry of Defence, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

[Download the Global Peace Operations Review Annual Compilation 2016](#)

The purchase option for the Annual Compilation 2016 via Amazon will be available soon

Note: CIC derives no income from the print-on-demand version of this publication and we are making it available at cost price for those who would like to access it in this paperback format.

A video highlighting the Annual Compilation is available below



COMMENTARY



A FEMALE MEMBER OF THE ETHIOPIAN BATTALION OF THE UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN LIBERIA (UNMIL) JOINS THE MILITARY OBSERVERS IN A PARADE AFTER RECEIVING MEDALS IN RECOGNITION OF THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE MISSION ©UN PHOTO

January 31, 2017

GOING, BUT NOT GONE: UNMIL STAYS ON IN LIBERIA

Amanda Lucey and Liezelle Kumalo

THE UN MISSION IN LIBERIA HAS BEEN EXTENDED, BUT THIS SHOULD NOT DETRACT FROM THE NEED FOR PEACE TO BE NATIONALLY OWNED.

Liberia is nearly, but not quite ready, to go it alone without United Nations (UN) peacekeeping support. This was the upshot of the 23 December 2016 [UN Security Council \(UNSC\) meeting](#), where it was decided that the UN peacekeeping mission in Liberia, of which the mandate had expired, would be extended until March 2018 for the final time.

Since the end of its devastating civil war in 2003, the country has made significant headway in consolidating its peace.

The Liberian National Police has slowly taken over the security sector from the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL); there have been efforts to develop a stronger justice system; and the government has adopted policies and strategies designed to address the root causes of the conflict.

This year is particularly important for Liberia. It will conduct its first post-conflict, open-seat elections – and incumbent Ellen Johnson Sirleaf will hand over power to one of 22 political parties. It is unlikely that there will be one clear winner and parties will potentially have to form coalitions to gain a clear majority.

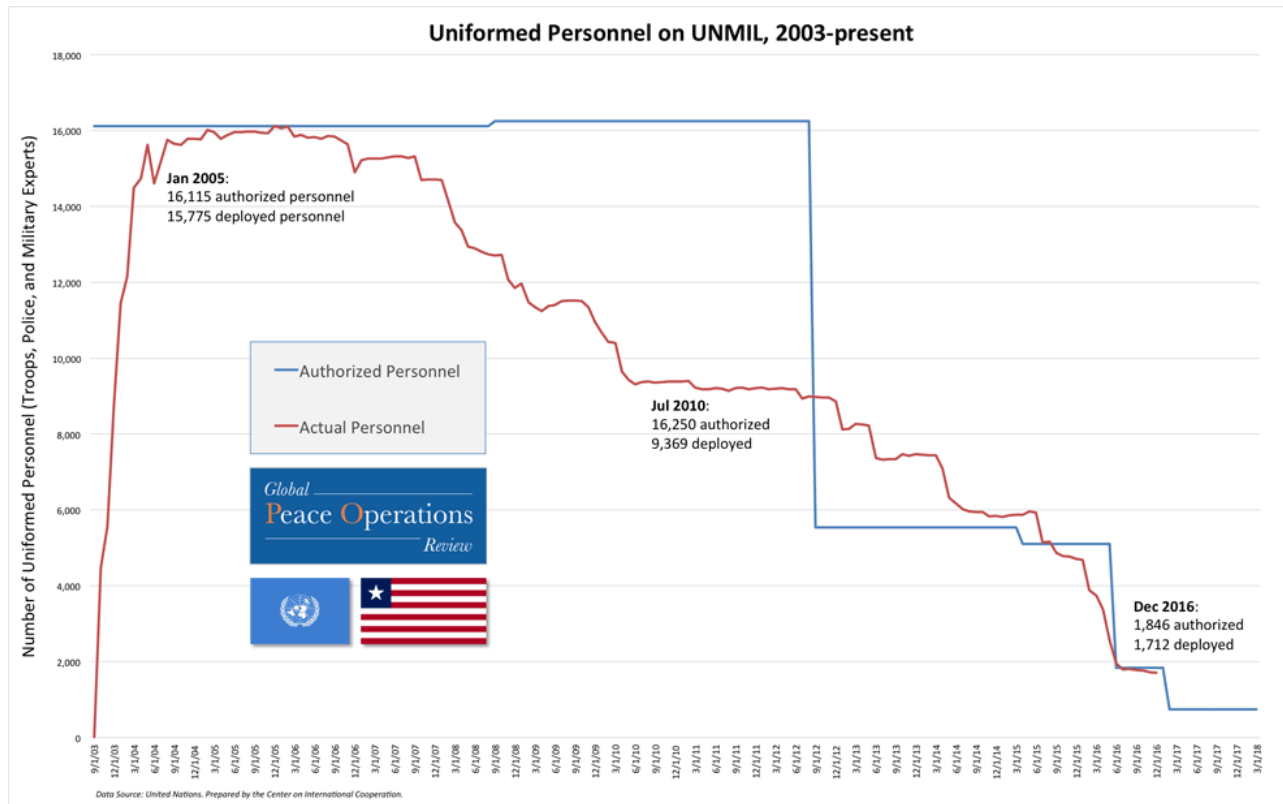
Already, allegations against some political party leaders have led to conflicts with the police. If the mudslinging witnessed so far is anything to go by, there is the potential that progress could be threatened.

