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AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

**Master's degree in
Human Rights and Multi-level Governance**

The Role of "Stabilization" in a Shifting UN Peacekeeping Paradigm

A Critical Analysis of its Evolution, Implementation, and Implications within United Nations Peacekeeping Doctrine

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INTRODUCTION

Peace operations[1] conducted by the United Nations (UN) have evolved significantly over time, encompassing a wide range of objectives and activities beyond the auspices of traditional peacekeeping mandates, and for which UN intervention mechanisms were originally envisioned for. Out of the numerous emerging concepts that have permanently shifted the organisation's paradigm for these operations, one specific concept is subject to much debate and controversy, especially considering to the absolute lack of any normative definition for it within UN key documents.

The concept of 'stabilisation'[2] appeared for the first time limited within debates in the Security Council, however, after two decades, the term has become one of the most frequently utilised in the lexicon of peace operations planning and execution, being extensively present even in the names of key large-scale operations. In this context, the absence of a concrete definition for stabilisation by UN policy documents has raised concerns among scholars and within the UN itself, as to the possible implications of stabilisation in practice. The notorious HIPPO report, for example, emphasized the need for clarification on the wide range of interpretations of the concept, and elected the elaboration of a precise definition as necessary for the future of UN peace operations[3].

In the lack of an institutional definition provided by the UN, the first objective of this research will be to identify how exactly did the idea of stabilisation came to existence within the scope of peace operations, identifying the key sources of this conceptualisation. The second, and considerably more elusive objective of this work will

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[1] For the sake of this research, the term 'peace operations' will be preferred as opposed to 'peacekeeping'. 'Peace operations' is an inclusive term which encompasses a range of mission types. Peacekeeping is used in this article to denote a more traditional interpretation where there is peace to keep or where discussing the principles or doctrine of peacekeeping as distinct from peace enforcement.

[2] Acknowledging that there is no specific spelling most utilized in this sense, this work will prefer the use of 'stabilisation' over 'stabilization', even though both terms are extensively utilised.

[3] The High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO), from 2015, was one of the most important documents adopted by the UN in the topic of peace operations, it mentions the absence of a definition for stabilisation as troublesome.

be to identify how is the precise application of a notion of stabilisation implemented by decision-makers in the process of mandating, planning and executing activities under the umbrella of UN missions. The expected outcome of this analysis will be the display of a broader perspective on how the term has several effects on a ruling paradigm for peace operations.

In order to accomplish this objective, the present research will be divided in three chapters, each including their own sections. The first chapter will be dedicated to a presentation of the key concepts and objects of study for this work. Due attention will be given to the legal dispositions concerning the deployment of peace operations in the UN Charter, and then focus will be shifted towards the evolution of UN peace operations, drawing upon a proposed categorisation of UN missions between different generations. The third and last section will occupy itself with the origins of stabilisation as a concept, including an analysis of the different origins of conceptualisations.

The second chapter will be devoted to the presentation of two case studies of missions including the ideas of stabilisation among some of their key concepts. Both in the case of MONUSCO as well as for the case of MINUSMA, an historic overview will be utilized together with a mandate analysis, in order to identify what mission characteristics and logics can be attributed to stabilisation. These case studies will provide practical examples of how the concept has been implemented and its impact on peacebuilding efforts.

Lastly, in the third chapter this study will take advantage of the elements described in the first two chapters, in order to define what are the most broadly impacts of the introduction of stabilisation to the UN paradigm for peace operations. Through this analysis, we aim to identify patterns, trends, and potential limitations in the impact of stabilisation missions, providing valuable insights for any policymakers, practitioners, and scholars engaged in the current trends observable among the organisation's missions, and how these will most likely affect its future.

In conclusion, this master thesis aims to contribute to the existing literature on UN peace operations by critically examining the impact of the stabilisation concept and its practical implementation. By adopting a rigorous analytical approach and utilizing comprehensive

data, this research will shed light on the measurable effects of stabilisation missions, thereby enhancing our understanding of their contributions to conflict transformation, state-building, and sustainable peace. Through this study, we hope to provide valuable insights that can inform policy decisions and enhance the effectiveness of future stabilisation efforts in UN peace operations.

Chapter I) The Evolution of UN Peace Operations and the Concept of Stabilisation

Before discussing the appearance of the stabilisation concept as a recurring keyword and a highly influential concept behind the planning and conduct of peace operations in the past decades, it is important to thoroughly analyse the development of the peace operations paradigm within the scope of UN peacekeeping doctrine. Marked by many developments and paradigm shifts, the evolution of the manner in which the UN conducts peace operations has reflected practical experiences, lessons learnt at a heavy toll, shifts in global power regimes, and has been relatively well documented through key reports, policies and guidelines produced by different bodies within the framework of the multinational organisation.

While the evolution and transformations behind the idea of UN peacekeeping have been relatively well documented and can mostly be associated with key developments in between the production of doctrinal capstones and the perspective of decision-makers, the same cannot be confidently said about the concept of stabilisation. The peculiar status of the stabilisation concept within the complex framework of UN doctrine is further evidenced by an, almost comical, absence of any definition whatsoever, in stark contrast to the numerous carefully worded definitions and detailed guidelines laying the foundation for practices and legal aspects ruling UN peacekeeping missions.

The absence of a clear definition on the meaning of stabilisation within the scope of peace operations is in no way a recent concern. Ever since the inclusion of the keyword in mission mandates it has been subject to criticisms, both from scholars, as well as from within UN's structure, such as through one of the recommendations from the HIPPO report, highlighting that the concept has a 'wide range of interpretations', and that the 'usage of this term by the UN requires clarification'. While it is not possible to consider

any doctrine from the organisation on the topic, many authors highlight how the fact that an absent doctrinal definition carries much meaning by itself.[4]

The first part of this chapter will be dedicated to an attempt of analysing the development of UN's peacekeeping doctrine, and interpreting how the inclusion of the stabilization concept might have affected the conception of mission objectives, definition of priorities and shaped the nature of activities promoted in the scope of increasingly ambitious peace operations. The first sections will be dedicated to an historic overview of peacekeeping operations in the scope of the UN, starting with the legal precedents for peace operations in the UN Charter, going from the first deployments until the present day, focusing on the evolution of a ruling peacekeeping doctrine and the experiences that were key to this shifting paradigm.

The last section of this first chapter will be responsible for a presentation of the concept of stabilisation, introducing the origins of the concept and, in the lack of appropriate UN doctrine defining it, will draw upon the concepts established by key actors for the term. The objective of this chapter will be to properly introduce the terms that will serve as a foundation for the coming discussions.

1.1) Peace Operations in the UN Charter

United Nations Peace Operations constitute the most well-known and, most likely, the main instrument in terms of mediation, negotiation and promotion of peace in the scope of the wide-reaching international organisation. Even though not explicitly mentioned in the document itself, the legal precedent for such operations can be traced to the organisation's foundational charter, under chapters VI, VII and VIII.[5] Despite the radical shifts in the nature of peace operations ever since UN's first deployments, and until most recent operations, all missions have traced back to these chapters the basis for their fulfilment, taking into account how the evoked chapter in each occasion plays a determinant role in the character of a subsequent mission[6].

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[4] Gilder (2019)
[5] Bellamy et al (2010)
[6] Foley (2017a)

Before delving deeper into the chapters associated with the deployment of peace operations, it is necessary to highlight the importance of Chapter I, "*Purposes and Principles*", of the Charter, where it is agreed upon that the maximum objective of the organisation is the maintenance of peace and international security, as well as the terms through which the organisation can act in order to promote them. Excerpts from Chapter I of the UN charter establish, respectively; the collective role of the UN in addressing possible threats and sources of instability; the primacy of pacific and legal channels of conciliation; and the reinforcement of state sovereignty, as depicted in the excerpts below:

Article 1)

.1 - To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace;

Article 2)

.3 - All Members shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered.

Article 7)

.7 - Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter; but this principle shall not prejudice the application of enforcement measures under Chapter Vll.[7]

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[7] UN Charter, Article 1

The understanding agreed upon the foundation of the UN, exemplified by these fractions of its first chapter, can be translated into a collective vow, in which member states vouch to preserve state sovereignty; as well as international order and stability, while establishing that the UN, more specifically the Security Council, should be the only legitimate source of decisions deciding upon eventual coercive measures taken in spite of another states' sovereignty.

Taking into account such understanding about the delegated authority to the UN and its Security Council, Chapter VI is the first one in the Charter properly dedicated to the direct involvement of organisation in what it entitles the "*Pacific Settlement of Disputes*". Highlighted below through key excerpts from its full text, in Articles 33, 34 and 37;

Article 33

1 - The parties to any dispute, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, shall, first of all, seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice.
2 - The Security Council shall, when it deems necessary, call upon the parties to settle their dispute by such means.

Article 34

1 - The Security Council may investigate any dispute, or any situation which might lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute, in order to determine whether the continuance of the dispute or situation is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security.

Article 36

1 - The Security Council may, at any stage of a dispute of the nature referred to in Article 33 or of a situation of like nature, recommend appropriate procedures or methods of adjustment.

2 - The Security Council should take into consideration any procedures for the settlement of the dispute which have already been adopted by the parties.

3 - In making recommendations under this Article the Security Council should also take into consideration that legal disputes should as a general rule be referred by the parties to the International Court of Justice in accordance with the provisions of the Statute of the Court.

Article 37

1 - Should the parties to a dispute of the nature referred to in Article 33 fail to settle it by the means indicated in that Article, they shall refer it to the Security Council.

2 - If the Security Council deems that the continuance of the dispute is in fact likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, it shall decide whether to take action under Article 36 or to recommend such terms of settlement as it may consider appropriate.[8]

These articles establish the rites through which a cause of international concern is brought up to the attention of the Security Council, and the steps that might be taken as soon as a concern is discussed by its members. An important remark must be made in regard to the nature of disputes considered in these articles, implying as well a consideration on the status of the "parties" mentioned in articles 33, 36 and 37. Even though not explicitly stated in the charter, it is implicit that these procedures envision the resolution of disputes between sovereign state entities, thus respecting the principle of state sovereignty present in the document and limiting the role of the UN in acting upon interstate disputes or full-scale conflicts.[9] Later developments would result in the deployment of missions in the context of internal conflicts, or responding to irregular threats to security, however, such a possibility was clearly not one envisioned for the UN at its foundation.[10]

Chapter VII, the next one versing on the rites of the UN when reacting to possible threats to international security is titled "*Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression*", and is dedicated to norms ruling situational assessments by the Security Council, whose responsibility will be that of determining the organisation's response to eventual sources of instability, establishing as well the role of member-states in a collective response. Articles 39 to 42 establish a sequenced course of

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[8] UN Charter, Chapter VI
[9] Bellamy et al (2010)
[10] Kenkel (2014)

action following the determination of an event in the nature of those enumerated in the chapter title.

Article 39

The Security Council shall determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression and shall make recommendations, or decide what measures shall be taken in accordance with Articles 41 and 42, to maintain or restore international peace and security.

Article 40

In order to prevent an aggravation of the situation, the Security Council may, before making the recommendations or deciding upon the measures provided for in Article 39, call upon the parties concerned to comply with such provisional measures as it deems necessary or desirable. Such provisional measures shall be without prejudice to the rights, claims, or position of the parties concerned. The Security Council shall duly take account of failure to comply with such provisional measures.

Article 41

The Security Council may decide what measures not involving the use of armed force are to be employed to give effect to its decisions, and it may call upon the Members of the United Nations to apply such measures. These may include complete or partial interruption of economic relations and of rail, sea, air, postal, telegraphic, radio, and other means of communication, and the severance of diplomatic relations.

Article 42

Should the Security Council consider that measures provided for in Article 41 would be inadequate or have proved to be inadequate, it may take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security. Such action may include demonstrations, blockade, and other operations by air, sea, or land forces of Members of the United Nations.[11]

The procedures foreseen in these articles represent a clear escalation of measures employed by the UN and its member-states, in response to a situation classified in the spectrum of possible threats to international peace and stability, and as determined by the Security Council in its resolutions. Provisional recommendations are followed by non-

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[11] Un Charter, Chapter VII

military measures, such as sanctions and other forms of economic, logistical or political reprisals. Should those measures prove themselves ineffective in addressing sources of systemic instability, a precedent is established for the use of military means to maintain or reestablish a peaceful and stable status quo, the last degree of coercive action provided by the UN Charter.

The last chapter of the Charter relevant to the realisation of peace operations is Chapter VIII, titled *"Regional Arrangements"*. In the excerpts of articles 52 and 53 provided below, the Charter praises the role of regional arrangements in sustaining international peace and security as a complement of efforts carried out by the UN and its member-states. The document establishes, however, that even when deliberating outside of the scope of the UN, member-states should refrain from taking any enforcement measures without the Security Council's approval and consent.

Article 52

1 - Nothing in the present Charter precludes the existence of regional arrangements or agencies for dealing with such matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security as are appropriate for regional action provided that such arrangements or agencies and their activities are consistent with the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations.

2 - The Members of the United Nations entering into such arrangements or constituting such agencies shall make every effort to achieve pacific settlement of local disputes through such regional arrangements or by such regional agencies before referring them to the Security Council.

3 - The Security Council shall encourage the development of pacific settlement of local disputes through such regional arrangements or by such regional agencies either on the initiative of the states concerned or by reference from the Security Council.

Article 53

1 - The Security Council shall, where appropriate, utilise such regional arrangements or agencies for enforcement action under its authority. But no enforcement action shall be taken under regional arrangements or by regional agencies without the authorization of the Security Council, with the exception of measures against any enemy state*, (...)[12]

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[12] Un Charter, Chap VIII

In conclusion, even when delegating possible responsibilities in the promotion of international peace and stability, the UN Charter foresees a leadership role of the organisation, under the decision-making authority of the Security Council, as an ultimate source of legitimacy for any enforcement action upon possible threats to the international status quo and integrity of its member-states. The inclusion of regional arrangements in this predisposition is an important aspect of the Charter in "delegating" a complementary role to regional organisations, which would in theory have the capacity to react more rapidly to local issues, while offering an alternative to a centralization of international community's peace initiatives under the umbrella of the UN.

