Action for Peacekeeping: Will Political Consensus Lead to Change in Practice?

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Introduction

Calling for a "quantum leap in collective engagement" in United Nations peace operations, Secretary-General António Guterres launched the Action for Peacekeeping initiative (A4P) during the Security Council's open debate on peacekeeping on March 28, 2018.[1] The aim of A4P is to galvanize member states to commit to peacekeeping and to translate statements of high-level political support into concrete actions to address the most urgent challenges facing peacekeepers today.[2]

As part of A4P, the secretary-general is convening a high-level event on UN peace operations on September 25, 2018, to underscore recent and ongoing initiatives aimed at adapting missions to contemporary political and security challenges. The event will highlight a "Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations." In this declaration, member-state partners in peacekeeping—members of the General Assembly and Security Council, troop, police, and financial contributors, host governments, and members of international, regional, and subregional organizations—have agreed to adapt peacekeeping operations to meet contemporary challenges.

A4P is part of a series of complementary initiatives implemented by the secretary-general over the past year aimed at improving the effectiveness of UN peace operations and conflict prevention. These include strategic reviews of several peacekeeping missions, restructuring of the peace and security architecture, broader revision of administrative structures and practices, and reform of the development system. Along with the ongoing series of annual ministerial-level meetings to generate troops, police, and critical enablers, these are intended to make the UN more field-focused and responsive to country contexts.

In short, reform of UN peace operations has become a dominant theme of debate and decision making—and with good reason.[3] The conflicts into which UN missions deploy are becoming more intractable and more deadly, and dissonance is growing between the Security Council's expectations and what peacekeeping can realistically achieve. However, it is not clear that member

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1 Secretary-General António Guterres, 8218th meeting of the UN Security Council, UN Doc. S/PV.8218, March 28, 2018, available at www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.8218 .

2 A4P gives short shrift to special political missions. This is unfortunate, as it undercuts the UN's own efforts to move beyond "the sharp distinctions between peacekeeping operations and special political missions" toward "a continuum of response and smoother transitions between different phases of missions." Moreover, a higher proportion of special political missions have been deployed in active wars, including in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Yemen.

3 The UN Security Council also held a debate on peacekeeping reform focused on performance on September 12, 2018, under the US presidency.

states are willing to actually go beyond broad political commitments to make peacekeeping deliver more effectively.

Peacekeeping Today: Difficult and Deadly

In the past few years, having successfully shepherded peace processes, longstanding, multidimensional UN missions in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire have closed. The missions in Haiti and Darfur should soon follow. Those that remain generally fall into two categories: on one hand, decades-old missions monitoring lines of control in the Mediterranean and Kashmir, as well as the more recent mission in Abyei doing much the same, and on the other, large, costly missions like those in the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Mali, and South Sudan.[4]

Large, multidimensional peace operations are where the challenges in implementing A4P will be most acute. Comprising the majority of peacekeepers today, these missions are deployed in complex, high-risk environments where localized armed groups, transnational criminal networks, and extremist ideologies have proliferated and regional actors are involved in intra-state disputes. These are environments where "peace agreements are absent or lacking engagement with key conflict actors, where those who can influence the trajectory of a conflict are not at the table, and where international leverage is insufficient to ensure compliance."[5]

Without clear exit strategies, these missions struggle to contain conflict, protect civilians, and mitigate humanitarian crises. Moreover, their explicit authorization to use force against armed groups and to extend state authority, as in Mali, is likely undermining perceptions of the UN's impartiality by parties to the conflict. This inhibits the UN's ability to play the role of honest broker in negotiating peace and contributes to direct attacks on the UN by armed groups.[6] These attacks underscore the threats and risks facing contemporary peace operations, while highlighting ongoing issues related to readiness, performance, and capabilities.

The challenges facing peacekeeping are well known, having been thoroughly diagnosed by numerous independent analyses. These have included the 2015 High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO), Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture, and Global Study on Women, Peace, and Security, as well as the 2018 report by General Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz on peacekeeper fatalities,[7] independently led reviews of individual missions, and inquiries into high-profile attacks on UN peacekeepers and failures to protect civilians.[8] Many of the operational and political challenges identified reflect the evolution of the environments into which missions are deployed, the changing expectations of what they should achieve, and the growing disparity between the two—a challenge identified by the Brahimi report in 2000 that has only become more complicated since.[9]

The conclusions of these reviews emphasize the importance of advancing political solutions, protecting civilians, and sustaining peace.[10] To this end, they have spurred myriad incremental, technical reforms in the field and at UN headquarters. These reforms have sought to strengthen strategic analysis and planning; improve training, performance monitoring, and accountability; enhance situational awareness and protection of

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4   The outliers are the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the future of which is caught between permanent members of the Security Council, and the UN Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS), which supports the AU mission there (AMISOM). The UN-AU Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) appears to be on a trajectory toward drawdown, though without having achieved its goals.