The government's ability to provide security is already being compromised by inadequate capacity. Security forces are stretched to their **maximum**: the government has committed to providing 8 000 police officers, but current figures are much lower at 5 101 personnel, of which 950 are women. An added challenge is the spread of resources. Monrovia receives a disproportionate allocation, while only 24% of police officers are deployed to the inaccessible, rural areas outside of the capital.

The decision to extend the UN peacekeeping presence in Liberia is therefore not surprising. Despite the pressure for Liberia to take full ownership of its peacebuilding challenges, recent field research has shown that UNMIL is still seen as a security blanket for the country. The presence of a continued UNMIL could act as a deterrent to those considering election-related violence.

At the same time, the United Kingdom, Russia and France – the three countries that abstained from the UNSC vote to extend the mandate (12 countries voted in favour) – have a point. As they noted, Liberia should now be focusing on peacebuilding activities, while UN mission resources are needed elsewhere, such as Mali.

To be fair, the current new mandate is not very resource heavy: it caps the military strength at 434 personnel, and police strength at 310. This is a major decrease from the 15 000 military troops in 2007.



Moreover, as pointed out by the United States, Liberia’s institutions are still extremely fragile. There are **high levels of corruption**, and further capacity building is required. The Liberian government also requires logistical, financial and institutional support in preparing for elections.

While UNMIL can certainly assist in these activities, coordinated support from other actors could also be explored. For example, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has a logistics depot in Sierra Leone, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has a programme for voter education that should be expedited and expanded as soon as possible, making use of civil society organisations in hard to reach rural areas.

Before the outbreak of the Ebola crisis in 2014, the country was well on its way in consolidating peace and development. The crisis diverted funds away from peacebuilding priorities, however, and presented **new peacebuilding challenges**. By late November 2015, the government of Liberia faced a **myriad of challenges**: from developing the economy to addressing national reconciliation. The same challenges remain and will have to be tackled even with UNMIL’s continued presence.

Liberia has limited revenue for providing basic services and is heavily dependent on donor assistance (including from the European Union, Sweden, the United States and the United Kingdom, to name a few).

Basic security and access to justice remains costly, and has not been adequately budgeted for by the Liberian government. There have been **some** efforts to decentralise the country to ensure greater localised ownership, but this has been hindered by the need for legislative reform. This kind of reform will allow for powers to be transferred from the national to the local, and subsequently for a Local Government Act to be promulgated.

More importantly, the underlying root causes of the conflict have not been adequately **addressed**. These include inter-ethnic divisions, lack of accountability and reconciliation, inequality and high levels of unemployment.

With the downsizing of UNMIL, other UN agencies (such as the UNDP, which is primarily focusing on voter education and decentralisation), now need to come to the fore. Liberian peacebuilding has been on the agenda of the UN Peacebuilding Commission since 2010, and has supported the National Peacebuilding Office in Liberia.

THE LIBERIAN GOVERNMENT NEEDS SUBSTANTIAL SUPPORT TO PREPARE FOR ELECTIONS

However, UNMIL's presence has come to be accepted as the UN presence in Liberia – to the detriment of other UN agencies. The next imperative must be to educate the public on the UN transition, to create understanding that UN peacebuilding assistance will continue through other mediums.