I.2) Five Generations of UN Peace Operations: An Historic and Doctrinal Overview

Having established the key foundations for UN peace operations doctrine, the UN Charter has served as the legal basis for the deployment of missions from 1948 until the present day. While the doctrinal rites and procedures haven't changed much in the past 70 decades, the same cannot be said about the character of peace operations deployed under the authority of the organisation. The nature of UN peacekeeping missions has evolved considerably ever since the establishment of its first peacekeeping operation, the UNTSO, until the deployment of large-scale multidimensional missions in the past decades, largely due to a necessity to adapt the organisation's paradigm for such a tool when involved in threats to peace much different from those foreseen when the peacekeeping instrument was envisioned.[13]

In order to better categorise the normative evolution of UN's peace operations paradigm, and as an attempt to frame the key characteristics of missions' through time, this chapter will draw upon the analytical framework proposed by scholar Kai Michael Kenkel, arguing for the categorisation of peace operations in four different generations, including hints of a

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[13] Foley (2017a)

fifth one gaining prominence in the past decade.[14] As admitted by the author himself, there is much room to discuss precise ways to delimitate different generations of peace operations, such as the ones proposed by Ghébali (1992) or Abi-Saab (1992), and indeed Kenkel's proposed framework differs considerably from the usual approach, identifying normally three generations of peace operations.[15] In any case, the definition of these four, or five, generations for peace operations shouldn't be taken into account as an attempt to create a definitive taxonomy of missions, but more as an analytical tool. Furthermore, it is also important to state that the evolution of peace operations is not a completely linear process, but something observable as mandates built upon the experience of lessons and demands from the field, sometimes even within the same mission.[16]

Kenkel's proposed analytical categorisation is based on three key characteristics; the level of military force employed by operations; the nature of activities and tasks carried out by mission civilian components; and in the case of his proposal for the delimitation of a fifth generation, increased UN responsibility-sharing with regional organisations.[17] Besides these key traits of different generations, another ambition of this chapter will be that of addressing key events, milestones and novelties crucial to the evolution of a ruling UN doctrine on peace operations, such as the introduction of concepts like the Protection of Civilians and the Responsibility to Protect. The last section of the chapter will be dedicated to discussing Kenkel's proposed notion of a novel fifth generation for peace operations, including also more recent developments, which couldn't be taken into account in his paper from 2013, and whose impact may very well be guiding the UN peace operations paradigm towards a doctrinal shift.

The First Generation of Peace Operations: Traditional Peacekeeping

Traditional peacekeeping constitutes the original concept of peace operations as conceived by the UN, drawing out from the legacy of conflict resolution mechanisms existing in the

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[14] Kenkel (2014)
[15] See Ghébali (1992), Abi-Saab (1992)Include authors cited by Kai himself and Donnely
[16] Foley 2017, maybe include others?
[17] Kenkel, 2014

framework of the League of Nations. These missions were employed by the UN in the years following its foundation and especially during the period of the Cold War, based on the core demand for an external, also neutral, mediator that could act as a supporter of peace following an end to armed hostilities, usually through a truce or ceasefire.[18]

In a nutshell, as the name suggests, those missions were mandated in support of fragile or temporary peace agreements, which could otherwise slip back into conflict without due support. The earliest examples of traditional peacekeeping missions deployed by the UN were the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) and the United Nations Monitoring and Observation Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), deployed in 1948 and 1949 respectively, and still existent until this very day, albeit in different circumstances.[19] [20]

Traditional peacekeeping operations are usually mandated under Chapter VI of the UN charter, are normally lightly armed and operate under strict rules of engagement. The political context of the Cold War and the conception of UN's role as a neutral mediator established a very restrictive nature for these peace operations, operating under three basic principles:

- **The consent of conflict parties**; Necessary due to the principle of states' right to non-intervention and state sovereignty.[21]
- **Impartiality (equal treatment without discrimination) between the conflict factions**; highlighting the UN's role as a neutral mediator.
- **The non-use of force by United Nations troops**, reflecting that the UN is not a conflict party.

Even though some of these principles are anachronic considering the nature and concept of present-day peace operations, even among those labelled as peacekeeping missions, it is important to highlight how these are still some of the most important guiding principles for

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[18] (Bellamy et al. 2010
[19] Include timeline for missions deployed, UN
[20] Include description of changes in the past decades
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peace operations under UN doctrine, despite the later prominence of other concepts challenging the irrevocable aspects of states' absolute sovereignty. Together, these principles constitute the "Holy Trinity" of peacekeeping, as coined by Bellamy and Williams. [22]

Activities endeavoured by traditional peacekeeping missions include monitoring borders, the oversight of demilitarised zones, territorial interposition between warring states and other activities under the auspices of facilitating a peace accord and political settlement over the cessation of hostilities.[23] Initially lightly armed, if armed at all, missions constituted of a small contingent would later give place to the deployment of fully-armed contingents, as a realisation that unarmed missions would not be successful in operating under higher levels of ongoing violence, such as the case of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF), deployed in 1956 in response to the crisis in Suez.[24]

Despite an increasing military capability, traditional peacekeeping missions would still operate under very strict conditions of military engagement, and continued working under the same principles of state consent, impartiality and non-use of force. Considering their passive nature and firm grounding in pacific dispute settlement, Kenkel points out that traditional peacekeeping operations have been accused of "*freezing conflicts and providing a disincentive to their final resolution*", perpetuating belligerent positions and delaying a definitive end of hostilities. Furthermore, the scholar further argues that this ineffectiveness in tackling underlying causes of conflict and promoting an enduring peace provided the necessary context for a paradigm shift, pushing the UN towards a more comprehensive peace operations paradigm, as an attempt to better tackle root causes of conflict.

The Second Generation of Peace Operations: Civilian Tasks and the Agenda for Peace

The second generation of peace operations establishes itself as an attempt to overcome the shortcomings of the traditional peacekeeping paradigm, unable to address real causes of

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[22] Bellamy 2010
[23] Ibid
[24] (Hillen 1998, 87)

conflict or to impede the eventual relapse of violence in some of the countries in which they were deployed. This generation differentiates itself from the former by relying also on the role of civilian components in mandates, which would be responsible for a myriad of tasks designed to reinforce local peace processes and reconciliation dynamics, such as the organisation of elections, essential to conflict transformation from violent to political contestation; disarmament efforts, demobilisation and reintegration of armed groups; humanitarian aid delivery; human rights promotion; refugee assistance; and government capacity-building.

This paradigm shift gains prominence under a very particular moment in international politics, the end of the Cold War. This period of time was extremely significant for the second generation of peace operations, as the UN witnessed what Diehl calls "an increase in supply and demand" for peace operations. Fading proxy war dynamics around the world gave room to tentatives of reconciliation, especially in the African continent, and UN's support for these processes was time and again requested by states looking for support to local peace processes. On the other hand, from the perspective of the Security Council, it was now much easier to deploy UN operations, considering the lack of exercised political opposition from permanent member-states through the use of their veto powers.

Grasping UN's potential to lead the world in a pursuit of more peaceful times, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali issued in 1992 a report titled "*An agenda for Peace*", highlighting the organisation's role as a promoter of collective security into the post-Cold War period, and establishing the practices through which peace efforts would be supported by the UN. The three areas of action are listed as *Preventive Diplomacy; Peacemaking;* and *Peacekeeping*, worded as the following by the report itself:

- **Preventive diplomacy** is action to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur.

- **Peacemaking** is action to bring hostile parties to agreement, essentially through such peaceful means as those foreseen in Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations.

- **Peace-keeping** is the deployment of a United Nations presence in the field, hitherto with the consent of all the parties concerned, normally involving United Nations military and/or police personnel and frequently civilians as well. Peace-keeping is a technique that expands the possibilities for both the prevention of conflict and the making of peace.

As it is evidenced by the language of the report and the preference for actions taken under Chapter VI of the UN Charter, despite a paradigm shift towards a more comprehensive approach for the promotion of peace in regards to civilian tasks, there was still no departure at the time from the basic principles of traditional peacekeeping, especially the respect to a state's sovereignty and the reliance on consent. The classification of Chapter VII activities, and subsequently the peace enforcement concept, as a subheading of peacekeeping activities, as pointed out by Kenkel, indicates that there was no preference for the UN at the time to move the peacekeeping paradigm towards the expansion of military activities and permissions.

Considering that no significant changes to the rules of engagement of peace operations were brought up by this generation, missions' rate of success would still rely heavily on the cooperation and good will of warring parties, as well as the practical attainment to peace agreements supported by mission mandates. Deployed in increasing numbers, the second generation of peace operations was responsible for a significant number of successful* missions, such as the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) in Namibia and the United Nations Operation in Mozambique (UNOMOZ), for example.

Unfortunately for the legacy of second generation peace operations, any possible success of this mission paradigm was overshadowed by the tragic developments during what would later be known as the "big three" failures of peacekeeping in the 1990s. The failure to prevent the Rwandan Genocide in 1994 and the targetting of civilians in Bosnia, pilled up with discontent from UN's disastrous attempt to curb the violence on the Somali Civil War, established a strong scepticism towards UN peace operations, and, logically, challenged the organisation's pretenses as a leading promoter of peace worldwide.

<u>**The Third Generation of Peace Operations: New Wars, Peace Enforcement, R2P and Humanitarian Interventions.**</u>

Despite some successes in facilitating local reconciliation processes and curbing conflict through second generation missions, UN's peace operations paradigm would eventually prove itself extremely unsuccessful in dealing with a fast shift in conflict dynamics in the field, better characterised by Mary Kaldor's definition of "new wars". Regardless of an actual historical novelty of such conflict dynamics, a discussion which would prove way beyond the scope of this work, it is a fact that during the 1990s the UN found itself present in extremely volatile security contexts, ones much different from the ones experienced in previous operations and in dynamics much different from those originally considered for peacekeeping missions.

According to Kaldor, with the end of the Cold War and weakening of bipolar proxy dynamics, the nature of ongoing conflicts started differing significantly from traditional interstate conflicts based in conventional warfare. Those "new" conflicts were characterised by their decentralised nature, involving a multitude of non-state actors such as militias, warlords, and insurgent groups, often fueled by, or also galvanising, ethno-nationalist, religious, or ideological motivations. In the security context of the post-Cold War period, Kaldor argues that the decline of the state-centric system and the erosion of state authority have contributed to the rise of these so-called "New Wars". This transformation of the global security landscape posed new challenges to traditional notions of security, and demanded a comprehensive approach to address the root causes and dynamics of theses conflicts, as the main sources of instability in the globe became intrastate conflicts, fueled by local grievances and the quest for control over resources, and sometimes posing themselves in the context of identity politics.

In hindsight, considering the high complexity and volatility of these conflicts, the UN's peacekeeping paradigm was severely ill-equipped to maintain or facilitate any peace amidst ongoing irregular conflicts such as the ones in Somalia, Bosnia and Rwanda. The outcome of the UN's failure in addressing these crises is perhaps the most significant paradigm shift in regards to peace operations, as it was the spark of a strong revision of the key principles of host-state consent, impartiality and neutrality in UN missions. Firstly, considering the demand for international action with humanitarian aims, which made itself

clear at the time, and also taking into account that some of those instances would often find themselves in the context of failed states or in territories with a practical absence of one, the reliance on host state consent for the conduction of mission activities proved itself very problematic when deploying peace operations in failed or collapsed states, without any sovereign government to receive consent from.*

Even more troubling, the experiences in Bosnia and Rwanda demonstrated how inadequate the principles of impartiality and non-use of force could result in conflict contexts where actors would perceive violence against civilians not only as a valid strategic tool, but also as an objective in itself. Troops serving under the UN flag were severely unprepared to use force as a source of protection to civilians in those contexts, lacking both capabilities and institutional support to take action, reduced to the role of mere witnesses to crimes against humanity in some cases. The issue with impartiality was further evidenced in the case of UNAMIR in Rwanda. Even in the face of multiple alerts provided by the mission's own force commander, reporting the occurrence of mass killings in the country, UNAMIR was still not preventively using force due to DPKO's (current DPO) insistence on the Chapter VI nature of the mission's mandate, considering that the perpetrators of these killings were concentrated on one side of the conflict, thus creating a moral dilemma for the mission's principle of impartiality.* Estimates calculate the total number of civilians killed during the Rwandan Genocide to be up to 800,000.*

As it couldn't unfold in any different way, the well-publicised failure of the UN in handling these humanitarian emergencies led to a crisis of legitimacy for the organisation, and resulted in profound changes in the ruling principles of peace operations, mostly centred around the use of force in UN missions and resulting in, as Kenkel puts it, "a growing shift in the balance between the two components of sovereignty, non-intervention and human rights". The first key development revolved around a shift in the expected use of force in peace operations, which was first glimpsed already in 1995, when "*A Supplement to Agenda for Peace"* was published, restating the 'core principles' of traditional peacekeeping, but asserting that 'peace- keeping and the use of force (other than in self- defence) should be seen as alternative techniques and not as adjacent points on a continuum, permitting easy transition from one to the other'.

The second, and perhaps most crucial, development in the paradigm of peace operations resulted from a consensus in favour of reframing traditional interpretation of state's indisputable sovereignty and principles of non-intervention. The turn towards human rights as a core principle can be framed as a direct result of the UN experience during its failures, the "horror of inaction", as well as a strengthened liberal zeitgeist in the aftermath of the Cold War. As human rights gained normative ground, the predominance of state's rights and principles of non-intervention became increasingly subject to contestation, resulting in a post-Westphalian notion of sovereignty, in which intrastate matters could also be subject to the scrutiny of the international community.

The notorious Brahimi report, released in 2000, is one of the first key documents in the peace operations' doctrine to codify this new notion, incorporated in the excerpt below:

"(...) Impartiality for United Nations operations must therefore mean adherence to the principles of the Charter: where one party to a peace agreement clearly and incontrovertibly is violating its terms, continued equal treatment of all parties by the United Nations can in the best case result in ineffectiveness and in the worst may amount to complicity with evil. No failure did more to damage the standing and credibility of United Nations peacekeeping in the 1990s than its reluctance to distinguish victim from aggressor.

In the past, the United Nations has often found itself unable to respond effectively to such challenges. It is a fundamental premise of the present report, however, that it must be able to do so. (...) Rules of engagement should be sufficiently robust and not force United Nations contingents to cede the initiative to their attackers. This means, in turn, that the Secretariat must not apply best-case planning assumptions to situations where the local actors have historically exhibited worst case behaviour. It means that mandates should specify an operation's authority to use force. It means bigger forces, better equipped and more costly but able to be a credible deterrent. (...)

Moreover, United Nations peacekeepers — troops or police — who witness violence against civilians should be presumed to be authorised to stop it, within their means, in support of basic United Nations principles. However, operations given a broad and explicit mandate for civilian protection must be given the specific resources needed to carry out that mandate."

This citation contains two key advancements for the actual inauguration of the third generation of peace operations. The first one is the attempt to accommodate a dilemma between two competing conceptions; the principle of impartiality, still framed as a key concept in UN mission paradigm; and the organisation's ambition to sustain human rights protection within its operations. The second one, evidenced in the final lines of the citation, is the concept of civilian protection, which would later evolve into a normative doctrine within the UN peace operations framework, normally referred to as POC or PoC (Protection of Civilians).