5   Jake Sherman and Adam Day, "Political Solutions Must Drive the Design and Implementation of Peace Operations," *IPI Global Observatory*, June 20, 2018, available at https://theglobalobservatory.org/2018/06/political-solutions-drive-design-implementation-peace-operations/ .

6   See, for example, Larry Attree and Jordan Street, "Should UN Peace Operations Get Off the Counter-terror Bandwagon?," *IPI Global Observatory*, September 12, 2018, available at https://theglobalobservatory.org/2018/09/un-peace-operations-should-get-off-counter-terror-bandwagon/ .

7   Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz, *Improving Security of United Nations Peacekeepers*, December 2017, available at https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/improving_security_of_united_nations_peacekeepers_report.pdf .

8   These include inquiries into attacks in Juba, South Sudan, in 2016 and Semuliki, DRC, in 2017. See *Executive Summary of the Independent Special Investigation into the Violence Which Occurred in Juba in 2016 and UNMISS Response*, November 2016, available at www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/sudan/Public_Executive_Summary_on_the_Special_Investigation_Report_1_Nov_2016.pdf .

9   UN General Assembly and Security Council, *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, UN Doc. A/55/305-S/2000/809, August 21, 2000, para. 63.

10 Richard Gowan, "Political Gap in Reform Agenda Leaves Questions on A4P Mechanisms," *IPI Global Observatory*, July 19, 2018, available at https://theglobalobservatory.org/2018/07/political-gap-reform-agenda-questions-a4p-mechanisms/ .

personnel; engage missions in strategic communication and community outreach; prioritize recruitment of women peacekeepers; jointly implement peacebuilding activities with development actors; deepen partnerships with regional and subregional organizations; and reorganize headquarters departments responsible for field support and political and operational oversight of peace operations.

At an operational level, such reforms and innovations show signs of improving the day-to-day performance of missions—from the use of intelligence to guide the timing and location of patrols in eastern DRC, to evacuation of personnel and access to lifesaving care in Mali. These changes positively impact the lives of peacekeepers and the civilians they are mandated to protect. But incremental operational progress does not appear to have fed into the more strategic goal of making UN peacekeeping capable of delivering politically driven, sustainable shifts away from violent conflict. All these technical improvements should be seen as a means of helping missions gain political leverage and deliver the strategic objectives of their mandates. Instead, it appears that technical improvements have taken on a life of their own; they aim to get better drones, increase interoperability among troop-contributing countries (TCCs), or improve accountability for peacekeepers without focusing on how these will contribute to a sustainable peace agreement or a peaceful exit following elections.

Many member states have ardently supported, and sometimes pushed, operational reforms. But attention to the preparedness of TCCs or the gender balance of forces, while important, can also detract from member states' own role in supporting—or hindering—political solutions. Indeed, wavering commitment to multilateralism and the international rules-based system among member states, particularly great powers often exacerbate challenges on the ground. Increased pressure to reduce UN peacekeeping budgets by major donors, including the five permanent members of the Security Council, further constrains the UN's ability to marshal all available means in the pursuit of peace. Current missions underscore what many have long argued—that peacekeeping is at its foundation political, and its successes rely on the high-level political support of member states.[11]

A4P's Call to Action

When the secretary-general announced A4P, he stated that "action by the Secretariat alone is not enough to meet the challenges that we face. Our chances of success increase dramatically when we work together with Member States and share the burdens, risks and responsibilities."[12] To this end, member states have agreed a set of twenty political commitments focused on seven themes: political solutions, protection, safety and security, performance, partnerships, sustaining peace, and conduct of personnel. Many of the commitments reaffirm past agreements in the Security Council or General Assembly and are unlikely to precipitate change in the face of past resistance. In a few instances, the declaration breaks new ground. In both cases, more concrete follow-up mechanisms will be required if it is to avoid becoming another set of general statements.

ADVANCING POLITICAL SOLUTIONS

The most important contribution of A4P may be member states' commitment to advance political solutions. In 2015, the HIPPO report observed that "lasting peace is achieved not through military and technical engagements but through political solutions…. When the momentum behind peace falters, the United Nations, *and particularly Member States*, must help to mobilize renewed political efforts to keep peace processes on track."[13]

Committed engagement by member states in supporting political solutions is welcome and much-needed. From CAR and Darfur to the DRC and Mali, the momentum behind peace has faltered. As Adam Day and I have previously noted, "The majority of UN peacekeeping operations have little prospect of achieving their original political

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11 See, for example, UN General Assembly and Security Council, *Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on Uniting Our Strengths for Peace: Politics, Partnership and People*, UN Doc. A/70/95-S/2015/446, June 17, 2015.