In 2017, a focus on elections by both national and international actors is bound to detract from the need to deal with longer-term issues. The Liberian economy is suffering from the decline in commodity prices, such as iron ore, and Liberia's development **roadmap** expired in 2016, – which is further complicated by the forthcoming change of leadership.

With interest and resources from donors waning both globally and also specifically for Liberia, how can a focus on the country's peacebuilding activities be retained?

As noted in a forthcoming publication (part of a broader **project** carried out with partners the Center for International Cooperation in New York and the Peace Research Institute Oslo), Liberia's peacebuilding efforts remain fragmented.

Civil society is uncoordinated and could better engage with the national peacebuilding office. Externally, donors do not often engage with bilateral African donors such as Nigeria and South Africa, nor do they engage fully with the African Union (AU) and ECOWAS on a coordinated peacebuilding strategy.

African regional, sub-regional and bilateral actors have much to offer, in particular because they emphasise national ownership, capacity building (through experience-sharing) and have context-specific models (such as, for example, on transitional justice). These may be very relevant to Liberia's transition.

In 2015, a **review** of UN peacebuilding emphasised the need for peacebuilding solutions to be nationally owned. It also argued that the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) play a stronger role in informing UNSC deliberations, by drawing on a wide range of perspectives – including those of African actors.

The PBC is now looking at new ways to work with the UNSC and play a coordinating role between different peacebuilding actors.

At the end of 2016, it organised a multi-stakeholder meeting in Liberia and a configuration meeting in New York, and conveyed findings to the UNSC. In addition, the PBC can also assist Liberians in mapping and capacitating civil society actors so that they can provide organised perspectives on peacebuilding priorities.

Yet, the PBC can do more to engage with the AU, ECOWAS and bilateral actors to provide a holistic and coordinated strategy, both for Liberia's forthcoming elections and for its larger peacebuilding priorities.

Capacity building throughout Liberian society is vital for ensuring national ownership over peacebuilding solutions. This includes working with the political parties in developing their visions and strategies. In this regard, African actors can share experiences from the continent. African actors can also assist in adapting traditional systems of governance and practices, when state capacity is lacking.

Liberia has the opportunity to build sustainable peace. It will be important that UNMIL's continued presence does not allow other peacebuilding actors to take the back seat. Peacebuilding in Liberia can be most effective if it is done in an inclusive manner, holistically supported by the international community.

This article was originally published by [Institute for Security Studies](#) on January 31, 2017

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This ISS Today was made possible by a grant from Carnegie Corporation of New York and funding from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The statements and views expressed are solely the responsibility of the authors.



UNMIL PEACEKEEPERS CONDUCT A RAPID REACTION TRAINING EXERCISE. MONROVIA, LIBERIA, JANUARY 25, 2013. (STATON WINTER/UNMIL PHOTO)

January 31, 2017

SUSTAINING PEACE IN SECURITY TRANSITIONS: THE LIBERIAN OPPORTUNITY

Gizem Sucuoglu and Lesley Connolly

FOR DECADES PRIOR TO THE SIGNING OF A COMPREHENSIVE PEACE AGREEMENT (CPA) IN 2003, LIBERIA SUFFERED THROUGH AUTHORITARIAN RULE AND ONE OF AFRICA'S MOST BRUTAL CIVIL WARS, WHICH KILLED MORE THAN 200,000 PEOPLE AND DISPLACED OVER A MILLION MORE.

On December 21 last year, the United Nations Security Council extended the mandate of the peacekeeping operation in Liberia (UNMIL) until **March 30, 2018**. The Council hailed the mission's overall progress toward restoring peace, security, and stability in the country. The drawdown, which UNMIL head Farid Zarif **called** "one of the most significant milestones for the country and the international community since the end of the civil war in 2003," will have important repercussions for the future of Liberia and the UN's broader efforts to sustain peace.

UNMIL is one of the first peace operations to draw down after the publication of the landmark 2015 **Report of the Advisory Group of Experts (AGE)** on the UN's peacebuilding architecture. The report, **unanimously endorsed** by the General Assembly and Security Council, defined "sustaining peace" as a goal and process that encompasses activities across an entire cycle of conflict: outbreak, escalation, continuation, and recurrence.