The concept of PoC arose initially through the deliberations of the Security Council in early 1999. In the context of a shared concern that "civilians and humanitarian aid workers 'continued to be targeted in instances of armed conflict, in flagrant violation of international humanitarian and human rights law'", the submission of a report was requested to the secretary-general, one "with recommendations on how it could act to improve both the physical and legal protection of civilians in situations of armed conflict". The report would be subsequently published in September of 1999, and led to the adoption of a series of resolutions on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflicts by the Security Council.**

Even though following resolutions would end up reinforcing the primary role of the state as the protector of civilians, a precedent was set for the inclusion of protection objectives under mission mandates, and by October 1999, the first PoC mandate was authorised by the Security Council in the context of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), which, under Chapter VII, including the following paragraph in its mandate:

"(...) decides that in the discharge of its mandate UNAMSIL may take the necessary action to ensure the security and freedom of movement of its personnel and, within its capabilities and areas of deployment, to afford protection to civilians under imminent threat of physical violence taking into account the responsibilities of the Government of Sierra Leone."

Included in this mandate is yet another challenge inaugurated by UN's PoC ambitions, which is the competing perspectives between a state's responsibility to protect its own population, and the international community's responsibility to intervene whenever a state

is unable, or even unwilling, to protect people under threat within its territories. Besides creating a substantial accountability concern for other member states, which would be responsible in the case of failing to intervene in face of crimes against humanity, further normative concerns raised the issue of a possible use of sovereignty rights by oppressive governments as a shield against intervention under international scrutiny, in occasion that those governments themselves could be the main threats to civilians.

As an attempt to remedy this inconsistency in the following years, the demands inaugurated by the inclusion of PoC in UN peace operations' agenda would give birth to another innovative concept in the form of the *Responsibility to Protect* (R2P), initially envisioned by the International Committee on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) in 2001, and subsequently unanimously adopted in 2005 at the UN World Summit, although not following the ICISS integral recommendations on it. Similar to PoC, precisely defining what R2P means is a bit tricky, as it can better be framed as a concept or general consensus, eventually endorsed formally by the UN and its member states. In more concrete terms, the R2P is, firstly, an understanding that states have a positive duty to protect the peoples within their borders. Secondly, besides recognizing state sovereignty and reiterating local state's primary responsibility in protecting people from crimes against humanity, R2P understands that states' sovereignty privileges may be momentarily revoked in cases where states are unable or unwilling to protect peoples within their jurisdiction from harm. In those cases, especially the ones in which governments are the ones threatening human rights, the international community would undertake collective responsibility in impeding the threat to human security.

Ever since their introduction until the present day, both PoC and R2P have been subject to much scrutiny and debates, both within UN decision makers as well as within academic circles. Despite sound agreement on the necessity of principles that can support the role of the UN in the protection of human lives and integrity, the extent to which the organisation and its member-states could be held accountable for eventual failures and the possible manipulation of these precedents in order to authorise interventionism have always stirred controversies in any arena, although such discussions are not of key relevance for the research focus of this paper. It is important to establish, however, that while PoC has gained substantial normative ground since its introduction in UN peace operations doctrine, one should be a bit more sceptical with the impact of R2P in the same regard. Despite presenting

indeed a revolutionary perspective on the conception of sovereignty, up to the point of being called "the most important shift in the conception of sovereignty since the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648.", R2P's potential to revolutionise the role of the UN was undermined by a huge concern towards its legitimacy as a tool of intervention by Western states, which will be discussed at a later stage of this chapter.

Going back to the year of 1999, considering the developments depicted in previous paragraphs, the first instance of third generation peace operations, as framed by Kenkel, materialises through the NATO action against Yugoslavia over the conflict in Kosovo in 1999. This was the first occasion in which a military intervention drew upon humanitarian concerns and the defence of human rights principles as a claimed justification for its actions, earning the paradoxical moniker of an humanitarian intervention, operating under Chapter VII as a peace enforcement operation. Curiously, and even more controversial for such an operation, was the fact that NATO's involvement in Kosovo began even before any formal authorization by the Security Council, which would be provided in June 1999 through Resolution 1244, resulting in the formal inauguration of NATO's KFOR.

Despite these controversies, NATO's action in Kosovo turned out to be recognized as a quintessential example of peace enforcement operation, displaying already the key characteristics that could be identified in similar operations that would be authorised by the Security Council in the future. Along with the Australian-led International Force for East Timor (INTERFET), in the same year of 1999, Kenkel argues that these operations are, for the most part, carried out not by the UN directly through seconded troops, but by regional organisations or coalitions duly authorised by the Security Council under Chapter VIII of the Charter. These missions are usually granted a temporally, limited mandate aimed at restoring, or enforcing as the name suggests, a peaceful context, in which a subsequent handover of leadership would be transferred to an UN mission, responsible for the support to peace through civilian tasks.

Although the third generation of peace operations presented a drastic shift in the UN mission paradigm, it is important to say that the occurrence of such missions would prove itself a small fraction of the operations authorised by the UN in the following decades. The vast majority of peace operations deployed by the organisation still function under more conservative interpretations of states' rights and their sovereign qualities, normally deployed

under Chapter VI of the UN Charter, under the leadership of the organisation itself, and attaining the same core principles titled the "holy trinity of peacekeeping" by authors. For a period, expectations on the revolutionary potential of the R2P assumed it could lead to a more active role of the UN through peace enforcement after the introduction of the norm at the 2005 World Summit, however, until the present date, any tendencies towards this horizon seem to have been dissipated by a greater concern with interventionist precedents and stronger political divisions within the Security Councils' permanent members.

Concerns on that topic would be further galvanised after the first ever military intervention authorised citing R2P, when the Security Council determined, under Resolution 1973, a military intervention in Libya, in 2011. A NATO-led coalition, originally authorised to intervene for the protection of civilians, played a key role in supporting the deposition and subsequent manhunt of Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi. The exacerbation of the Security Council's original mandate, added to the later turmoil left in Libya after NATO's swift exit from the country following Gaddafi's death, have been blamed for the deflation of political and moral support to interventions based in R2P principles, especially with a stronger political opposition from non-Western states within the Security Council.

The Fourth Generation of Peace Operations: Peacebuilding, Multidimensional Missions and Stabilization

In Kenkel's typification, the fourth generation of peace operations is formally inaugurated in the direct aftermath of the previously-mentioned peace enforcement missions, as UN multidimensional missions were deployed to follow up on the initial military success of NATO's KFOR and Australia's INTERFET. UNMIK and UNTAET were respectively deployed in Kosovo and East Timor, under wide-reaching executive mandates. Constituting the current generation in which peace operations would generally be classified until the present day, peacebuilding operations are defined by a combination of its elevated permissions to use force, with enhanced civilian tasks that are more intrusive and more comprehensive than those of the second generation of peace operations, which provided significant conceptual roots for the eventual establishment of this fourth generation.

The principles behind the concept of peacebuilding operations are established firstly in the aftermath of the Cold War, an epoch in which many foresaw an inevitable emergence of the liberal paradigm as an incontestable form of political consensus, as coined by Fukuyama as "the end of history". Based in this political context and historically framed in a moment of liberal expansion across the globe, the "democratic peace" theory further supported the thesis that supporting establishment of liberal democracies would be the best alternative not only to halt conflicts, but also to create a positive peace, addressing the root causes of belligerency.

This notion is embedded in UN's original definition of peacebuilding, a term initially provided by the *Agenda for Peace* in 1992, which would later guide not only the work of large-scale peace operations, but also UN political missions deployed with a smaller footprint and designed to promote, mostly through political or civilian tasks, peaceful management of of disputes and grievances. The definition of what constitutes peacebuilding is explored in more detail in the following excerpt from the Agenda:

"Peacemaking and peace-keeping operations, to be truly successful, must come to include comprehensive efforts to identify and support structures which will tend to consolidate peace and advance a sense of confidence and well-being among people. Through agreements ending civil strife, these may include disarming the previously warring parties and the restoration of order, the custody and possible destruction of weapons, repatriating refugees, advisory and training support for security personnel, monitoring elections, advancing efforts to protect human rights, reforming or strengthening governmental institutions and promoting formal and informal processes of political participation."

"Once these have achieved their objectives, only sustained, cooperative work to deal with underlying economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems can place an achieved peace on a durable foundation Preventive diplomacy is to avoid a crisis; post-conflict peace-building is to prevent a recurrence. (...) The authority of the United Nations system to act in this field would rest on the consensus that social peace is as important as strategic or political peace. There is an obvious connection between democratic practices-such as the rule of law and transparency in decision-making-and the achievement of true peace and security in any new and stable political order. These elements of good governance need to be promoted at all levels of international and national political communities."

Having established the shared conceptual roots between the second and fourth generations of peace operations, it is important to reiterate that, while paradigm shifts relevant to these generations address

the same *raison d'être*, the mechanisms and tools at their disposal vary significantly. Peacebuilding operations are, firstly, equipped with much larger uniformed contingents, in between police and military peacekeepers, possessing a robustness never before experienced by UN missions, and more broadly authorised to employ force. Secondly, fourth generation peace operations possess increasingly complex and intrusive civilian tasks and objectives, with the objective of supporting political, as well as social and economic, reforms, including state-building objectives following liberal democratic standards.

This departure from former levels of capabilities is perhaps better exemplified when examining the first, and more extreme, instances of fourth generation missions. UNMIK and UNTAET were both deployed after the authorization of peace enforcement operations in Kosovo and East Timor, respectively, and included in their mandate authorization to operate as a transitional administration, being granted, in a temporary basis, the authority and sovereignty to fully exercise all executive, legislative, and judicial functions of a ruling government.

Despite inaugurating this important step in the evolution of peace operations, the occurrence of missions under an executive mandate would later prove itself, until the present day, secluded to the UN experiences in Kosovo and East Timor, taking into account the fact that the experiences of exercising executive powers and governance functions in those missions is, generally, not deemed a much successful case, and to a certain degree problematic in different manners. The future deployment of numerous "lighter", non-executive missions should, however, by no means be understood as a conceptual departure from the robust and multidimensional character inaugurated by fourth generation peace operations. From the deployment of both executive missions until the present day, the ruling peace operations paradigm still relies on the concept of militarily robust components and comprehensive multidimensional areas of activity, having doctrinal evolutions in the past two decades represented more of a practical refinement and improvement than a paradigm shift per se. Contemporary examples of fourth generation missions are the current biggest peace operations endeavoured by the UN; MONUSCO, MINUSMA, MINUSCA and UNMISS.**

One of the key challenges in the context of peacebuilding efforts, besides the enormous complexity of scenarios in which they operate and increasingly ambitious mission mandates, is the coordination of activities carried out by multiple actors, operating sometimes almost independently or with competing agendas. As the name entails, multidimensional missions are usually composed of a multitude of independent, or also semi-independent, entities supporting local processes or addressing humanitarian concerns.

Organisations involved in these operations are extremely varied, and range from large-scale regional, UN specialized agencies, international or local NGOs, and even financial institutions. Managing or, at least trying to, coordinate so many different actors is another important challenge in the scope of these fourth generation peace operations, and one that has so far been addressed with the development of specific policies and guidelines, such as DPO's Capstone Doctrine of 2008. A major problem arising from this multitude of different actors involved in peacebuilding is that, sometimes, activities are carried out simultaneously by actors with different origins, agendas, and political goals, sometimes competing, or prejudicial between them.

Moving from a 'Westphalian conception of peace' to a 'post- Westphalian' one, and in order to promote a "peacebuilding" process foreseen in the mould of 'liberal democratic regimes and societies, peace operations started employing a variety of sovereignty- intruding tasks, involving a diverse range of activities. Numerous monikers have since then been used to characterise the objectives involved in fourth generation mandates, besides the already mentioned concept of peacebuilding, the idea of peace support operations or the concept of human security are some of the examples.

In between these additions to UN peace operations discourse, a key term that has been inaugurated by fourth generation missions, and which will be addressed in more detail in the subsequent sections of this paper, is the concept of stabilization. Despite the lack of any documents, or even a general understanding regarding the exact practical meaning of stabilization within peace operations, the term has been present in the very name of recent UN missions, including the currently three biggest missions deployed by the organisation. This seemingly minor matter is, however, quite problematic considering the varied range of activities that have been carried out by missions on behalf of "stabilization efforts". In any case, before tackling these issues, due attention must also be given to what Kenkel considers as evidence for the emergence of a fifth generation of peace operations.

A Fifth Generation of Peace Operations? Hybrid Missions and the UN at War

By the time of Kenkel's publication, the author called attention to the development of what he described as an incipient, still nascent, fifth generation of peace operations. This new generation would be characterised by the deployment of parallel, or even hybridised forms of peace operations, involving not a time-limited contribution in the style of what is foreseen in Chapter VII of the UN Charter, but in the simultaneous presence of military contingents led by different organisations, such as the UN and a partner regional organisation, for example.

Such a paradigm shift could be understood within the context of a trend observable in the past decades, that of a changing division of labour between states supporting UN peace operations. Ever since the repercussion of the organisation's peacekeeping failures in the 90s, the presence of uniformed personnel seconded by Western states has been steadily declining. On the other hand, efforts to further "globalise" and regionalise peace operations have led to a significant increase in the involvement of states from the Global South in these missions, up to the point that, already for the past decade, the absolute majority of uniformed peacekeepers comes from non-Western countries.

The precise reasons for this shifting division of labour in peace operations is subject to much debate, including much reasonable critiques claiming that wealthier states are simply preferring to deploy cheaper personnel, and subjected to environments more dangerous than those acceptable for their own uniformed contributions. While this discussion is extremely relevant, it is, however, outside of the scope of this current research. All things considered, not only is the contribution of non-Western states significantly increasing in the scope of UN peace operations, but regional organisations such as the African Union are increasingly involved in peace efforts, both in cooperation with the UN, as well as through the deployment of their own missions.

Due attention must be given to the developments highlighted by Kenkel, even if their categorisation as a generation in itself can be still subject to debate, considering arguments that this hybridization could be some sort of delegation or specialisation of actors still within a fourth generation paradigm. The author argues for the existence of a clear division of tasks within organisations involved in fifth generation operations, a phenomenon exemplified well by the coexistence in Kosovo of KFOR, a nato military operation, and an OSCE mission dedicated to institutional-building activities. Further examples of hybrid missions can be found also in more recent missions, and including the UN as well, such as the example of UNAMID, in which African Union's military structure was integrated within the UN chain of command, or even the relationship in Mali between MINUSMA and the French anti-insurgent military operation, Operation Barkhane.

While it is beyond the auspices of this research to test Kenkel's prognostic, and also considering the developments in the field of peace operations in the past decade, it is perhaps necessary to discuss the "hybridization" of UN peace operations through the analysis of two concomitant paradigm shifts. The first one, as mentioned in the last paragraphs, is the growing participation of regional organisations in peace operations not only as a complement to UN missions, but also through the deployment of missions under their own authority. In the past decades, both the AU and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have become in the implementation of

large-scale multidimensional missions, such as the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), currently the biggest peace operation in the world*.