12 António Guterres, speech at 8218th meeting of the UN Security Council, UN Doc. S/PV.8218, March 28, 2018, available at www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.8218 .

13 UN General Assembly and Security Council, *Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations*, italics added.

goals."[14] The declaration commits member states to "stronger engagement to advance political solutions and to pursue complementary political objectives and integrated strategies, including at national and regional levels."

Yet stating that political engagement is important is unlikely to increase it. Deep political divisions among permanent members have resulted in paralysis within the Security Council on pressing threats to peace and security. Major and regional powers are increasingly active supporters of, if not parties to, conflict. Violent extremist groups have been frozen out of political processes by some member states. The declaration is unlikely to yield dramatic changes in member states' behavior, yet without such change, political progress in South Sudan or Mali is likely to remain elusive.

With a view to improving the political drive of missions, the declaration also seeks to address problems around the designing of mandates. The secretary-general, echoing the Brahimi report, commits to providing frank and realistic recommendations to the Security Council, including on prioritization and sequencing of tasks. Member states have pledged to strengthen consultation with host governments, and among peacekeeping stakeholders on developing and implementing mandates. Echoing another Brahimi-era challenge, the declaration also seeks greater coherence between mandates and resources.[15] Brahimi suggested a two-stage process by which the mandate would be set only after firm commitments of troops had been secured. The HIPPO report suggested a different two-stage process by which the mission would deploy with an initial, politically focused mandate and limited additional tasks, then return to the council within six months with a proposal for additional achievable, sequenced activities. However, without more concrete ideas for making mandates more realistic,

this is another empty call that will not result in meaningful change.[16] The general commitments in the declaration will need to be moved forward in one way or another through specific actions.

STRENGTHENING PROTECTION

Protection of civilians has been a growing priority for large, multidimensional missions operating in complex, volatile environments. Since first explicitly mentioned in a peacekeeping mandate in 1999, protection of civilians has become a core task of peacekeeping missions. In that time, the share of mass atrocities committed during wartime has increased. Wartime rape is widespread, and sexual violence has often become a tool of forced displacement. Children continue to be recruited as soldiers or laborers and intentionally targeted, killed, maimed, and raped.[17]

Over the past several years, much has been done to improve protection of civilians on the ground, including through better engagement with local communities, intelligence collection, and risk assessment. The declaration reiterates the importance of protection of civilians. However, it does not aim to resolve longstanding differences among some member states over how to frame the use of force. While in some instances the use of force is the most appropriate response to threats against civilians (or, for that matter, to deter peace process spoilers or pressure them to the negotiating table), member states are divided over when and how missions can exercise military responses. The declaration therefore commits to use "all necessary means when required" to protect civilians—a formula politically acceptable to countries wary of explicit reference to the "use of force."

Despite this compromise language, A4P could help rebalance the roles of nonmilitary and military protection efforts. The signatories affirm their commitment to providing tailored approaches to protecting civilians, including women and children. Such context-driven approaches should

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14 This is equally true of the UN's special political missions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Yemen. Sherman and Day, "Political Solutions Must Drive the Design and Implementation of Peace Operations."

15 This has taken on increased salience following significant cuts to the peacekeeping budget by major financial contributors, led by the US, as well as gaps in critical enablers like combat convoys and attack helicopters in high-risk missions.

16 Adam Day has suggested "turning mandates on their head" so that the Security Council sets broad peace objectives while the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the host government, and other stakeholders develop the substantive mandate as a political agreement. Adam Day, "To Build Consent, Turn Mandates Upside Down," UN University Centre for Policy Research, January 19, 2017, available at https://cpr.unu.edu/to-build-consent-in-peace-operations-turn-mandates-upside-down.html .