In taking stock of the UN's mixed track record at preventing relapse into conflict following withdrawals in theaters such as the Central African Republic (CAR) and Burundi, the AGE highlighted the importance of smooth transitions from peace operations to other types of engagement, often in the form of UN country teams. Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support Oscar Fernandez-Taranco acknowledged the significant timing of the UNMIL drawdown in a recent Peacebuilding Commission meeting, arguing that the UN could take an important step toward better practices by effectively responding to the transition challenges in Liberia.

THE BACKGROUND

For decades prior to the signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2003, Liberia suffered through authoritarian rule and one of Africa's most **brutal civil wars**, which killed more than 200,000 people and displaced over a million more. That year, the Security Council authorized UNMIL, which comprised 15,000 soldiers, police, and civilians. The dual impact of the peace agreement and UNMIL's presence bolstered an era of relative peace and stability. Over the years, the country steadily developed its economy and institutions and enacted several **security and justice reforms**. It also managed to overcome a devastating Ebola outbreak in 2014, which claimed nearly 5,000 lives and caused economic stagnation but did not lead to major political instability. In January 2016, the World Health Organization declared **Liberia Ebola-free**.

Still, significant challenges remain. In October 2017, as UNMIL is preparing for its drawdown, Liberia will hold general elections for president and House of Representatives appointees. Political transitions are typically a period of heightened risk of instability at the best of times, and the current downsizing to around 1,000 personnel could make it harder to ensure safety during the polls. Elsewhere, the security and justice sectors are facing resource and capacity constraints, while weak institutions, governance challenges, and corruption persist. The reconciliation process is far from complete; power is highly centralized, risking future peace and stability; and economic revitalization is desperately needed. The inclusion of women, youth, and vulnerable groups in development processes remains a challenge.* How can the UN continue to support Liberia as it addresses these issues after the peacekeeping mission ends?

THE CHALLENGE OF SMOOTH TRANSITIONS

The UN's track record on mission transitions is mixed, with relapses into conflict not uncommon. In its report, the AGE compared mission transitions and drawdowns in places such as Burundi, CAR, Sierra Leone, and Timor-Leste, identifying three main challenges the UN faces in the transition out of peacekeeping operation mandates:

- **Prioritizing inclusive national ownership and including diverse views from the field in mandate discussions.** Rather than enhancing the UN's response on the ground, sustaining peace is about finding appropriate ways of working with national actors and boosting their capacities. This entails listening to a multitude of voices and different political, developmental, and humanitarian perspectives during mandate deliberations, including Liberia's vibrant civil society.
- **Ensuring adequate, sustained, and predictable financing for peacebuilding, across the conflict cycle.** Even during missions, the multidimensional peacebuilding activities that have been written into mandates are often not supported by adequate resources from the regular budget. Meanwhile, funding for the peacebuilding activities of UN country teams is voluntary, and usually unpredictable. When peacekeeping operations depart, regular budget funding disappears, while international attention and voluntary funding for peacebuilding often drop dramatically. Member states and other donors must be aware that these funding cliffs increase the risk of relapse, and ensure the provision of adequate and sustained resources during and after transitions.
- **Fostering joint and linked action within the UN system and beyond.** Sustaining peace should be a collective endeavor between UN peace operations and country teams. From the outset, peace operations and country teams should communicate, plan, and act in concert. This will help mitigate the fragmentation of field operations and ensure more focused, efficient, and cost-effective action.

AN IMPROVED PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION ROLE

As Fernandez-Taranco noted, the Liberia transition provides a unique opportunity for the UN to test the potential of the Peacebuilding Commission in aiding mission transitions.

The AGE report understood that the Security Council's ability to formulate context-appropriate and adequately resourced peacebuilding mandates depends on its access to comprehensive input and analysis from the field. Since collecting, analyzing, and processing such information would be taxing for the Council, the AGE recommends tapping the Peacebuilding Commission's

unique potential to convene global, regional, national, and local actors. With input from these sources, the Commission could provide the Council with concise and practical analysis and advice concerning peacebuilding needs, local and national capabilities and perspectives, relevant stakeholders, and critical resource gaps. This would in turn lead to better-informed peacebuilding mandates.