Concurrent to a regionalisation of peace operations, and very relevant to this research, another paradigm shift witnessed in the past years is a tangible trend towards the militarisation of multidimensional peace operations. This phenomenon can be identified in instances where, through the framework of multidimensional peace operations, and generally under the moniker of stabilisation or PoC objectives, missions have included in their mandates tasks of a peace enforcement nature, or have assumed a preemptive military posture in face of possible sources of threats to civilians or to local state institutions. This trend should not be confused with an increased robustness of mission uniformed components through these years, which precedes this phenomenon. The concern at hand is with the fact that it is increasingly more common for military forces deployed under the UN to actively take sides amidst internal conflicts, or for the organisation to partner with other states or institutions doing the same. In the scope of MONUSCO, for example, the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) is responsible for conducting offensive military campaigns against insurgent groups classified as threats to civilians.

This is by no means a minor shift in the UN peace operations paradigm, and implicates numerous issues for many of the concurrent initiatives carried out in the scope of multidimensional missions, besides representing as well a key departure from the original principles of impartiality and neutrality, as the UN has formally become a conflict party in support of some of its host states. As it will be discussed in further sections of this work, research on the dynamics involved in this increasing militarisation of peacebuilding operations demonstrate how military objectives in the context of stabilisation, or perhaps better categorised as peace enforcement activities, are often prioritised in a manner detrimental to humanitarian initiatives and efforts for the promotion of human rights in the field. Additionally, a very serious concern in this matter involves the military support provided to governments which can be, in some instances, a more serious threat to human security and basic rights than insurgent groups, as the UN may end up providing substantial support to regimes averse to human rights standards and norms, prioritising the assurance of stability over the morality of its actions.

In conclusion, while the increase in hybrid peace operations and subsequent division of labour between organisations involved in them do indeed point out towards a future for these missions, evidence from the past decade points out that the future of the peace operations paradigm may instead include a stronger protagonism of regional organisations in the leadership of operations and a tendency toward the militarisation of mission objectives, as well as a primacy of stabilisation discourses. Regardless of configuring a fifth generation of peace operations in itself or being

contained to the framework of a fourth generation typology, these trends may very well indicate worrisome tendencies for the future of peace operations, which will be discussed in the following sections.

Chapter I.3) The Concept of Stabilisation

As the premise of this research entails, properly defining the concept of stabilisation is an extremely elusive task. Unlike all other keywords and concepts mentioned across the development of a paradigm for peace operations, and exhibited in the previous chapters, stabilization never underwent a formal codification process within UN doctrine. Yet, notwithstanding the lack of doctrinal rites for the formalisation of the concept, stabilisation and the general notion of stability as an end goal have been steadily gaining ground within the UN peace operations framework, becoming some of the most reiterated keywords both at a conceptual and political levels of discourse in the realm of UN missions.[25]

The initial apparition of the term, and its subsequent insertion in the lexicon of peace operations, can be naturally attributed to its use by members of the Security Council in the early 2000s,[26] a phenomenon perhaps better described as an "uploading" of the term, as some authors would put it.[27] In the past two decades, in the context of the ongoing fourth generation of peace operations, the notion of stabilisation has been constantly manifested, for example, in general Security Council resolutions[28], mandates[29] and in the very title of large-scale, multidimensional operations themselves. Out of the four multidimensional missions currently deployed by the DPO, the only one not including stabilisation in its title is the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), regardless of the widespread presence of the stabilisation term and rhetoric among key mission components and stakeholders.[30]

The high iteration of the term across different domains of multidimensional operations is also no telltale sign of a definitive consensus on the meaning of the term. The concept of stabilization has been applied in such a diverse range of contexts, and carrying so many different connotations, that some authors have described it as a generalist keyword, at the same time descriptive of

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[25] Curran, D and Holtom, P 2015 R
[26] Ibid
[27] Curran, D., & Hunt, C. T. (2020)
[28] Find resolutions with stabilisation
[29] Find keyword in mandates
[30] Include examples of stabilization in UNMISS components

multidimensional efforts for the establishment of peace through an integrated approach, but also void of a precise meaning, being used as a synonym for peacebuilding initiatives and human security, for example.[31] From this perspective, one could question the relevance of attempts to formally codify the concept of stabilisation in the framework of UN operations, claiming that the term is only a shifting keyword being used in the context of different mandates and conditions.[32]

The problem, however, lies in the fact that stabilization is not a simply a keyword spontaneously manifested in Security Council vocabulary, but a term at first broadly defined by parallel, yet still singular, Western national conceptualizations. Taking into account the development of national security strategies, the initial conceptualization of stabilisation can be traced back to approaches developed among NATO member states, which would be gradually "uploaded" into a UN paradigm mostly through the influence of Security Council's P3; UK, USA and France.[33] Therefore, although it can be argued that the UN is capable of influencing and repurposing the concept according to its own agenda, it is highly unlikely that a conceptualisation within the organisation will not be influenced by the approaches of these key member-states, who also play the role of decision-makers in the scope of the organisations' most powerful organ.

The competing existing definitions and the widespread application of the term by the Security Council and the organisation's Secretariat in the past decades has contributed to further confusion on the matter, as stabilization and stability have been utilised in a range of different contexts and objectives, including both uniformed and civilian domains of peace operations. Among its key recommendations for the future of peace operations, the HIPPO report, in 2015, raised attention to this issue and mentioned that "... the term "stabilization" (has been used) for a number of missions that support the extension or restoration of State authority, in at least one case during ongoing armed conflict. The term "stabilization" has a wide range of interpretations, and the Panel believes the usage of that term by the United Nations requires clarification.[34]

Despite the adoption of the HIPPO report, no mention of this recommendation, and no other comment on the topic of stabilization, was made in the follow-up report of the Secretary-General, discussing the implementation of the HIPPO report recommendations.[35] Intriguely, while the topic of stabilisation has been discussed extensively in academic circles in the past decades, in a seemingly willful ignorance of the matter, no substantial effort has been raised within the UN to properly define

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[31] Foley 2017?
[32] Ibid, Gilder?
[33] Curran and Hunt 2020
[34] HIPPO, 2015
[35] Insert reference to implementation report

the term and its implications. In the absence of a formal definition, authors argue that the best way to analyse the effects of stabilisation in the UN peace operations paradigm is to start from the doctrinal approach from the key member-states responsible for the mainstreaming of the keyword.

NATO's Definition for Stabilisation

Drawing on NATO's role in advancing, and harbouring among its members, the development of a doctrine on stabilisation, a natural alternative for the definition of stabilisation would be consulting its joint doctrine on the matter.[36] In this comprehensive document, the organisation defines the keyword in the following terms:

"Stabilization is an approach used to mitigate crisis, promote legitimate political authority, and set the conditions for long-term stability by using comprehensive civilian and military actions to reduce violence, re-establish security, and end social, economic, and political turmoil. Reconstruction is the process of rebuilding physical infrastructure and re-establishing governmental or societal institutions which were damaged during the crisis. These activities should be focused on mitigating the sources of instability which fostered the crisis in the first place and should help establish the foundation for long-term stability. (...)

Initially the military might be the only organization capable of operating within an area due to the nature of the environment. In a non-permissive environment, the military may be required to temporarily assume initial responsibility for leading the international response to S&R (stabilisation & reconstruction) activities that would normally be undertaken by civilian organizations. In such instances these activities must be planned and coordinated in conjunction with other actors. This will assist in ensuring that military activities do not undermine and are complementary to longer-term goals. (...) Military activity can sometimes have negative effects on civilian activities. Therefore, planning and conduct of military S&R support to other agencies should attempt to complement their efforts. The hand-over process between the military and civilian agencies must be defined from the outset. As the security environment improves, the military involvement and support should decrease commensurately. (...)"

Acknowledging the important role of the definition provided by NATO doctrine, but maintaining a pragmatic perspective towards the implications of stabilisation in peace operations, a more sceptical, and shorter definition is proposed by Curran and Holtom for the notion of stabilisation. Based on a broader conceptualization of the concept among Western states, UN and their practical experiences in the field, the authors have defined stabilisation as the following:

A combination of civilian and military approaches with a focus on reestablishing state authority in "failed states"; this includes provision of "legitimate" state authority, institution-building, and delivery of key state

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[36] Allied Joint doctrine for Military contribution to Stabilization (NATO)

services. It is supported by the use of military force, bordering on counterinsurgency, and predominantly aimed against non-state actors who challenge the state's monopoly on violence.[37]

Further trying to delimitate a precise definition, the authors further attribute the manifestation of stabilisation within UN discourse as a combination of American and British approaches, which are also the P3 members who have developed a deeper conceptual definition of stabilisation.[38] Although unique, the development of these national approaches can be traced back to the experiences of NATO in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, developed as well through the alliance's involvement in Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan, missions deployed with with significantly more resources, deployed personnel, and budgets than even large-scale multidimensional UN operations.[39] In spite of a shared consensus in the scope of NATO, American and British conceptions of stabilisation differ in ways beyond the calligraphy of the keyword, and which will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

The British Approach to Stabilisation

Historically, the UK has been deemed as the source of a more "comprehensive" approach to stabilisation. This conception of stabilisation is based on the protagonism of civilian-led processes, with support provided by military actors or partners. The British approach to stabilisation, regarded by some authors as an exemplar approach of international inter-agency cooperation, is based on a model that focuses on support for state legitimacy, responsiveness, resilience and competence in the delivery of public services.[40] In practical terms, this approach towards stabilisation is materialised along three core pillars of strategic objectives. The first one is focused on the state's 'survival functions', in particular strong leadership, as well as national structures and institutions. The second one is directed to the accumulation of social capital, especially through the reinforcement of sub-national governance structures to connect with the population, and to encourage the blossoming of a vibrant civil society. Lastly, the third pillar is directed towards the delivery of essential services and "iconic reconstruction projects".[41]

Institutionally, the British approach for stabilisation has been developed and spearheaded by its own Stabilisation Unit, a cross-government entity established in 2007 for the coordination of UK government activities in fragile and conflict-affected states, replacing the former Post Conflict

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[37] Curran and Holtom 2015
[38] Ibid and Gilder, 2019
[39] Include reference Curran and Hunt, 2020
[40] Gordon 2010: 383
[41] Ibid

Reconstruction Unit.[42] It is not only responsible for the development of policy on the theme, but also for the recruitment, training and deployment of qualified civilian experts in support of the UK initiatives in fragile and conflict-affected states, as well as in direct contribution to multilateral missions, such as UN operations.[43]

When defining the British national approach to stabilisation, the unit's define it as one "designed to protect and promote legitimate political authority, using a combination of integrated civilian and military actions to reduce violence, re-establish security and prepare for longer-term recovery by building an enabling environment for structural stability."[44] Curiously, as peculiar as it is, among its recommendations to personnel deployed under UN efforts, the Stabilisation Unit recognizes that it should be expected that no consensus or common vision or coordinated approach towards stabilisation.[45]

Despite providing a theoretical concept much similar to the idea of peacebuilding proposed by UN policy, and including an approach to civilian tasks traditionally characteristic of 21st century peace operations, the British approach to stabilisation differs from the UN conceptual paradigm by including a key pillar of stabilisation notions, which is is the identification of a legitimate state authority that should be supported over other contender political entities. Even though a similar long-term impact is shared between the two doctrines, the approach fostered by the UK Stabilisation Unit stresses that in a destabilised, or failed, state there will likely be a number of actors involved in local power disputes, also trying to ascertain a political legitimacy under international recognition. Therefore, as an imperative for the work of international actors in this volatile context, a decision will need to be taken with regard to who with and how to work locally. In other words, organisations engaged in stabilization will necessarily need to determine who should be deemed a legitimate authority receiving their support, a perspective in direct tension, at least in doctrinal terms, with UN principles. [46]

The American Approach to Stabilization

The American approach to stabilisation is linked with a narrower approach to the concept, or as some authors have characterised it, a "hot stabilisation" approach. This perspective is also one usually

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[42] Ibid, Stabilisation Unit site
[43] Stabilisation unit site
[44] Ibid
[45] UN guide stabilisation
[46] Gilder, 2019

referred to by authors when addressing the problematic aspects of stabilisation as a whole, one led by military objectives instead of civilian initiatives. The USA perspective defines the role of international actors as "enforcing aspects of a settlement through the defeat of an insurgency while simultaneously cementing support for a domestically owned process of "transition" towards peace as well as building societal capacities to resist conflict drivers".[47]

In this approach towards stabilisation, military activities and the assurance of a monopoly on the use of force by a host regime are the prime objectives embedded behind an operations' rationale, which implies the secondary role of civilian tasks and objectives. As widely argued by scholars writing on the topic, this dynamic created by such hierarchy can cause significant implications for the support of local peace processes and reconciliation initiatives, undermining significantly as well the autonomy and respectability of civilian components in the field, with reduced access and credibility to promote social impact and societal reconstruction amidst overlapping counterinsurgency objectives.[48]

This notion is embedded in the *United States' Joint Publication 3-07 "Stability Operations"*, published in September 2011. In this document, the USA military identifies its role in stabilization operations according to the following terms:

"The establishment of security fundamentally requires a monopoly on the use of force by a single entity. In stabilization efforts, the goal is normally to support a legitimate HN [Host Nation] governmental authority that holds this monopoly, using it to protect the population, or to help that authority attain the monopoly. Toward this goal, joint forces take action to support efforts to end ongoing conflict, build HN security force capacity, and disarm adversary forces."[49]

Despite being historically linked with a more militarised perspective on stabilisation, as observable as well in past paragraphs, and possibly influenced by practical experience and voiced concerns over its proposition for stabilisation, the USA has recently developed a new strategy to advance a more "comprehensive" view on stabilisation, prioritising the prevention of violence and supposedly empowering local processes and initiatives.[50] This proposed shift is characterised in the *United States Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability*, implemented by the American Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, the entity responsible for " the formulation and implementation of USA

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[47] (Gordon 2010: 372).
[48] (Barakat and Larson and Hunt
[49] (Joint Chiefs of Staff (USA) 2011: xvi)
[50] USA strategy

conflict prevention and stabilization strategies, policies, and programs", within the scope of the Department of State.[51]

The strategic document provides a perspective in stabilisation much more similar to that of the UK and as the one proposed by other Western actors, recognizing that it represents a shift from previous strategies. The following excerpts characterise well this reflection and proposed new "vision" of the American approach to stabilisation:

Through this Strategy, the United States will pursue a different approach from previous efforts. Rather than externally driven nation-building, the United States will support locally driven political solutions that align with United States' national security interests. Rather than fragmented and broad-based efforts, the United States will target the political factors that drive fragility. Rather than diffuse and open-ended efforts, the United States will engage selectively based on national interests, host-nation political progress, and defined metrics. Rather than implementing a disparate set of activities, the United States will strategically integrate its policy, diplomatic, and programmatic response.