17 Sebastian von Einsiedel et al., "Major Recent Trends in Violent Conflict," United Nations University, 2014, available at https://cpr.unu.edu/examining-major-recent-trends-in-violent-conflict.html .

reflect the varied threats faced by civilians across and within countries and enable appropriate combinations of military and nonmilitary responses, including building confidence between conflict parties, advancing peace processes, and supporting local conflict resolution efforts. As IPI Research Fellow Namie Di Razza has highlighted, peacekeeping missions should utilize the full spectrum of armed and unarmed strategies to "deter, prevent, preempt, and stop violence."[18] Such an integrated, holistic approach would help respond to concerns that peacekeeping operations have become too focused on robust mandates to use force, at times at the expense of efforts to find long-term political solutions.[19]

The declaration also emphasizes the primary responsibility of host states for protection. Some member states will view this as a necessary assertion of their sovereignty, others of states' responsibility to safeguard their citizens. Peacekeeping missions do save lives, but durable protection requires the commitment of states. Peacekeeping missions' role in providing protection needs to be viewed alongside that of states, as well as of regional organizations, humanitarian and development actors, civil society, and other stakeholders able to positively influence perpetrators of violence and increase the resilience of vulnerable communities.

Peacekeeping missions cannot protect all those at risk, yet the presence of a peacekeeping mission often creates unrealistic expectations—within both communities experiencing violence and the international community. The declaration therefore acknowledges the importance of strategic communication and engagement with local populations to strengthen their understanding of peacekeeping missions and their mandates. It acknowledges the contribution of peacekeeping to promoting and protecting human rights, but

sidesteps efforts by member states, including permanent members of the Security Council, to reduce or eliminate human rights and gender adviser posts critical to fulfilling the mandate provided by the council. Nevertheless, beyond engaging communities to manage their expectations, peacekeeping operations also need to put people at the center of the protection of civilians.[20] Protection tools and activities implemented by peacekeepers are more effective when local communities inform UN missions' analysis, political strategies, decisions, and actions.

IMPROVING SAFETY AND SECURITY

Peacekeeping has become more deadly for UN personnel. More peacekeepers died from malicious acts in 2017 than in any year since 1994; by some measures last year was the deadliest ever recorded.[21] The declaration commits signatories to bring perpetrators of criminal acts against UN personnel to justice and to address the rise in peacekeeper fatalities, the focus of the Santos Cruz report and the secretary-general's implementation plan.

Yet despite fairly robust policies and laws, such justice remains elusive. It is unclear how the declaration will help. Furthermore, peacekeepers do not face risks due to a lack of justice; they are targeted because they are seen as a party to the conflict. In Mali, the most dangerous peacekeeping mission, as of August 31, 2018, 104 peacekeepers have been killed by malicious acts since MINUSMA was established, many from improvised roadside explosives and mortar attacks.[22]

SUPPORTING EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE

Past efforts to improve mandate delivery, particularly protection of civilians, have tended to focus on operational readiness and the performance of uniformed personnel: ensuring that they have

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18 Namie Di Razza, "Reframing the Protection of Civilians Paradigm for UN Peace Operations," International Peace Institute, November 2017, available at www.ipinst.org/2017/11/poc-paradigm-un-peace-ops . Alison Giffen has also noted that "the effective protection of civilians…hinges on a mission's civilian component, integrated operations, and coordination with external stakeholders." Alison Giffen, "Five Reform Areas for Effective Peacekeeping Performance," *IPI Global Observatory*, July 6, 2018, available at https://theglobalobservatory.org/2018/07/five-reform-areas-effective-peacekeeping-performance/ .

19 Jean Arnault, "A Background to the Report of the High-Level Panel on Peace Operations," *Peace Operations Review*, August 6, 2015, available at https://peaceoperationsreview.org/thematic-essays/a-background-to-the-report-of-the-high-level-panel-on-peace-operations/. See also Ralph Mamiya, "Protection of Civilians and Political Strategies," International Peace Institute, May 2018, available at www.ipinst.org/2018/05/protection-of-civilians-and-political-strategies .

20 Namie Di Razza, "Making Peace Operations about People: A Needed Shift for the Protection of Civilians," *IPI Global Observatory*, June 26, 2018, available at https://theglobalobservatory.org/2018/06/making-peace-operations-about-people-needed-shift-protection-civilians/ .

21 United Nations, press release, "At Least 71 United Nations, Associated Personnel Killed in Malicious Attacks against Peacekeeping Operations during 2017," January 26, 2018, available at www.un.org/press/en/2018/org1663.doc.htm .