The Liberia configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, which was chaired by Sweden, took up some of these challenges prior to the UNMIL drawdown deliberations. At a multi-stakeholder forum called “Sustaining Peace through Transition,” which was held in Monrovia in October 2016, more than 100 local, national, regional, and international stakeholders met to identify long-term peacebuilding priorities. The fruits of these discussions were subsequently taken up by the Peacebuilding Commission in New York, with the goal of generating recommendations for the Security Council to consider. This exercise helped bring to the Council’s attention a broad range of issues, such as youth unemployment, land rights, decentralization, reconciliation, and social cohesion, sending a strong message to member states on the importance of continued attention to peacebuilding priorities from international partners beyond the 2017 elections and the UNMIL transition.

With continued refinement, this new relationship between the Peacebuilding Commission and the Security Council might lead to mandates that better advance the goal of sustaining peace. But first, two shifts need to happen. The Council would have to make time, well ahead of deadlines for the creation of mission mandates, to listen to the Commission’s inputs on sustaining peace and use these in a meaningful way. And the Commission would have to ensure that the time of the Council is used efficiently, by having its insights prepared in a timely manner and delivered clearly and concisely.

FUTURE STEPS FOR BETTER TRANSITIONS

The coming Liberia transition has also generated debate at the UN on other challenges and possible new ways forward. The first issue under discussion is how to put national actors at the forefront of peace efforts, by ensuring that national stakeholders are in the lead of transition efforts with the support of the UN. This framework increases the importance of the UN country teams and particularly the resident coordinator, given their ability to provide context-driven analysis, engage with local and national stakeholders, and implement programs on the ground.

In peace operations like UNMIL, local populations often perceive Security Council–mandated missions as “UN brand.” Once they shut down, local populations often find it difficult to understand the purpose, scope, and format of the UN’s continued presence on the ground. Better coordination between peace operations and country teams from the outset—complemented by coordination in New York between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Peacebuilding Support Office, the Department for Political Affairs, and the UN Development Program—would allow all actors to better apply their comparative advantages to strategic goals, preventing duplication that costs the UN valuable resources.

The second issue generating debate in UN circles is the financing puzzle. Sudden drops in donor attention and funding trigger risks of relapse. Ensuring adequate, predictable resources for peacebuilding activities during and after transitions is key. But how to address this challenge? The first step is generating awareness: making clear to member states and other donors the risks of relapse caused by sudden funding cliffs. Studies estimating the expected peacebuilding costs in a particular context over fixed periods could provide answers, accompanied by discussions on how to enhance the capacities and resources of country teams as needed. Other solutions could include ensuring regular budget contributions for peacebuilding activities for a specific time

following drawdowns, or looking into establishing special political missions after peacekeeping operations, to catalyze the needed attention and resources for a transitional period. Partnering with international financial institutions, particularly the World Bank, during transitions and exploring sources of innovative financing might also help.

With the advance notice given by the Security Council, and the thought that has gone into the AGE report, Liberia's transition now offers the UN system a unique opportunity to show how it can sustain peace.

*A policy brief on "Addressing Liberia's peacebuilding priorities through partnerships" by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), to be released later this year, will focus more on the transition challenges of Liberia. It is part of the broader "Enhancing African responses to peacebuilding" project from ISS, the Center on International Cooperation, and the Peace Research Institute Oslo.

This article was originally published by the [International Peace Institute \(IPI\)](#) on January 30, 2017

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January 17, 2017

REDUCING CIVILIAN HARM CAUSED BY MONUSCO

Lauren Spink



©CIVIC

MONUSCO TRIES TO ADDRESS THE HARM ITS OPERATIONS CAUSE TO CIVILIANS. WHAT IS NEEDED NOW IS A FORMAL POLICY ON TRACKING AND RESPONDING TO CIVILIAN HARM.

Peacekeeping operations deployed by the United Nations are often tasked with the protection of civilians as one of their primary duties. But their positions of power and access to weapons mean that they sometimes harm civilians, both directly through their actions and indirectly through inaction in the face of armed groups inflicting damage on civilian men, women, and children.

As one of the largest and longest serving UN missions, the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) has been at the forefront of developing new protection tools such as [Joint Protection Teams](#) and [Community Liaison Assistants](#). While MONUSCO has also put in place practices to monitor and respond to potential civilian harm its operations can cause, research completed by the Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC) documented important areas where MONUSCO can improve its policies and practices to mitigate the harm caused by their operations.