To implement this new approach, the United States will recognize the complexity of each fragile environment, be nimble and adaptive, and prioritize building resilience,2 and ultimately building toward peace, across interventions. Patterns of conflict, large-scale violence, and instability are often cyclical; they fluctuate geographically and over time; and each has a unique context.

Given this complexity, the United States will adopt a multi-pronged, multi-sectoral approach to strengthen the resilience of partner nations. Fragile countries face an array of often compounding shocks and stresses that can include civil unrest, complex humanitarian emergencies, natural disasters, and economic volatility. The United States will align diplomacy (including public engagement), assistance, investment, defense engagement, and other tools to help partners end protracted or recurrent crises and absorb, adapt to, and recover from such shocks and stresses.

The United States will also incorporate peacebuilding approaches to address the drivers of conflict, violence, and instability, such as, inter alia, exclusionary politics, entrenched corruption, impunity, or capacity deficits. The United States will support partners to build durable mechanisms to resolve conflicts, undertake difficult reforms where needed, enhance social cohesion, build critical institutions, deliver crucial services such as energy, create inclusive political coalitions, and mobilize domestic resources that can enable lasting peace, stability, and ultimately prosperity.[52]

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[51] Bureau site
[52] USA stabilisation strategy

The conceptual departure embedded in this strategy represents a tendency towards a more accepted shared perspective in regards to stabilisation efforts, at least in a theoretical and "moral" foundation. Even though a definitive shift in the American posture in regards to their international operations will have to be assessed in due time, a couple of interesting points can be taken from this approach, especially the integration of stabilisation terms and civilian peacebuilding efforts, characterised by the   strategy   under   the   same   scope   of   efforts.

Further Conceptualizations

Considering the preponderance of the concept of stabilisation within all spheres involved in peacekeeping or other forms of international multilateral operations in the past decades, taking into account also the Western liberal consensus surrounding the keyword in the scope of NATO doctrine and experience, it should be no surprise that conceptualizations for stabilisation have germinated in national frameworks beyond the ones mentioned so far in this study.

The Global Public Policy Institute published in 2013 a report identifying and mapping key actors involved in the development and practice of stabilisation doctrine. Besides the P3, including also France, the organisation identified other five western countries that had, already at the time, played a relevant role in the development of national approaches to the theme of stabilisation, namely Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden.[53]

Chapter II) Stabilisation in Peace Operations - Case Studies

In this section, in order to better illustrate the practical effects of the "upload" of stabilisation in the UN peace operations' paradigm, an in-depth analysis of two of the largest missions ever deployed by the UN will be provided. The first one is MONUSCO, the multidimensional UN peace operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the second one is its counterpart in Mali, MINUSMA.[54]

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[53] GIIIP report, including also additional actors

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These two missions were not selected arbitrarily. For starters, both of them are deployed in contexts much characteristic of the tendencies in peace operations in the past decades, meaning that they are mandated to operate in theatres where there is little, if not none, peace to keep. Secondly, these missions can be either characterised along the vanguard of UN peace operations doctrine,[55] classifiable in different occasions either as multidimensional fourth generation peace operations, or in limited circumstances as hybrid missions, falling in the definition of fifth generation operations proposed by Kenkel.

Having integrated a stabilisation approach in activities spawning over several years, both of these missions have created a significant impact in the nature of local conflict dynamics themselves, and have therefore presented observable trends related to the manner in which they react to lessons learned on the field, and changing levels of legitimacy due to becoming an integral part of local conflicts in support of host governments. The first is more notable in the case of MONUC/MONUSCO, as the mission precedes the deployment of MINUSMA by a decade.

Lacking a precise conceptualisation for stabilisation within the UN doctrine, precisely distinguishing to what extent is the concept responsible for determined mission approaches and objectives can be a tricky task, as naturally would occur considering that different mission components interpret the term in ambiguous or even opposite terms.[56] To tackle this problem, the following section will not fix its lenses only in activities and objectives claiming to be related to stabilisation, but considering a more comprehensive approach. In order to do that, the objective of this section is to take into account the normative approaches to stabilisation proposed by Western states and try to observe a preponderance of those principles over missions that would, originally, be planned and conducted according to the core principles of UN peace operations and other key conceptualizations formulated by the organisation over the past decades, such as the idea of PoC and Peacebuilding.[57]

In order to scrutinise this perceived deviation, each case study will be divided in three parts. The first chapter for each of them will be devoted to the presentation of a historical background for current and past violent episodes, as a much necessary contextualisation of the high level of complexity and multilayered nature of both conflicts. The second chapter will favour the perspectives of the UN peace operations themselves, going into more detail in their specific traits and discussing changes in character, or in mandate, along their lifespan.
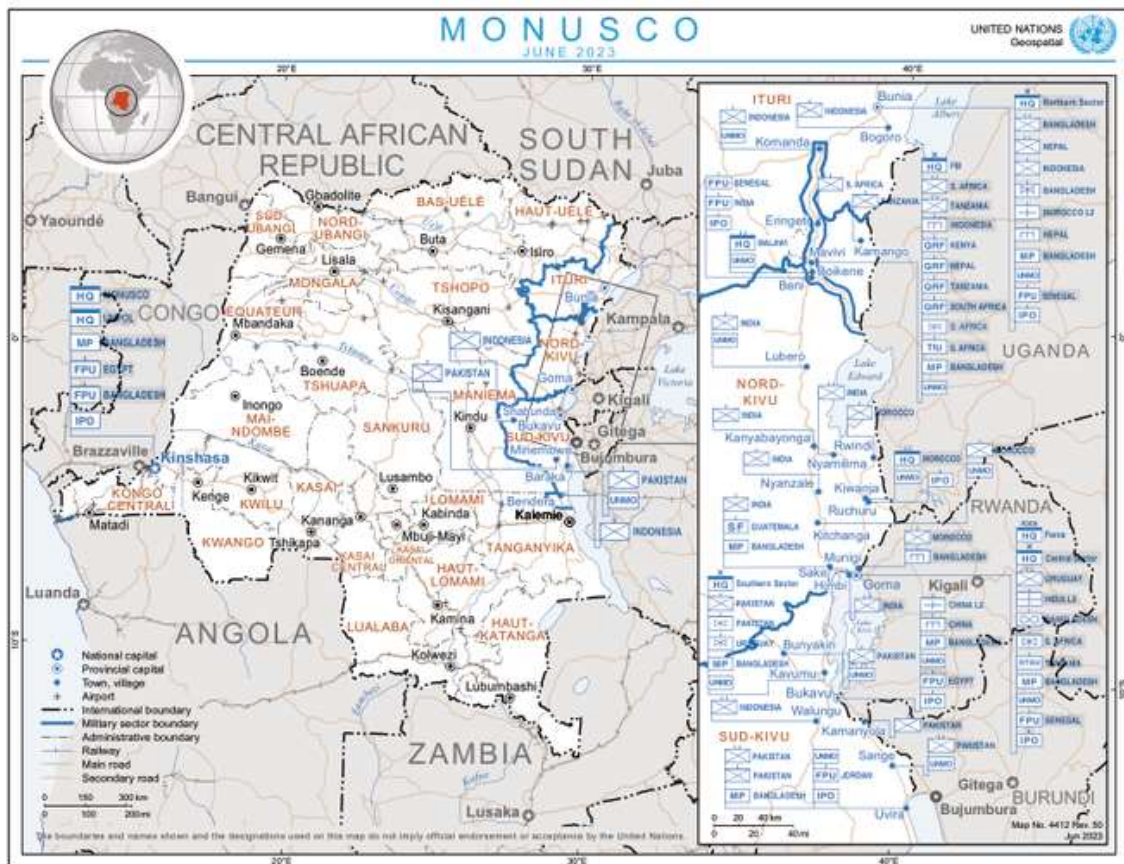
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[55] Include part where MONUSCO is treated as a laboratory for future practices

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The final chapter in each case study will be dedicated to an overview of the manner through which stabilisation principles can be perceived as depicted in the existing conceptions of stabilisation, the objective will be to analyse how such approaches have affected and influenced the success of UN missions in positively affecting the ongoing conflict in which they are deployed. The parameters for this evaluation will take into account the expected focus and objectives foreseen in UN doctrine, including the provision of human protection, humanitarian relief and key action tackling root causes of conflict, as stipulated in doctrinal documents, mission mandates and coordinated strategies themselves. These contextualizations will be crucial for an understanding of the concerns raised in the last section of this research, where the effects of the stabilisation doctrine in UN peace operations will be highlighted more directly.

Chapter II.1) Case Study - MONUC/MONUSCO

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58 https://reliefweb.int/map/democratic-republic-congo/monusco-deployment-map-june-2023

Chapter 4) Historical Background for the Conflict(s) in the DRC

Understanding the deep complexity and multilayered nature of issues causing the current conflict in the DRC and the demand for a UN peace operations requires, firstly, an overview of the drivers and dynamics that led the country, as well as the region in itself to be the subject of repeating cycles of violence, political instability and volatility. These drivers of violence are paramount for the understanding of some of the long-standing constraints and difficulties the UN has faced in implementing mandates in the DRC, in which local conflict dynamics present intertwined layers that vary across time, space and origin, interacting and being influenced by national and regional power, as well as complex social dynamics.

As a first component, crucial to an understanding of the root causes of conflicts in the Great Lakes region, one must take into account the Belgian colonial legacy[59] left behind in the form of a predatory system of government, "which promoted the mass immigration of Rwandans and manipulated ethnic power structures"[60], and through a complete social rupture by the imposition of an ethnic-based system, created and sustained by the Belgian rule, which succeeded in dividing local societies and creating an identitarian divide among the groups of Hutus and Tutsis, reverberating until the present day. In a more recent period, during the 20th century, other factors contributed to a general discontent with the ruling of the recently independent country. Issues such as the lack of decentralisation of power and resources, the massive illicit mineral extraction industry (in which international actors, national political elites, and local armed groups were all involved), competing claims for land access, unequal rights to citizenship, and localised competition for access to and control over economic resources across the DRC were pivotal for the escalation of violence that would follow in the 90s.[61]

Exacerbating all these issues, turmoil in another former Belgian colony, the neighbouring Rwanda, accelerated a spiral of violence in the DRC. In the early 90s, as a result of the same social issues caused by the Belgian ethnicity-based system, Rwanda went through a civil war disputed along ethnic lines between a Hutu-led regime and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a rebellious group formed by previously exiled Tutsis in Uganda. The most notorious, and also most tragic, episode

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[59] Explain belgian colonial territories

[60] Jason K. Stearns, North Kivu: The Background to Conflict in North Kivu Province of Eastern Congo (London:Rift Valley Institute, 2012) pp. 9, 13-20. See also David Van Reybrouck, Congo. Une Histoire (Paris: éditionsActes Sud, collection Babel, 2014).

[61] https://effectivepeaceops.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/EPON-MONUSCO-LowRes.pdf

of the conflict was the genocide of approximately 800.000 people[62], mostly Tutsi, carried out by government forces and supporters in 1994, regarded properly by many as one of the major human tragedies in the past decades, and which was previously mentioned in the first chapters of this work.

The Rwandan Civil War would eventually end with a victory of the RPF, resulting in the migration of about 1.2 million Hutus, including government and armed forces members, into the eastern border of the DRC's eastern regions. growing instability in the eastern Kivu regions, caused by ethnic tensions and disputes amplified by the Rwandan War and Genocide, would be further exacerbated by the influx of arms and ex-combatants in a region then mostly inhabited by Tutsis and other ethnic groups. Amidst elevated tensions in the country, the propagation of armed groups in the eastern regions, and the inability of the government led by Mobutu Sese Seko to control the movement of these armed militias, served as the prompt for a Rwandese military invasion in 1996, initiating what would later be known as the First Congo War. [63]

The rich natural resources in the county and its strategic importance to the continent led to a great degree of internationalisation of the First Congo War, African states such as Angola, Uganda, and Zambia, besides the previously mentioned Rwanda, became involved in the conflict in support of the mostly Tutsi rebel forces led by Laurent-Désiré Kabila, who managed to overthrow Mobutu's regime in 1997, bringing the war to an apparent end.[64] Despite expectations on a cessation of hostilities, tensions were still heightened by the persisting foreign military presence in the country, as well as by continuing ethnicity-based conflicts in the countries' eastern regions.

In 1998, relationship between the DRC and Rwanda constantly deteriorated, as the Rwandan government would refrain from removing its military presence from the country. Only a short period after leaving Kinshasa, Rwanda supported the eruption of a Tutsi rebellion initiated in the Kivu regions against the regime led by Kabila, and in a matter of weeks the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD) had seized control of large areas, receiving also support from Uganda.[65] In response, the regime in Kinshasa enlisted the support of Angola, Chad, Namibia and Zimbabwe, in

[62] Foley, 2017

[63] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. "Democratic Republic of the Congo 1993-2003." Info Note 6 (2003). Accessed April 8, 2021. https://www.ohchr. org/Documents/Countries/CD/FS-6_Neighbouring_States_ FINAL.pdf.

[64] International Crisis Group. "How Kabila Lost His Way: The performance of Laurent Désiré Kabila's government." ICG Congo Report Nº 3 (May 21, 1999). Accessed April 8,2021. https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/how-kabila-losthis-way-the-performance-of-laurent-desire-kabila-s-government.pdf.

[65] Look for source

what would later be known as the Second Congo War, or Great African War due to the extensive level of internationalisation of the conflict.[66]

Despite being successful in the defence of Kinshasa, both opposing sides reached a stalemate in 1999, after a quick, yet extremely deadly period of conflict, in which around five million people lost their lives, both through direct as well as indirect effects of the war.[67] In July of the same year, the DRC and the other five states involved in the conflict (Angola, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda and Zimbabwe) signed the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement in Zambia, establishing an disengagement of foreign forces from the country and cessation of hostilities.

Following the implementation of the ceasefire agreement, in November 1999, the Security Council authorised the deployment of an initial peacekeeping operation to oversee the implementation of the Lusaka Agreement, thus inaugurating the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) by its resolution 1279.[68] Initially staffed by 500 military observers, the MONUC was unable to impede the relapse of hostilities in the DRC, which motivated the mission's expansion to the authorisation of over 5000 troops and including a mandate expansion to include further activities to support the implementation of the ceasefire agreement.