22 United Nations, "Fatalities by Mission and Incident Type," August 31, 2018, available at https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/statsbymissionincidenttype_4_17.pdf .

proper training and equipment and proactively implement mandated tasks and that instances of poor performance are quickly and transparently addressed.[23] Reflecting a recent shift toward a broader, whole-of-mission understanding of performance, the declaration supports the secretary-general's development of an "integrated performance policy framework for mandate implementation" by military, police, and civilian components of missions. As noted by Alison Giffen of the Center for Civilians in Conflict, a comprehensive performance-monitoring framework could "push the Secretariat and peacekeeping operations toward a culture of monitoring, evaluation, and learning, which is fundamental to improved planning, budgeting, and impact."[24]

Perhaps the most significant commitment related to performance is to avoid "all caveats that have a detrimental impact on mandate implementation and performance." The declaration links caveats to performance, going a step further than previous acknowledgements of their systemic repercussions.[25] The declaration therefore calls for the equal treatment of declared caveats—viewed by some as preferable because they can be factored into deployment planning—and "hidden" or "sudden" caveats that arise when national capitals countermand orders to units on the ground. However, as both types of caveats are intended to mitigate risk and avoid political fallout at home, it is unlikely that most major TCCs will abandon them.[26] Enforcement of the commitment will depend on whether the secretary-general is willing to expend political capital and risk relationships by refusing deployments or repatriating contingents when they refuse to use lethal force or to put their troops in harm's way.

Yet, according to IPI Senior Fellow Alexandra Novosseloff, "Parallel chains of command always exist as no member state releases the full command of its troops to any international organization or to a military coalition."[27] Eliminating caveats, she argues, would require clarity from the Security Council and field offices on the purpose of a peacekeeping mission and more transparent dialogue between the Secretariat, the council, and TCCs on goals, risks, and expectations prior to deployment. The Brahimi report similarly recommended TCCs be given "an assessment of risk that describes what the conflict and the peace are about" but cautioned that the council trades in ambiguity to reach consensus—the rationale for a two-stage mandate.[28] The need for mandates to realistically reflect capabilities is no less important today.

SUSTAINING PEACE

UN member states have confirmed their support for strengthening national ownership and capacity building, as well as stronger coordination between the Security Council and Peacebuilding Commission, through the adoption of twin resolutions on sustaining peace and peacebuilding by the General Assembly and Security Council in 2016 and 2018.[29] The A4P political declaration endorses many of the principles of sustaining peace: stronger national ownership, greater inclusivity, and greater coherence within the UN system.

Yet it arguably walks back from previous agreements on how to better align peacekeeping with a sustaining peace approach—notably in the November 2017 Security Council presidential statement.[30] In that statement, council members recognized that "sustaining peace…should flow through all three pillars of United Nations engagement at all stages of conflict, and in all its dimensions." Signatories to the declaration commit to improved cooperation between the Peacebuilding Commission and Security Council,

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23 For example, Security Council Resolution 2409 "requests the Secretary-General to conduct a comprehensive performance review of all MONUSCO units in accordance with the Operational Readiness Assurance and Performance Improvement Policy and the Secretary-General zero tolerance policy on Sexual violence and abuse by September 2018 and further report to the Council every three months, as part of its regular reporting, on the percentage of MONUSCO contingents who have satisfied the requirements of the these reviews, the status of any remediation action to address contingents who have satisfied requirements, and detailing plans to address contingents where remediation is not deemed appropriate, as certified by the Force Commander." Available at https://undocs.org/S/RES/2409(2018) . Security Council Resolution 2409 (March 27, 2018), UN Doc. S/RES/2409.

24 Giffen, "Five Reform Areas for Effective Peacekeeping Performance."

25 UN General Assembly, *Report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations: 2018 Substantive Session*, UN Doc. A/72/19, February 12–March 9, 2018.

26 See Alexandra Novosseloff, "No Caveats Please? Breaking a Myth in UN Peace Operations," *Global Peace Operations Review*, September 12, 2016, available at https://peaceoperationsreview.org/thematic-essays/no-caveats-please-breaking-a-myth-in-un-peace-operations/ .

27 Ibid.

28 UN General Assembly and Security Council, *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*.

29 Security Council Resolution 2282 (April 27, 2016), UN Doc. S/RES/2282; General Assembly Resolution 70/262 (April 27, 2016), UN Doc. A/RES/70/262.

30 UN Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2017/27, UN Doc. SC/13139, December 21, 2017.

and to supporting UN country teams to assist host countries in building peace during transitions. The consensus reflected in the declaration, however, may mask different visions among member states of what this means in practice, including concerns about the role of the UN in conflict prevention and wariness regarding the "securitization of development" or the "politicization of peacebuilding." Indeed, many member states have reservations about including development and human rights as part of the UN's cross-pillar sustaining peace approach.