First, there is a lack of clarity around how MONUSCO should differentiate between civilians and combatants in its operations. This confusion stems from the tactics of armed groups in the DRC who embed themselves within civilian populations, use civilians as human shields during fighting, and forcibly abduct civilians to serve in combat and support roles. Across the Mission, MONUSCO personnel are moving toward a more clear understanding that only individuals actively involved in hostilities should be viewed as targets for direct military action. But MONUSCO staff expressed various views on [distinction](#) to CIVIC researchers, not all in line with international humanitarian law.

MONUSCO TRIES TO ADDRESS THE HARM ITS OPERATIONS CAUSE TO CIVILIANS. WHAT IS NEEDED NOW IS A FORMAL POLICY ON TRACKING AND RESPONDING TO CIVILIAN HARM.

MONUSCO also relies heavily on the Congolese army (FARDC) to make targeting decisions and for information on the impact of operations. MONUSCO is mandated to collaborate with the FARDC to carry out many of its functions and, for practical purposes, needs to coordinate with the army to carry out operations effectively. Still, collaborating too closely or allowing FARDC priorities to shape MONUSCO military decision-making is problematic given [accusations that the FARDC is complicit in violence perpetrated by some armed non-state actors](#). MONUSCO should build its capacity to operate more independently and to replace information from the FARDC with information collected by civilian components of the peacekeeping mission and directly from Congolese communities.

In practice, MONUSCO tries to address the harm its operations cause to civilians. What is needed now is a formal policy on tracking and responding to civilian harm so the Mission can better understand patterns of harm, adjust operations to reduce harm, communicate more effectively with civilians around its policy to address harm, and respond to each case of reported harm systematically and consistently.

UN officials in New York and MONUSCO staff on the ground need to ensure that rather than being dictated by more narrow military objectives against armed groups, military operations and engagement decisions are instead driven by civilian protection priorities and analysis of civilian harm.

These points are explored in more detail in CIVIC's report, *From Mandate to Mission: Mitigating Civilian Harm in UN Peacekeeping Operations in the DRC*. Many of the observations included in the report are ideas proposed by MONUSCO personnel themselves. They reflect ideas for best practices proposed by dedicated officials within the Mission, but which require adoption and support implementation and further capability development.

Lauren Spink is a Peacekeeping Advisor at Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC). She is also the co-author of a recent CIVIC report *Under Fire: The July 2016 Violence in Juba and UN Response*. | **Twitter:** [@lspink01](#)



A UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPERS RIDE IN THEIR ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIER (APC) AS THEY PATROL THE PERIMETER OF THE PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS SITE HOSTING ABOUT 30,000 PEOPLE DISPLACED DURING THE RECENT FIGHTING IN JUBA, SOUTH SUDAN, JULY 22, 2016. (ADRIANE OHANESIAN/REUTERS)

January 13, 2017

UN PEACEKEEPING IN SOUTH SUDAN: A KIWI COMES TO JUBA

Megan Roberts

TODAY, SOUTH SUDAN FACES INTERTWINED SECURITY, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND HUMANITARIAN CRISES.

The following is a guest post by [Megan Roberts](#), associate director of the International Institutions and Global Governance program at the Council on Foreign Relations.

January 2017 David Shearer of New Zealand will take the helm of South Sudan's beleaguered peacekeeping operation (the UN Mission in South Sudan, or UNMISS). Outgoing UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon tapped Shearer, a former New Zealand MP, as his special representative to oversee one of the United Nations' most expensive missions, composed of nearly fourteen thousand uniformed personnel and two thousand civilians.

Shearer assumes leadership at a dangerous time for the world's youngest country. Ushered into independence on a wave of optimism five years ago, South Sudan quickly descended into violent conflict, first against Sudan and then later into a civil war that began in 2013. Under significant international pressure, President Salva Kiir and his main rival, Riek Machar, [agreed](#) in August 2015 to a regionally-brokered peace agreement, which introduced a tenuous power-sharing arrangement. In a sign of just how fragile the truce was, Machar was not sworn in as vice-president until he returned to South Sudan eight months later.

Today, South Sudan faces intertwined security, political, economic, and humanitarian crises. In July 2016, the capital of Juba erupted into violence, dealing what may be a fatal blow to the peace process. Machar again fled the country and shortly after, Taban Deng Gai, formerly the opposition's chief negotiator, was sworn in as the new vice-president. The move, which international actors [accepted](#) for pragmatic reasons, has sidelined much of the opposition. Denied a means to engage politically, those still loyal to Machar are now likely to [advance](#) their objectives through violence.