Despite UN efforts, the war continued even after the expansion of its mission, and it was only in 2002 that the Luanda Peace Agreement determined the withdrawal of Ugandan forces from the DRC, foreseeing the establishment of a transitional government in the country under Laurent Kabila's son, Joseph Kabila. The complete withdrawal of Uganda in May 2003 marked the formal end of the Second Congo War and served as a starting point for a new reconstruction phase in the country. [69] In spite of the successful peace agreement, the DRC paid a heavy toll for almost a decade of turmoil. An alarming humanitarian emergency was exacerbated by widespread poverty; inter-communal tensions; the continued proliferation of armed groups; disputes over the control of natural resources and continuous foreign interference in local matters.[70]

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[66] Same

[67] Estimates in Coghlan, Benjamin, Pascal Ngoy, Flavien Mulumba, Colleen Hardy, Valerie Nkamgang Bemo, Tony Stewart, Jennifer Lewis, and Richard Brennan. Mortality in the Democratic Republic of Congo: An ongoing crisis. New York: International Rescue Committee (2007).

[68] Monusco background

[69] Ahere, John. "The peace process in the DRC: A transformation quagmire." African Center for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (December 2012). Accessed April 8, 2021. file:///C:/Users/katea/OneDrive/Documents/ACCORD-PPB-20.pdf.

[70] https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/MONUSCO-Case-Study.pdf

In spite of the critical context, the period between 2003-2006 marked what has been in the past years maybe the most stable period in regards to levels of ongoing violence. Local political processes, in support of a more broadly mandated MONUC, had been able to support a transitional government and a subsequent constitutional referendum, calling for elections in August 2006. Unfortunately, what had been treated as an important step towards an eventual handover of autonomy to the newly-established regime, and subsequent exit strategy for the UN, turned out to be the beginning of yet another cycle of violence for the country. The increasingly militarised posture of the regime in Kinshasa matched the launch of a Tutsti rebellion in the North Kivu by the Congrès national pour la défense du peuple (CNDP), initiating a period of conflicts between the now elected government of the DRC.[71]

A greater autonomy of the national regimes served as an additional factor increasing the volatile conditions experienced by the eastern part of the DRC since the 2000s. Shortly before the end of the Second Congo War, an amalgamation of armed groups formed by Rwandan Hutus gave birth to the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (in French FDLR), which have been the targeted both by Rwanda and the DRC, and active until the present day in the North Kivu. The military campaign and oppression exercised by Kabila's government against armed groups in the Kivus caused great apprehension to the international community, as government's forces, especially the FARDC[72], became the main sources of violence and abuses against local populations in the east, as local populations would be place in between the poorly disciplined Congolese armed forces and a proliferating number of armed groups and militias mushrooming due to the interlayered cycles of violence in the regions of North and South Kivu, as well as Ituri.[73]

Despite the continued violence in the eastern part of the DRC, the desire to advance an exit strategy for the UN in the country, together with the host governments' desire to further exercise its sovereign political autonomy, led to a rebranding of the MONUC in 2010, changing its name to MONUSCO[74], adding a 'S' for "stabilisation", with the intent of indicating a return to "normalcy" within the Congolese state. The new name was followed by a more supportive mandate and significant reduction of the UN's military component in the operation, with the authorised withdrawal of 2.000 troops from the country. [75]

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[71] https://effectivepeaceops.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/EPON-MONUSCO-LowRes.pdf
[72] Add source explaining congolese military situation
[73] https://effectivepeaceops.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/EPON-MONUSCO-LowRes.pdf
[74] h Resolution 1925 (30 May 2010)
[75] Ibid

Nevertheless, expectations of a diminished military role of the UN in the DRC would not last very long, for in 2012 yet another major rebellion took place in the Kivus, initiated by the March 23 Movement (M23), a rebel group formed out of former-CNDP and with ties to Rwanda. After resulting in the takeover of Goma, the capital of North Kivu, the rebellion initiated by the M23 galvanised the international community once more to act in support of the Congolese government, resulting also in a remobilisation of UN's military capabilities in support of the regime in Kinshasa. The joint-offensive staged by the FARDC and the UN's Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) resulted in a huge blow to the M23, together with growing pressure over Rwanda's support to the movement, and the rebel group was defeated by November 2013.[76]

The support provided by the MONUSCO and subsequent defeat of the M23 inaugurated a period of a more militarised approach of the UN in regards to the stabilisation objectives in the DRC. Although the support provided by the organisation was crucial to a stronger grip of the national government in the eastern parts of its territories, it could not impede the proliferation of smaller armed groups, the formation of militias, the predatory posture of the FARDC and the repetition of intercommunal patterns of violence since them. The persisting tensions and violent episodes culminated in the reemergence of the M23 in 2017, still in a smaller scale, preceding a new large-scale offensive by the group five years later, in 2022 and currently ongoing.[77]

As of early 2023, reports claim that the crisis in the eastern states of the DRC persists in an extremely complex manner. The expansion of the M23, with support from the Rwandan military, threatens the control of key strategic locations, and parallelly, countless armed groups such as the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), the Cooperative for the Development of Congo (CODECO) and Mai-Mai[78] take part in the belligerence, creating an extremely critical humanitarian scenario both regionally and nationally, also considering the high number of displacements caused by conflicts and violence.[79] As for the MONUSCO, it continues to provide key support for the host government's offensive, being mandated to neutralise and carry out preventive measures against selected "negative" groups, such as the M23, FDLR, ADF, and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).[80]

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[76] Ibid
[77] Pending reference for the history of MONUSCO conflict
[78] Mai-mai definintion
[79] Pending reference for MONUSCO conflict
[80] https://effectivepeaceops.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/EPON-MONUSCO-LowRes.pdf

Chapter 5) MONUSCO - Mission Background and Mandate Evolution

From an historic perspective, the MONUC, established at the end of 1999, was not the first ever peace operation deployed by the UN in the DRC. More than 50 years ago, in the 1960s, the organisation deployed what was at the time the largest, and most expensive, mission in its history. The United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC) involved 19,928 personnel in its peak, in between military and civilian components, and was convoked through Article 99 of the UN Charter, supporting the newly independent Zaire with the restoration of public order in its territories, considering the secessionist tendencies in the region of Katanga. As a novelty in peace operations' paradigm, it was also the first and only occasion in which the Security Council explicitly authorised, through Resolution 169[81] (24 November 1961), the Secretary-General to "take vigorous action, including the use of the requisite measure of force, if necessary, for the immediate apprehension, detention, and/or deportation of all foreign military and paramilitary personnel and political advisers not under the UN command, and mercenaries."[82]

More than 30 years later, in the aftermath of the First Congo War and following the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement from July 1999, the Security Council formally established MONUSCO's predecessor, MONUC, through Resolution 1279 (30 November 1999)[83], and thus inaugurated a presence lasting over two decades in the country. In all these years, the UN's mission mandate changed and evolved considerably, taking into account shifting political conditions and a very volatile fragile stability in the DRC, considering a national as well as regional perspectives. The necessity to constantly adapt itself demanded profound changes in the character of both MONUC and MONUSCO, and the mission that was initially deployed as a small-scale operation, consisting in 500 military observers, in 1999, is today a large-scale multidimensional mission, peaking in size at 21,485 uniformed personnel and
3,944 civilians as of October 2013.[84]

Such an evolution demanded a proportionate adaptability of Security Council mandates to events on the ground and updated mission strategies, fact that is evidenced by the substantial growth in

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[81] Ibid

[82] Resolution 169 (24 November 1961)

[83] 15 A region and a country that reappeared on the agenda of the Council in November 1996 when the situation in Eastern Zaire deteriorated and constituted "a serious threat" to the stability of the region (S/PRST/1996/44). See
Tatiana Carayannis, chapter 32 on "Te Democratic Republic of the Congo," in The UN Security Council in the
21st Century, Sebastian von Einsiedel, David M. Malone, and Bruno Stagno Ugarte (eds) (New York: IPI/Lynne
Rienner Publishers, 2015, second edition), p. 661

[84] https://effectivepeaceops.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/EPON-MONUSCO-LowRes.pdf

the operation's mandates, from a 3-page mandate in 1999 to a 17-page one in 2018, as a demonstration of the increasing complexity of UN involvement in the DRC. The expansion of mandates resulted from a mix of micromanagement on the part of the Security Council; an inability to remove unachievable tasks from the Council and the Secretariat; requests from the Secretariat to keep certain tasks; and also through a "natural growth" due to requests from the ground.[85]

Being involved in a country for such a long time, however, it can be said that UN missions were to some extent not only adapting to demands in the field, but were also responsible for shaping the political and security context in the DRC. From this perspective, and taking into account that approaches applied more recently by MONUSCO are also results of previously utilized forms of engagement, it is possible to pinpoint four major phases in the lifespan of UN missions in the DRC, characterised as well by key episodes and dynamics. Those phases can be divided into the deployment into the aftermath of the First Congo War and the progressive growth of the Mission; (2) the support to the transitional government and to the organisation of general elections in 2006; (3) the post-transition phase that led to a stabilisation mission; and (4) the creation of the FIB to fight the M23 and other designated armed groups.[86]

The first phase, that of the mission's initial deployment, was inaugurated through Security Council Resolution 1279, of November 1999, to monitor the ceasefire and the disengagement of forces, as agreed to in the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement signed in July 1999 by the DRC and other states involved in the war. [87] MONUC's deployment followed a period of continued engagement of the UN and the Security Council with the developing situation in the region.[88] Tasked with monitoring the fulfilment of the Lusaka ceasefire agreement, and a respective disengagement of forces, MONUC's activities were greatly limited by the continuity of skirmishes and by the limitations imposed by the regime of Laurent Kabila, which in spite of agreeing with the mission's initial deployment, ended up limiting the operation's freedom of movement, believing that its presence in conflict areas would prevent a military victory for his forces.[89]

The expansion of MONUC's military contingent starts through resolution resolution 1291[90], authorising the deployment of up to 5,537 military personnel to operate in support of the mission's observers. In 2001, the mission's mandate is broadened to include its first additional tasks unrelated to the Lusaka agreement, and is authorised through resolution 1355, to assist on an early

[85] Ibid

[86] Ibid

[87]

[88] Add resolutions Resolution 1234 (9 April 1999 and Resolution 1258 (6 August 1999)

[89] Jason K. Stearns, Dancing in the Glory of Monsters, op. cit., p. 271

[90] Resolution 1291, 24 February 200

implementation, on a voluntary basis, of the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of armed groups involved in the conflict in the DRC.[91]

In spite of the expansion of the MONUCs mandate and robustness, accounts from the period claim that the UN still had a very limited capacity to properly create an impact on the ground. Resolution 1291 did include a clause in which peacekeepers were authorised to use force in order to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence, even though no major positive impact could be attributed to the mission's protective possibilities in an extremely non-permissive theater of operations.[92]

The first turning point for MONUC's role in the DRC was triggered in January 2001, when president Laurent Kabila was assassinated in Kinshasa, under shady circumstances. His succession by his son, Joseph Kabila, initiates a period of turnabout in the country's posture in regards to the ongoing war, resulting in a series of agreements for the cessation of hostilities, including those planning the withdrawal of foreign troops from the DRC, and eventually accords for the formal end of the conflict. As foreseen by the Sun City Agreement and the Pretoria Accord, both key accords for the end of the Second Congo War, a transitional government led by Joseph Kabila would be responsible for the organisation of a referendum for the new DRC constitution and subsequent elections for a new regime.

Along these transitional governance arrangements, and inaugurating MONUC's second phase, the UN assumed the role of supporting the institutional reconstruction of the Congolese state, having resolution 1493 established MONUC's role contribute to the security of the institutions and officials of the Government of National Unity and Transition, more specifically, through the International Committee in Support of the Transition (CIAT).[93] In this phase, the role of the UN was reoriented as in the support of statebuilding activities. Examples of new roles played by the MONUC in this context include the support to DDR initiatives, projects in the area of security sector reform (SSR), as well as political engagement with the constitutional referendum. Despite an apparent shift towards a post conflict phase on a national level, MONUC's approach to the DRC could not leave aside the military aspect of its presence, and this was made clear by the persisting emergence of newly formed armed groups in the region of Ituri during the period between 2002 and 2003.

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[91] (Resolution 1355, 15 June 2001

[92]

[93] Meaning in French

Treating the transitional regime's security and stability as a key precondition for a successful democratic governance in the country, Security Council Resolution 1484[94] authorised the deployment of a typical 3rd generation peace enforcement operation, called the Interim Emergency Multinational Force in Bunia, but more commonly known as "Operation Artemis". The operation was sent by the European Union and had the objective of stabilising the security situation in the region of Ituri.[95] The efficiency of the European mission seemed to indicate a success in the strategy employed by the international community in the DRC, having cleared the presence of armed groups in the region in over three months and then handing positions over to MONUC's military component.

In the period between 2003-2004, a further escalation of MONUC's robustness would take place in the context of worrying developments preceding the realisation of the constitutional referendum. Protests in the capital Kinshasa, which came very close to overrunning the UN compound in the city, and a series of violent episodes across the country, were the pretext for yet another turn towards an increased military approach for the UN. In Kisangani, a divisional HQ was created with increased autonomy and capabilities to disarm armed groups in the region, including special forces' personnel and attack helicopters. [96] Furthermore, the military contingent of the mission was increased to more than 15,000 troops and a reorganisation of the mission's mandate was put in place by Resolution 1565 (1 October 2004).[97] The increase in MONUC's military capacities coincides with UN expectations over the accomplishment of the 2006 elections, treated by some members of the Security Council as the key milestone for an eventual mission drawdown.[98]

The aftermath of the elections, however, didn't turn out as the international community initially expected. After a period to which analysts attribute the most effective years of MONUC, one in which the transitional government's interests were very much in tune with those of the international community, the now elected regime of Joseph Kabila seemed to "close the doors" on the international concerns regarding matters within the DRC, considering that from that moment onwards, his office was backed by an electoral process deemed legitimate by international observers.[99]

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[94] (30 May 2003)
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[96] See Patrick Cammaert, "Learning to use force on the hoof in peacekeeping: Reflections on the Experience of MONUC's Eastern Division," ISS Situation Report, April 2007
[97] Include resolution Resolution 1565 (1 October 2004
[98]

[99] MONUSCO doc

The end of the transitional period inaugurates the third phase of the MONUC lifespan. This period is marked by a gradual extension of the mission's mandate, while representing as well a weakening of the political strength of the UN position in the country. The election's "success" was perceived by the Security Council as an opportunity to gradually leave the country, the USA and the UK were reported as particularly interested in this approach. As a result, the Security Council significantly reduced its political and diplomatic engagement with the DRC, and a shift towards a mission posture focused more in human protective activities and the provision of support to local government initiatives.[100] Although the engagement levels with the Congolese regime were significantly reduced, the same could not be said about the state's reliance on the support provided by the MONUC, which expanded its mandate to include over 50 different tasks.