Recent experience in Liberia, Haiti, and, to a lesser extent, Côte d'Ivoire suggests that political, financial, and other considerations can trump the accumulated wisdom that should underpin efforts to sustain peace during a peacekeeping transition. Similarly, while the declaration commits its signatories "to support inclusive and participatory approaches by peacekeeping operations with the host government" and "the inclusion and engagement of civil society," what this means in practice, and where the balance between engagement with the state and its citizens lies, is ambiguous. As Aditi Gorur of the Stimson Center notes, "Responding to the needs of the people can put peacekeepers in direct conflict with the government of the country that is hosting them."[31] The broad reiteration of support for sustaining peace is unlikely to lead peace operations to take into account the kinds of structural and institutional reforms—like analysis, strategies, funding, and programming that are truly integrated across the UN system, international financial insititutions, and other partners—needed for sustainable solutions.

ENHANCING PARTNERSHIPS

The declaration acknowledges the growing collaboration between the UN, regional organizations (particularly the African Union and European Union), and subregional organizations and calls for a clearer delineation of roles between their respective operations.

However, it does not explicitly suggest where these boundaries should lie. Delineation of roles can be ambiguous, for example when both the UN and the African Union (AU) or a subregional organization are engaged in mediation, as in South Sudan, or when peacekeeping and peace enforcement or counterterrorism operations exist side by side, as in Mali. In the latter case, MINUSMA provides logistics support to the regional G5 Sahel Joint Force and bilateral counterterrorism operations. But while regional actors have demonstrated a willingness to take on offensive operations, potentially obviating the need for the UN to do so, they remain dependent on the UN and bilateral partners for financial and logistical support. Such support can undermine the UN's political role, as seen in Mali.

Reflecting a priority for AU member states, the declaration also underscores the need to make donor financing of the AU more predictable, sustainable, and flexible and to be tied clearly to missions authorized by the Security Council under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. This has emerged as a point of contention between major donors wary of the cost of providing UN assessed funding to the AU and those that view such AU missions as a credible response where UN missions are not appropriate. While the text reflects carefully crafted language previously agreed in the Security Council and the General Assembly's Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C-34), its inclusion is nonetheless significant given opposition from key member states.[32]

The declaration also includes a specific commitment by host governments to facilitate access for peacekeeping operations and a recognition of their responsibilities related to safety and security. Yet, as Gorur notes, "In many mission settings, host-state governments have consented—sometimes under pressure—to a mission's presence on paper while in practice obstructing some of the mission's mandated activities or the political process that the mission is there to support."[33] While it is unlikely that A4P will bring about the consent of the most intransigent host states, consultations to address concerns and expectations early in mandating

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31 Aditi Gorur, "Strengthening Host-State Consent and Cooperation through 'Action for Peacekeeping,'" *IPI Global Observatory*, June 21, 2018, available at https://theglobalobservatory.org/2018/06/strengthening-host-state-consent-cooperation-action-for-peacekeeping/ .

32 UN Security Council Resolution 2378 (September 20, 2017), UN Doc. S/RES/2378; UN General Assembly, *Report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations: 2018 Substantive Session*, UN Doc. A/72/19, February 12–March 9, 2018.

33 Gorur, "Strengthening Host-State Consent and Cooperation through 'Action for Peacekeeping.'"

processes could forestall further deterioration in existing missions and encourage cooperation in future ones. Identifying the risks associated with incomplete consent from the outset would enable the secretary-general and the Security Council to calibrate mandates accordingly. A compact among key stakeholders, as proposed in the HIPPO report, could also help garner consent by setting mutual expectations from the outset.[34]

Finally, the declaration expresses a collective commitment to "better prepare, train, and equip uniformed personnel through innovative approaches, including triangular partnerships and co-deployments." Recent practice has suggested possible models that might be continued and built on, including "smart pledges" by two or more countries to deploy as part of a single unit, multinational rotation (particularly for limited, niche capabilities), and training, equipment, and logistics support to third-party TCCs. All of these options to address capability gaps were part of the commitment made by participants at the 2017 Defense Ministerial in Vancouver.

CONDUCT OF PERSONNEL

The declaration includes a broad set of commitments on the conduct of UN personnel, including implementation of the UN Human Rights Due Diligence Policy and adoption of environmentally responsible approaches. Both are important, as underscored by recent revelations of a TCC deploying officers accused of past human rights abuses,[35] and by the efforts of a permanent member of the Security Council to cut funding to mitigate the environmental impact of peacekeeping missions.[36]

Secretary-General Guterres has emphasized the duty of peacekeepers, both civilian and uniformed, "to uphold the highest standards of integrity, professionalism and respect for the dignity of the human person."[37] He rightly emphasizes zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse by UN peacekeepers, which is also a top priority for member states. Guterres has pushed concrete efforts to ensure accountability for sexual exploitation and abuse, provide victims with specialized services and support, and ensure compliance with human rights norms and standards through the screening and vetting of personnel. As of September 4, 2018, ninety-eight countries have signed on to a voluntary compact committing to eliminate sexual exploitation and abuse,[38] while fifty-eight government leaders and heads of state have joined the secretary-general's circle of leadership. Nonetheless, "these vague commitments are not reflected in policy and lack demonstration of any substantive change."[39]