As the dry season begins, ominous [warning signs](#) point to renewed clashes, including in areas previously unaffected by conflict. Government and opposition groups are recruiting fighters and stocking up on arms in what combatants increasingly see as an existential conflict. Intertribal incitement has escalated. The United Nations has warned of the potential for [genocide](#). President Kiir has proposed a national dialogue. In other circumstances, this could help deescalate the conflict. But the UN has [warned](#) that the deteriorating security environment will not allow for an inclusive process.

As with previous rounds of fighting, civilians will again be in the crosshairs of attacks by both government and opposition. Aware of the danger, more than one million South Sudanese have fled to neighboring countries. Those who stay face [record levels](#) of food insecurity. The risk of famine looms.

UN peacekeepers have struggled to maintain order in the face of repeated cycles of violence in South Sudan. UNMISS was initially authorized in 2011, with a mandate to help build the capacity of the new government and protect civilians. As civil war consumed the country in 2013, civilians sought protection from the warring parties on UN bases. The Security Council responded by restructuring the peacekeeping mission to place priority on the protection of civilians.

The mission has struggled with the enormity of the task, however, and its troops have repeatedly failed to implement their mandate. According to one [inquiry](#) into clashes at a protection site in Malakal in early 2016, UN troops abandoned their posts or refused to engage combatants in a number of instances, endangering civilians. A second investigation into violence that erupted in July 2016 [detailed](#) a “chaotic and ineffective response,” including abandonment of posts and instances of failure to protect civilians. In response, Ban Ki-moon took the unusual step of firing the mission’s Kenyan force commander, drawing the ire of the Kenyan government, which [announced](#) its intent to withdraw all of its more than one thousand peacekeepers from UNMISS.

Peacekeepers should not be given a pass for failing to implement their mandate, particularly when they abandon posts, putting civilians at risk and undermining the credibility of their mission. But some perspective is in order: With the August 2015 agreement in tatters, UN peacekeepers in South Sudan are being asked to keep peace where there is none to keep.

Nor is there any [consensus](#) among regional and international partners on where to go from here. Despite [dire warnings](#) from Ban Ki-moon and the head of UN humanitarian affairs, the Security Council recently failed to agree on implementing a long overdue arms embargo, unable to garner the nine needed votes (China and Russia were among those who abstained). Though a belated step, such an embargo could have stemmed the violence while symbolizing the council’s unified effort to bring peace to South Sudan. [Regional powers](#), with competing interests in South Sudan, are also divided on how to proceed.

In practical terms, UNMISS is nowhere near large enough to fulfill its mandate. Three years after civil war erupted, peacekeepers are still sheltering more than two hundred thousand civilians in porous protection camps. In the wake of the violence of summer 2016, the Security Council authorized the deployment of a 4,000-strong protection force, to be drawn from countries in the region, with a mandate to facilitate free movement in Juba, protect the Juba airport, and protect civilians, UN staff, and humanitarian workers. The national government consented to the force under regional and international pressure, but it has since [obstructed](#) efforts to deploy it. As signs point to potential genocide, the United Nations has [warned](#) that its peacekeeping mission lacks “the appropriate reach, manpower or capabilities to stop mass atrocities.”

The government of South Sudan has also placed restrictions on the ability of previously deployed UNMISS forces to move freely about the country, hindering the mission’s ability to implement its mandate—and violating the [status of forces agreement](#) signed by the government and United Nations. In his last report on UNMISS to the Security Council, Ban Ki-moon [warned](#) that this “barrage” of restrictions was paralyzing the mission. Government forces regularly harass UNMISS staff and the mission itself came under fire during the July 2016 violence. Attacks on UN personnel by government troops [increased](#) in the months after.

All of this comes as the United Nations, United States, and African Union Commission are undergoing leadership transitions. Meanwhile, UNMISS itself has been without a leader and force commander since November. This leadership vacuum, which coincides with the onset of the dry season, is likely to tempt combatants to try to reshape realities on the ground and strengthen their bargaining hand.