The impact of UN' support to the recently elected government was extremely important for the continuity of the relative order in the country, considering that even after the election, the regime in Kinshasa was not able to control the actions of armed groups in the Kivus, and also taking into account the fragility of the state's institutions at that moment in time, especially the whole congolese security sector. This resulted in a much particular condition, in which even though a lot of responsibility was placed in MONUC, no equivalent political influence was exercised by the operation regarding the government's practices in dealing with the local crisis.

During the third phase of MONUC, this dynamic resulted in a preference of the DRC host state in asserting independence from the plans and objectives from the UN mission, conditioning the presence of the organisation and the international community as a whole to conditions stipulated by Kabila's regime, matching a willingness of the Security Council in authorising the mission to adopt a militarised approach in support of armed groups challenging the authority of the elected government. In 2008, through Resolution 1856, MONUC's troops were authorised to "prevent attacks on civilians and disrupt the military capability of illegal armed groups that continue to use violence".[101]

This approach created a clear dilemma between the respect to the organisation's values and principles, as the UN saw itself involved in a conflict caused to a great extent by the very own regime that it was trying to support, during the conflict with the FDLR. It was an indisputable fact that in the areas under control of the government, FARDC constituted the main threat to local populations' integrity and rights. As a response to these concerns, Resolution 1906 (23 December

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[100] Tatiana Carayannis, "Te Democratic Republic of the Congo," op. cit., p. 672. See also International Crisis Group, "Congo: A Stalled Democratic Agenda," Briefing 73/Africa, 8 April 2010.

[101] (Resolution 1856, 22 December 2008)

2009) introduced a principle of conditionality, demanding peacekeepers to withdraw their support to any unit that had committed violations to human rights, in spite of how little it would actually resemble a genuine PoC approach.

Taking into account the momentaneous supremacy over armed groups in the east, and considering also a continued convenience existing between the desire of the host DRC regime to ascertain executive independence from the UN mission, and the will of the organisation to advance motions for an eventual exit of the mission, discussions took place in 2010 to initiate a reduction of MONUC's force, and to gradually shift the nature of UN's presence in the DRC. In this context, Resolution 1925 of the Security Council authorised the return of up to 2,000 troops, also rebranding MONUC into MONUSCO as of 1 July 2010, with the inclusion of a 'S' for "Stabilization" in the mission's name. The recharacterisation of the mission and the addition of the stabilization term seemed to indicate a "return to normalcy" on the ground, a state in which the missions' role would be that of a mere support and protection agent in a national reconstruction process implemented by the Congolese state.

The tendency, however, would not last very long, as a new rebellion initiated by the M23 in the Eastern part of the DRC would elevate once again the level of hostilities in the KIvus. The takeover of Goma despite positions held by the FARDC and MONUSCO in November 2012 would give start to a remobilisation of international efforts in the region, and so a revision of MONUSCO's mandate was undertaken. Resolution 2098 (28 March 2013) determined the creation of the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB), with a mandate to "neutralise" selected armed groups, and thus marked the beginning of the fourth and current phase of MONUSCO.[102]

Since the inauguration of the FIB, troops under the hierarchy of the UN have for the first time carried out offensive operations against armed groups independently, inaugurating a new chapter in the UN peace operations paradigm, even though most of the offensives carried out by the FIB have taken place in support of the FARDC[103]. Through the support provided by MONUSCO, the Kinshasa regime was able to subdue the M23 in 2013, however, both the FARDC and the FIB would still be engaged with other groups in the region of the Kivus. Besides the continuing instability in the East, in 2016 a rebellion was triggered in the Kasai region, which would demand the establishment of a MONUSCO force in the area, considering its stronger presence in the eastern regions. More recently, in late 2022, a resurgence of the M23, with reported support from Rwanda, have again taken control of positions in the Kivus, in a conflict that is still unfolding, and in which the FIB is integrally engaged.

102
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MONUSCO's current mandate is established by Resolution 2666 (2022), and in spite of the continued security concerns in the DRC, signals towards a "progressive and phased drawdown of MONUSCO." The authorised strength of the mission has a ceiling of 13,500 military troops, 660 military observers and staff officers, 591 police personnel, and 1,410 personnel of formed police units. Lastly, the mission's mandate is concentrated along three core objectives, prioritised in the following order; (1) to contribute to the protection of civilians; (2) to support the stabilisation and strengthening of State institutions in the DRC; and (3) key governance and security reforms.

Chapter 6) MONUC/MONUSCO - The Impact of Stabilisation

The influence of the stabilisation concept becomes more evident in MONUC/MONUSCO lifespan, naturally, during the mission's rebranding, and subsequent inclusion of the term in the mission's very name. However, considering the appearance of stabilisation as a recurrent keyword in the Security Council around the first years of MONUC's deployment, it would be logical that the approach is somehow made present in the planning of the mission at the time. Moreover, a telltale sign that conceptualizations similar to the ones discussed in the first part of this work have been integrated into MONUC/MONUSCO can be found when contrasting principles attributed to a stabilisation doctrine and the strategy utilised by the UN when deploying and structuring its mission's mandate in the DRC.

Considering the variation of approaches adopted by the UN across more than two decades, with varying degrees of success across different periods of time and phases of the conflict in the DRC, some key observable constants aligned with stabilisation include, first and foremost, statebuilding aligned with support provided to an internationally recognized regime. Secondly, a militarised engagement in favour of supporting the sovereignty of said regime, including the "criminalisation" of any actors that may contest state authority in some form. Lastly, and in an apparent lower priority than the former two constants, the concurrent strife for multiple civilian tasks, including a wide arrange of themes and initiatives.

As demonstrated in recent history, and also through the previous chapter, the approach's success in terms of substantial, long-term gains for the Congolese citizens is questionable at best. While MONUC/MONUSCO indeed managed to secure populations and promote an institutional reconstruction in the DRC at some degree, it has done so by parallelly enabling a regime and political scenario that are greatly responsible for the continuity of violence cycles and structural deficiencies of the country. By doing so, the UN presence facilitated the addition of yet another factor compounding the extremely complex dynamics of the Congolese conflict, in between foreign involvement; widespread proliferation of arms in the country; multilayered cycle of violence; and much pressing humanitarian demands.

A Stabilisation Framework

A strategic framework for stabilisation was formally established in the context of the DRC for the first time in 2008. The International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy (I4S) was originally envisioned in the context of the Goma accords, a moment in which many armed groups agreed to collaborate in laying down arms and reintegrating into society after years of conflict.[104] [105] The I4S was conceived with great expectations of the international community on the potential for a lasting solution to the cycles of violence in the DRC, and initially counted with a strong support both from military and civilian mission components in its design and subsequent roll out. In this very same context, the Kabila regime in Kinshasa was also responsible for the development of a stabilisation plan for the eastern regions, the STAREC.[106]

Planned in the context of the Goma accords, the original I4S, was based on clear principles of counter-insurgency operations, more specifically in regards to a strategy for 'clearing, holding and building' to restore the Congolese state's presence in the east and build its capacities to deal with possible sources of conflict. In the Kivus and in Ituri, the plan pinpointed six strategic geographical axes where there was the threat of a return to conflict. Along these axes, FARDC forces, with operational support provided by MONUC, conducted military operations to 'clear out' the last remaining presence of scattered armed groups. In the aftermath of these operations, key

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[104] Original name (UNSSS)
[105] https://www.clingendael.org/pub/2015/going_around_in_circles/4_test_case_the_international_stabilization_strategy/
[106] STAREC name and origin

infrastructure projects would revitalise roads, and in key areas support would be given to the reestablishment/establishment of key government offices, mostly related to the security sector, such as police stations and courthouses, for example. The key outcomes for those initiatives would be to demilitarise areas and install a sense of civilian normality, with restored access to public services.

Following the initial projects, further activities would focus on socio-economic recovery, health, sanitation and education, designed to disencourage a remobilisation of armed groups, and together with the implementation of a DDR programme, impede a relapse of the areas into violence. Most of these civilian projects would be managed by UN agencies, in association with MONUC/MONUSCO sections, including also the participation of NGOs, but on a smaller scale. In parallel, the training and capacitation of national armed forces were conducted in order to gradually hand over UN military positions, where possible, to host state counterparts.

Despite presenting a comprehensive perspective in an attempted solution to the creation of an environment prone to establishment of positive peace, the implementation of the I4S during its first period between 2008-2012 faced major challenges to the creation of positive impact at a local level. The most problematic nuisances for an I4S effectivity can certainly be attributed to a problematic engagement with the Congolese state in the topic. Taking into account MONUC/MONUSCO' historic s role in supporting the "expansion" of the regime in Kinshasa in territories affected by conflict, it should come as no surprise that, after the development of STAREC, many of the I4S were directed to be put in place alongside the established objectives in the Congolese plan. The first years of implementation of the stabilisation strategies saw a very poor level of collaboration from the part of the Congolese government, a disinterest in supporting even the objectives highlighted in the STAREC national plan itself.

Secondly, reports highlight the fact that the STAREC plan itself resembles more of a "a long list of humanitarian and development activities worth US$700m, for which Kinshasa had barely budgeted."[107] Furthermore, aligning the I4S with state interests and the propositions of its plan resulted in an extremely limited range of "top-down" military tasks and technical/material developments, such as refurbishing courts, army barracks, municipal buildings, as well as police stations and courthouses, as mentioned previously. While those are certainly important, focusing on these aspects resulted in a narrow approach of the I4S, ignoring issues and projects more

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[107] Government of the DRC (STAREC, 2009), pp. 15-41; Demetriou and Quick (2012); Oxfam (2012). In the end, the government had budgeted some US$320,000 for STAREC activities versus the US$368m of the ISSSS, and even what that money had been spent on was unclear (ISSSS quarterly progress report 1, 2012).

sensitive to local populations and with a greater possibility of tackling local root causes of conflict.

The importance of stabilisation in MONUC/MONUSCO grew over the years, and by the time of the mission's rebranding to MONUSCO, stabilisation was among the key priorities of the operation, despite no precise definition on the meaning for that. In 2010, the mission's mandate was updated to include the stabilisation core objective along the two other main tasks of the UN in the DRC, along with PoC and the support to the next national electoral cycle. As a novelty in the UN peace operations paradigm, MONUSCO was the first mission in which a Stabilisation Support Unit (SSU) was established, a specific instrument tasked with the implementation of the stabilisation strategy for the country, along with the support to activities in the scope of STAREC.

After 2012, MONUSCO's I4S strategy was revised, taking into account the lessons learned from the previous years of its implementation, trying to assert a degree of independence from the national Congolese strategy for stabilisation, and recognizing as well the existence of a predatory host government, not working with the same goals as the ones foreseen in mission principles and strategies. The new approach proposed by the updated I4S tries to combine the previous "top-down" perspective to local, "bottom-up", conflict transformation perspectives, taking into account the inputs from local actors. This dynamic results in a pretty particular context, in which at times the strongest partnerships for the implementation of the I4S are found among local or provincial actors, developing a partnership in some cases much stronger than the current levels of engagement with the national government in Kinshasa.

Enabling a Predatory Regime

Widely regarded as one of the most problematic aspects of MONUC/MONUSCO as a whole, the close alignment between the initiatives carried out by the UN, and the interests of a political regime and problematic elite, largely responsible for the perpetuation of root causes of conflict, is a major issue across all dimensions of the UN mission in the DRC. Taking into account all necessary considerations in the scope of the basic principles of UN peace operations, it should not be acceptable that, for the sake of pursuing order and stability in the DRC, substantial support is given to a political scenario actively disregarding human rights principles and the best interests of populations in parts of its territory.[108]

In the case of the regime led by Joseph Kabila, it seems that the UN and the international community have closely assumed the principle of supporting and actively building up a local

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[108] Curran and Hunt

government partner, however, the dwindling political engagement of the international community in the period after the 2006 elections have demonstrated a clear lack of awareness or even disinterest with the trajectory chosen by the elected regime. Subsequent mandate updates and positions taken by the UN across different episodes have further reinforced the perception that the Security Council was always more interested in achieving important milestones for a diminished responsibility of the UN in the Congolese conflict, instead of being closely engaged with host state actors and how they exercised their sovereignty.[109]

With the implementation of the I4S, and the practical focus on the reconstruction of national institutions and extension of State authority, MONUC/MONUSCO has in fact provided substantial support to the interests of a dominant Congolese political class, tying international resources to government-owned plans in the eastern region. This process facilitated the establishment of new exploitable patronage dynamics, and subjected local populations to additional layers of insecurity and oppression.[110]

A Local Approach and the "Islands of Stability"

In response to the challenges posed by a predatory state and the imperative to empower local communities, MONUSCO has revised its strategy in the DRC after a review of its first stabilisation strategies. The new proposition combines a "top-down" and "bottom-up" conflict transformation approach, emphasising a context-specific and damage control-focused strategy. The current phase of the strategy places significant importance on democratic dialogue as a means of conflict transformation and political engagement. As part of this approach, conflict zones have been identified and prioritised, leading to the development of provincial stabilisation strategies and action plans that receive validation from both national and provincial authorities.

However, it is important to acknowledge that despite the creation of areas of relative stability, these regions remain susceptible to spillover effects from other parts of the country. The absence of an overarching peace agreement and the uneven collaboration from the national government, which exhibits stronger collaboration at the provincial level, have contributed to a "patchwork quilt" of varying levels of stability that remain fragile. This approach, referred to as the

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[109] EPON MONUSCO
[110] Ibid

establishment of the "Islands of Stability", is contained in the renewed I4S and draws upon inspiration from other stabilisation experiences.[111]

Chapter II.2) Case Study - MINUSMA

112

Chapter 7) Historical Background for the Conflict(s) in Mali

Much like the case of the extremely complex underlying causes of conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, exposed in the first case study of this research, discussing the root causes of violence in Mali requires a deeper analysis than just an overview of the episodes leading to the outbreak of violence in the country in 2012. In order to portray a comprehensive picture of the

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[111] Include comment from Hunt, origins of islands of stability + swamps of instability
[112] https://reliefweb.int/map/mali/mali-minusma-deployment-may-2023

conflict dynamics in place in Mali, it is necessary to consider the historic processes preceding by many years the collapse of the Malian state and the conflict responsible for the deployment of MINUSMA in 2013.