A4P: One of Several Initiatives to Strengthen Peacekeeping

A4P should not be viewed in isolation from other complementary reform initiatives, including efforts to reduce peacekeeper casualties in hostile environments, the restructuring of the UN's peace and security architecture, the reorganization of the UN's administrative and management system, and independent reviews of several peacekeeping missions to examine the conditions for their success. These efforts reinforce the goals of A4P and likewise largely depend on the political will of member states to change existing practices.

Following the Santos Cruz report on reducing peacekeeper fatalities, the Secretariat—with strong support from TCCs—has moved to strengthen command and control and contingency planning, identify and redress shortfalls in contingents' equipment, improve and tailor training, implement a peacekeeping intelligence system, strengthen force protection measures, improve medical

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34 Gorur proposes that prior to authorizing a new mission, the Security Council either visit the host country or host a briefing by the major parties and civil society representatives in New York to better understand the political dynamics at play, the parties' political priorities and sensitivities, and the political support the mission will require. These consultations could also be used by member states and the council to reduce misunderstandings and mismatched expectations between themselves and the host state about the mission's responsibilities and limitations, which often lead to deterioration of consent down the road. Ibid.

35 Mark Townsend, "Sri Lankan 'War Criminals' Deployed as UN Peacekeepers," *The Guardian*, July 21, 2018, available at www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/21/sri-lanka-war-criminals-un-peacekeeping-missions-darfur-mali-south-sudan .

36 Personal communication with the author, July 9, 2018.

37 António Guterres, quoted on UN website, available at https://conduct.unmissions.org/ .

38 United Nations, "Voluntary Compact," available at www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/voluntary-compact .

39 Annie Rubin, "How Can the UN Enhance Its Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse?," *IPI Global Observatory*, June 15, 2018, available at www.theglobalobservatory.org/2018/06/how-can-un-enhance-prevention-of-sexual-exploitation-abuse/ .

capabilities in high-risk environments, and enhance accountability.[40] These efforts, which have focused on the five highest-risk missions (in CAR, Mali, the DRC, Darfur, and South Sudan), have been put in place to improve the security of peacekeepers. At the same time, peacekeepers must become more decisive, less risk-averse, and better able and more willing to confront threats to mission mandates.

Effective January 1, 2019, the peace and security architecture at UN headquarters will be restructured into the new Department of Peace Operations (DPO) and Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA). A major aim of the reorganization is to deliver more regionally integrated political strategies, improve linkages with regional partners, and make transitions into, out of, and between peace operations less disruptive.[41] Nonetheless, it remains to be seen whether the reforms will translate into attention to conflict prevention and sustaining peace and whether they will go beyond "moving around boxes" at UN headquarters to improve mandate delivery in the field.

The secretary-general has also received approval for sweeping changes to the organization's administrative processes and structures governing budgeting, human resources, and procurement in an effort to make UN missions more agile and responsive.[42] In line with A4P, these reforms should empower decision makers in the field, enabling missions to be more agile in responding to shifting conditions on the ground, to recruit and retain expertise when and where it is needed, and to shift resources to emerging priorities. Yet achieving this vision will require a cultural shift within the UN's inefficient, risk-averse, overly centralized bureaucracy and among member states accustomed to at times intrusive operational, procedural, and financial scrutiny.

Finally, to better align the mandates of UN peace operations with political and security conditions on the ground and ensure that missions are optimally configured to achieve the strategic objectives of the Security Council, the secretary-general has initiated independent reviews of several peacekeeping missions.[43] The reviews assess the assumptions underlying mandates, whether conditions for successful implementation exist, opportunities for prioritizing tasks and improving performance, and resource constraints.

Yet despite the challenges facing missions, none of the reviews have yet resulted in major changes to mission mandates, political strategies, or resource allocations, nor have their full findings and recommendations been made public. Reviews of the missions in Mali (MINUSMA) and South Sudan (UNMISS), for example, resulted in only modest adjustments to the mission footprints and mandates, reflecting the unwillingness of particular member states to shift their strategy (like France in Mali). The extent to which member states break from past practice and uphold their A4P commitments matters at the level of individual missions. There is a widening gap between the purported objective of these reviews and where they ended up—in the case of Mali, the mission now has a mandate that is even longer and more complicated than before—and between the lack of change on the ground and the expressed commitments in the political declaration. Such results raise questions about the whole A4P endeavor.