All this presents quite a challenge to the new UN secretary-general, Antonio Guterres, who took office on January 1, and David Shearer, his man in Juba. Having already served the United Nations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Lebanon, Shearer faces what may be his toughest post yet. As head of UMISS, he will need to assess how he can support resuscitating a moribund political process in South Sudan, as well as assisting an inclusive national dialogue if one is forthcoming. He will also need to rapidly assess the capacity of the mission to carry out its mandate, as well as accelerate implementation of the recommendations stemming from the two 2016 inquiries on mission performance. His priorities must include ensuring that all personnel understand the UNMISS mandate and conducting regular scenario-based exercises, so that staff are equipped to protect civilians and know how to respond when the mission comes under attack.

For Guterres, who has made conflict prevention a core theme of his tenure, the task may be even harder: persuading an often fractious Security Council—including an incoming, nationally focused U.S. administration—that it must ramp up the United Nations' presence in South Sudan or risk massive loss of life.

This commentary originally appeared in the Council on Foreign Relations blog [The Internationalist](#) on 5 January 2017.

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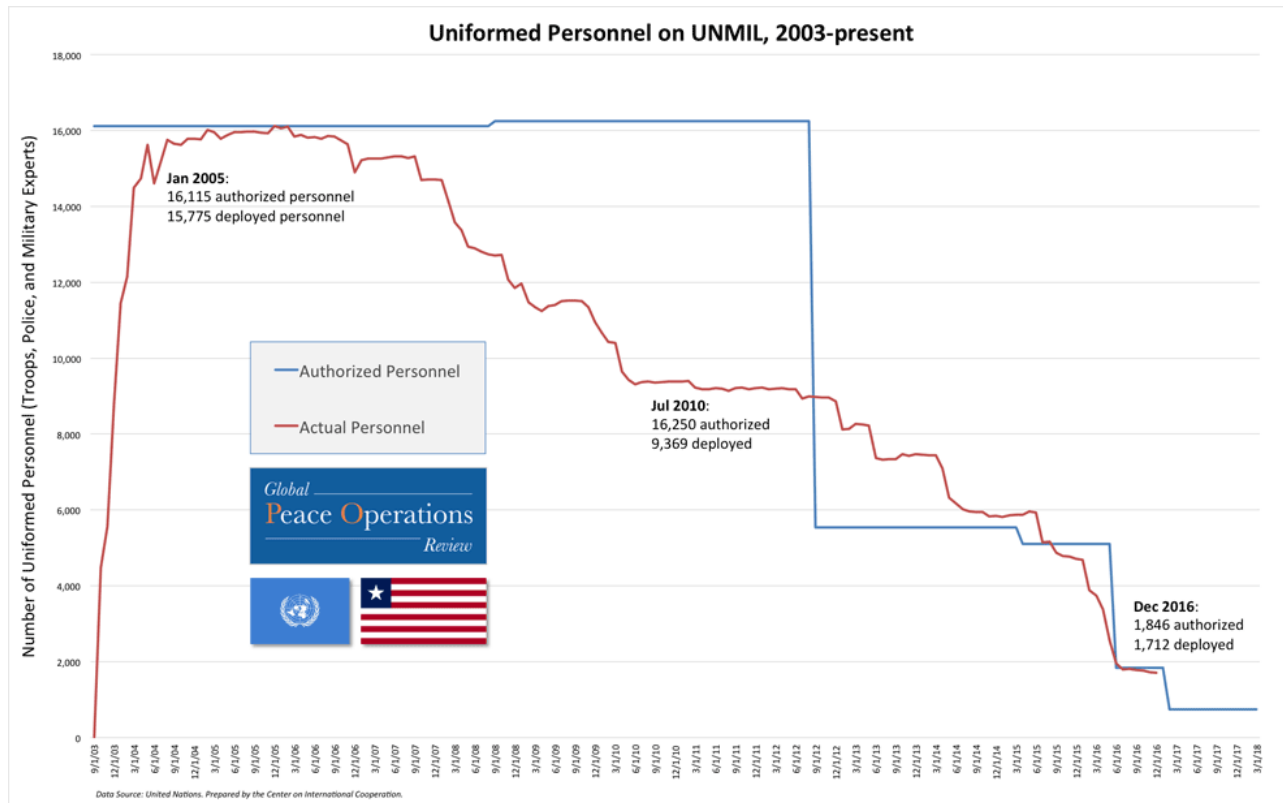
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The Global Peace Operations Review has received generous support from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, French Ministry of Defence, German Federal Foreign Office, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

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