Conclusion

Ultimately, A4P is intended to galvanize member states to commit to peacekeeping. It aims to provide the secretary-general with the political support and resources needed to implement the many reforms he has initiated and to provoke a positive shift in the policies and practices of key peacekeeping stakeholders, from Security Council members and financial contributors, to troop and

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40 United Nations, "Improving Security of United Nations Peacekeepers: Action Plan for Implementation of Fatalities Report," April 9, 2018, available at https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/180406_action_plan_revised.pdf .

41 Jake Sherman, "High Stakes for the Secretary-General in the Upcoming Fifth Committee Negotiations," *IPI Global Observatory*, May 4, 2018, available at https://theglobalobservatory.org/2018/05/high-stakes-secretary-general-fifth-committee-negotiations/ .

42 The reorganization will replace the Department of Management and Department of Field Support with a new Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and a Department of Operational Support, along with a new consolidated Office of Information and Communications Technology. Further, the secretary-general has overhauled the UN development system to better ensure a "whole-of-system" approach across the peace and security, human rights, and development pillars.

43 Including in Abyei (UNISFA), the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), Cyprus (UNFICYP), the Golan Heights (UNDOF), Mali (MINUSMA), Somalia (UNSOS), South Sudan (UNMISS), and Western Sahara (MINURSO).

police contributors, host countries, and regional partners. The Secretariat will need to capitalize on the political attention and support it has generated through A4P to drive change—and get member states to take ownership and drive change themselves.

Two measures of success should be applied to A4P: whether member states and the Secretariat honor their commitments, and whether these commitments enable peace operations to help end conflicts and deliver sustainable peace. Regarding the first of these measures, negotiation of the A4P declaration was a highly consultative process in which member states were able to find consensus on a set of mutual commitments. It has achieved this consensus by providing everyone with something they can point to as a win, enabling them to overlook more contentious points. All of the commitments are valuable expressions of political commitment to strengthening peace-keeping, but not all of them carry equal weight. Many reaffirm past agreement in the Security Council and General Assembly, while others—like pursuing complementary political objectives at multilateral and bilateral levels—represent important new expressions of member states' strategic political commitment to peacekeeping.

At the same time, deep fault lines on a few contentious issues like the use of force, human rights, support to counterterrorism operations, financing for AU peace support operations, caveats imposed by TCCs, and performance of peacekeepers have been papered over by negotiated language that is sufficiently ambiguous or aspira-tional as to be acceptable to all signatories. A4P will face a challenge moving from political commit-ment to implementation, particularly in areas that directly contribute to setting and achieving strategic objectives but have historically been resistant to member-state agreement.

In principle, member states will regularly convene to assess their progress on implementing A4P, having committed "to translating these commitments into our positions and practices in the relevant UN bodies, including the General Assembly and the Security Council, and meeting periodically in relevant formats to review progress, inter alia, at field level." It remains to be seen what such a forum or mechanism will look like. Among the ideas floated are a group of friends, a rappor-teur to report on implementation, "shadow reporting" by civil society, and mission-specific groups of stakeholders.[44] Also still to be settled is whether there is sufficient support for A4P to be formalized through General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. Either way, determined member states will probably continue to push operational and policy innovations that have a positive impact on peacekeeping effectiveness. Moving forward, the UN and member states should collectively identify which commitments are most important and could be the focus of future reviews of progress.

Regarding the second measure of success, the looming question is whether A4P is ambitious enough. As Richard Gowan of UN University succinctly frames it, A4P reflects support for a set of "pre-existing ideas" rather than "fresh ideas about how states should cooperate."[45] Addressing the most pressing challenges facing contemporary peacekeeping will require concerted international will. The greatest obstacle to policy change is member states' resistance to ideas, due to the extent to which they affect equity and interests. Alternative processes for crafting mandates and negotiating political compacts offer one path toward supporting political solutions in seemingly intractable conflicts. Bespoke configurations of UN and regional arrangements, including clearer division of labor on peace enforcement and counterterrorism, would support more meaningful partnerships. Strengthened processes for selecting, preparing, and supporting senior mission leader-ship teams would improve cohesiveness, adaptability, and morale. Sustaining peace offers a multidimensional approach that could bridge the gap between the state and its citizens. As of yet, these and other potential solutions remain elusive.

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44 Gowan, "Political Gap in Reform Agenda Leaves Questions on A4P Mechanisms."

45 Gowan, "The End of a Peacekeeping Era," *Global Peace Operations Review*, April 4, 2018, available at
   https://peaceoperationsreview.org/thematic-essays/the-end-of-a-peacekeeping-era/ .

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