Despite having been hailed in the past as an "African beacon for democracy", closer inspection on the reality of the former French colony would depict a much more pessimistic image, one in which claims of a democratic success would play the role of "a façade for institutional weakness and mismanagement."[113] Among studies on the topic, it is a consensus that, despite being usually explained in ethno-identitary lines, the outbreak of full-scale conflict in Mali was substantially exacerbated by the poor governance and institutional weakness within the national regime in Bamako.[114] In respect to the resilience of the Malian democratic system, a deeper analysis will also show that, even before the outbreak of conflict in 2012, and since its independence from France in 1960, autocratic regimes are more frequent than democratically elected ones. From the 1960 to 1968, the country was ruled by a socialist one-party political system, replaced after a military coup by an authoritarian, military regime that was only ended in 1992.[115]

Amidst these decades of political instability, the localised dimension of the rebellion that started the Malian conflict in 2012 can be understood as the culmination of repeated episodes of violence involving Tuareg peoples in the northern part of Mali. Consisting of semi-nomadic groups inhabiting the Sahel-Saharan region, Tuaregs have been very influential in Northern Mali from a historical perspective, until the French colonial regime in Mali placed their territories under the direct authority of Bamako. Subject to a distant leadership with whom they shared no cultural background, customs or language, Tuaregs have raised rebellions against the Mali state on three other occasions in varying scales, the first one between 1962 and 1964, the second, and for a period longest, between 1990 and 1996, and a more recent one between 2006 and 2009.[116]

These cyclical outbreaks of conflict are significant in the creation of a general feeling of discontent between Tuaregs and the Malian regime, regardless of what leader held the office in Bamako. The spark for the 2012 rebellion occurs in a panorama of relative power decline for Tuaregs within the political landscape of the Northern part of the country over time, as well as a political and

[113] Morten Bøås and Liv Elin Torheim, "The trouble in Mali – Corruption, collusion, resistance," Third World Quarterly, 34(7): 1281, 2013, quoted in Jennifer C. Seely, "A political analysis of decentralisation: Coopting the Tuareg threat in Mali," Journal of Modern African Studies 39(3): 506, 2001
[114] EPON MINUSCA
[115] Include info about regimes
[116]

economic marginalisation of the region.[117] Grievances towards the authority of Bamako have been further aggravated by a serious failure of Malian authorities to implement any durable solutions or response to the causes of Tuareg discontent. Along these past rebellions, the Malian state has applied a mixture of different strategies to deal with Tuareg resistance such as, for example, divide-and-rule tactics, co-optation of elites, military control, repression, and also eventual peace agreements that came to no fruition.[118]

In this context, it is important to highlight that beyond the initial conflict cleavage between a North-South divide involving the centralised Malian state and Tuareg rebellions, there also exists a significant level of fragmentation within Tuareg groups, which can in no way be understood as a monolithic political movement.[119] Divided into numerous sub-groups by caste, Tuareg clans and groups have been involved in deep rooted tensions between themselves over issues such as clan rivalries; particular personal or collective interests; differing also in the desired political perspective of a Tuareg society. These fissures have consistently hindered the political mobilisation of Tuaregs, even in the context of the four rebellions initiated against the Malian regime, which would often work in favour of this process of the fragmentation itself.[120]

Upper-caste leaders of elite clans within the Kel Adagh confederation have been traditionally credited for leading the Tuareg rebellions. Within this confederation, the "noble" clan of the Ifoghas play a dominant role[121], a logic that is challenged by the "vassal" clans of the Imghdad, in an ongoing process of tribal splitting traced back to the 90s.[122] The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), who sparked the 2012 rebellion, was for a brief period able to rally these different groups together in order to proclaim independence from Mali, however, this unity quickly fell apart as the Tuareg rebellion was eventually hijacked by jihadist groups, as it will be explained later in this chapter. [123]

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[118] EPON MINUSMA

[119] Ibid

[120] Ibid =

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[122] EPON MINUSMA

[123] Ibid

Timeline of the 2012 Rebellion

Preceding the launch of the 2012 rebellion by the MNLA, the availability of military capacities in Northern Mali was greatly influenced by regional developments in the past years, most notably the conflict in Libya. Following the fall of the Gaddafi regime, the return of experienced Tuareg fighters, and influx of firearms provided the Tuaregs with a significant boost in military capacity that caught Malian authorities completely off-guard when a major offensive was launched by an armed branch of the MNLA in early January 2012. In the course of the following months, despite peace efforts brokered by Algeria, the rebels advanced further south with surprisingly low resistance presented by the Malian military forces, caught by surprise by the well-coordinated and swift advances of the MNLA.[124]

The Malian military's ineffective response was exacerbated by accusations of indiscriminate targeting of civilians and the alleged employment of mercenaries in their counteroffensive. Such actions fueled grievances among local communities, further eroding the legitimacy of the Malian government and its security forces.[125] By March 2012, the MNLA had allegedly managed to take control of a third of the Malian territory, including major towns such as Kidal, Gao, and Timbuktu.

This rapid territorial gain of the Tuareg rebellion in the north would fuel mounting levels of dissatisfaction with the government of President Amadou Toumani Touré, triggering a coup d'état in Bamako in March 2012. The coup was led by a group of mid-ranking officers within the Malian armed forces, known as the National Committee for the Restoration of Democracy and State (CNRDRE). The actions taken by the CNRDRE would later be argued as a culmination of long-standing discontent with the Malian political class from the part of the civil society and the military forces, justified by claims of widespread corruption, mismanagement of resources, and galvanised by the government's management of the crisis in the North. These officers seized the opportunity

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[124]https://web.archive.org/web/20131109224556/http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/02/23/mali-strike-idAFL5E8DN9DK20120223
[125] Ibid

presented by the political instability and the weakened state authority to detain the president, as well as some of its key ministers, and overthrow the country's democratically elected government.

The military coup had an initial positive consequence for the Tuareg rebellion, as it further weakened the Malian state's capacity to respond militarily to the MNLA advances. In this context, in April 2012, MNLA's Secretary General Bilal Ag Acherif announced the establishment of a Tuareg state in the Northern territories of Mali, in the form of the Independent State of Azawad, encompassing more than half of Mali's territory.[126] [127] The claim for the conquered land, however, would not last very long, for rifts among the groups supporting the MNLA rebellion would result in a collapse of the Tuareg consensus and subsequent takeover of the region by jihadist armed groups, such as the Ansar Dine.[128]

Having previously established a solid foothold in the region, islamist jihadist groups had been involved in the takeover of the country's Northern regions, mostly in support of the Tuareg rebellion. Despite positioning themselves behind different political projects, MNLA and the salafist groups had undertaken a pragmatic accord in order to raise arms against the Malian state. Additionally, in many occasions, some of the jihadist groups involved in the conflict had been already entrenched in Tuareg groups or were constituted within specific clans, as was the case of the Ansar Dine, formed out of a core of members from the Ifoghas clan.[129] The collapse of the rebellion's unity unfolded quickly after the declaration of independence of Azawad, and revolved around key differences between different conceptions for the organisation of a Tuareg society and state.

While some of the groups involved in the rebellion and MNLA largely defended the establishment of a Tuareg state on the basis of self-determination, these entities still positioned themselves in favour of secular political regiments. On the other hand, the jihadist groups have largely pursued the imposition of salafist arrangements. Even between themselves, the projects' intended by those groups were extremely diversified, ranging from re-establishing the Macina Empire, or "Dina" in Central Mali; creating a Sharia state

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[126] News
[127] Explanation for Azawad name
[128] Gilder (2023)
[129] Ibid

in the region' or also ridding North Africa of Western influence and overthrowing "apostate" governments.[130] The pragmatic alliance's rupture did not favour the secular elements of the MNLA, and in a couple of weeks the territory claimed by the Tuaregs was in control of jihadist groups, who faced little resistance in imposing their political projects, implementing strict social codes, restricting cultural practices and targeting moderate religious leaders

Before moving towards the conflict timeline, it is important to highlight the degree of anarchy experienced in Northern Mali during this period of intertwined conflicts. The rebellion raised by the MNLA, and the subsequent inter fighting between armed groups who had raised their arms against the Malian state. The already critical levels of state fragility in Northern Mali had already created the perfect conditions for the proliferation of armed militias and even criminal groups of the most varied trades, including arms, drugs and human traffickers. In this context, the conflict and subsequent total collapse of any order in the region further exacerbated these logics, conducting the place into a hobbesian state of nature with the proliferation of an endless multitude of small armed entities, fending for themselves in volatile alliances and under a diverse range of banners.

Amidst this escalating crisis, regional and international actors mobilised to address the unfolding collapse of the country. In between all of them, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) played crucial roles in coordinating the first regional responses to the crisis. Back in March 2012, in a moment of great international mobilisation over the illegality of the military coup in Mali, ECOWAS vowed to "take all necessary measures to re-establish constitutional order in Mali", and ordered its 3,000-strong Standby Force to be on high alert[131]. Formerly a member of the group, Mali was swiftly suspended from the organisation and a series of measures were imposed by the other members as an attempt to weaken the CNRDRE position. Considering its fragile standing due to the ongoing conflict and the lack of international support, in April 2012 the military junta signed an agreement with the ECOWAS to hand power over to a transitional government, preceding the announcement of deployment of the organisation's standby force in response to the rebellion in the North.

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[130] Bøås, Osland and Erstad, Islamic Insurgents in the MENA Region
[131] EPON MINUSMA

In association with the AU, plans were announced to deploy the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA), despite planning and financing issues made public by the organisations. In order to obtain the proper resources to deploy the mission in Mali, the AU Peace and Security Council requested the UN's support for the mission, in the form of a "support package funded by UN-assessed contributions[132]." The mission was sanctioned by the Security Council through resolution 2085 on 20 December 2012, now with the support of the UN. The transitional government of Mali also requested the deployment of a stabilisation mission of the UN in its territory, however, it was argued by the Security Council that the availability of such mission would have to be preceded by a successful employment of AFISMA, considering that the UN did not want to involve its forces in a counteroffensive against the rebellion, but in the context of a future UN operation aimed at "long-term stabilization and peacebuilding assistance[133]."

Due to planning and logistical constraints, however, the deployment of AFISMA, under the leadership of the AU was too slow to cope with the development of the crisis on the ground. Estimates foresaw that the mission would only be deployed in its full capacity by September 2013, while further advances from jihadist armed groups proceeded in the direction of Mali's central region and the capital Bamako. Fearing for the establishment of a stronger footing in the country, a military intervention was launched by France in the form of Operation Serval, in January 2013. The operation was relatively successful and managed to free all major towns from control of the jihadist groups in over two months, beginning to draw down from the country from April onwards, and handling taken positions over to AFISMA troops.

Still in April, another key development of the situation in Mali occurs in the Security Council, as the deployment of MINUSMA, a UN-led multidimensional stabilisation mission in Mali is authorised. The formal beginning of the mission is set for July of the same year, even though the military component of the mission would eventually be constituted mostly of incorporated troops deployed initially under the AFISMA. Assuming a robust position contrary to the initial claims of the UN, MINUSMA becomes closely

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[132] Ibid
[133] Include commentary SC

involved with the support implementation of the Ouagadougou Preliminary Agreement, a ceasefire accord signed between the Malian government, the MNLA, and the High Council for the Unity of Azawad (HCUA). The agreement seemed to set conditions favourable to a return to some degree of normality in Mali, even though heavily armed jihadist still were present.

As an outcome of internal and international engagement in implementing the Preliminary Agreement, In 2013, Mali was able to conduct elections with the support of MINUSMA, which were seen as a critical step towards restoring democratic governance in the country. Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, known as IBK, was elected the new president, in a 7-year term. The elections were aimed at bringing stability to the country and setting the foundations for a more comprehensive peacebuilding process, however, the occasional relapses of violence and also the persisting activity of armed jihadists and in the North impeded the full implementation of points foreseen in the agreement.

In 2014, despite the initial hopes for stability, Mali experienced a significant elapse of violence in the form of terrorist attacks. The dispersion of many of the jihadis groups, including Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and its affiliates across the country contextualises the issue. In this context, France launched Operation Barkhane, a military operation aimed at combating terrorism and supporting regional security in the Sahel region. French forces, along with troops from partner countries, including Mali, Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso, and Mauritania, conducted counterterrorism operations to degrade and disrupt the military and organisational capacity of salafist groups in the country. Barkhane remained a key military actor in the country until its exit from Mali in 2022. In the context of efforts to revitalise the Malian peace process involving the rebellious Tuareg groups, new discussions were brokered by Algeria, as an attempt to propose a more comprehensive agreement that can satisfy widespread demands of entities and populations in the North. Discussions in the context of the Algiers peace process sought to include, besides representation of the Malian state, the participations of different groups was organised in the form of two coalitions, the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) representing groups aligned with the Tuareg rebellion, and the Plateform coalition, consisting of pro-government entities and militias.

Critiques to the conduction of the process quickly pointed out that, in spite of including a diverse range of actors in the process, actual representation of the local population's needs and demands remained very limited, having the groups opted to defend their own interests and projects.[134] The Algiers Peace Agreement would be subsequently signed in 2015 in terms largely supported by the international community, including France, other Sahel member-states and the MINUSMA. The implementation of it, however, would follow the fate of the Ouagadougou Preliminary Agreement, and would be severely restricted by sporadic outbreaks of violence and the further deterioration of security conditions in Central Mali.

The central region of Mali, particularly the Mopti and Segou regions, witnessed a surge in intercommunal violence between different ethnic groups, primarily the Fulani and Dogon communities. These conflicts, driven by a mix of ethnic, economic, and land disputes, and being contextualised by the proliferation of arms and violence, further complicated the security situation in Mali. Efforts to address stability in central Mali focused on promoting dialogue, enhancing community engagement, and fostering reconciliation between the affected communities were undertaken by the UN were not enough to impede the escalation of violence in the region, exploited as well by criminal and terrorist groups.

From 2014 onwards, the threat of terrorism became a persisting, and seemingly constant threat to the presence of the international community and the work of MINUSMA in itself. Due to the absence of state forces in the North, MINUSMA forces became the most likely targets of attacks, especially through the use of IEDs. The operational support provided to France and its allies in counterterrorism efforts further reinforced the antagonisation of jihadist groups and made the presence of peacekeepers in that context extremely challenging, even worse for civilians. The increase in casualties was so drastic, that in 2017 the organisation experienced the peak of casualties in its missions across the globe, boosted by the high mortality of troops deployed by the UN in Mali.

In between the hardships and persistence of stability across the country, MINUSMA was able to support the 2020 elections in Mali, the second one after the 2012 military coup. In April of that year, after the completion of two voting sessions, the Malian Constitutional

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134

Court overturned preliminary election results from polls held in the preceding months and installed a new electoral crisis in the country. Directly benefiting the ruling coalition backing President Boubacar Keïta, the ruling inflamed mounting dissatisfaction with the government, considering the persistence of poor levels of governance and widespread corruption. Protests followed and in June of the same year, violence erupted in the capital Bamako.

The political crisis escalated and culminated in a new military coup in August. President Boubacar Keïta was ousted by a military junta led by the Comité national pour le salut du peuple (CNSP), a group within Malian military forces. Unlike the previous occasion, the most recent coup in Mali is received with reprisals from the international community, however, the UN and others involved in the support to the security situation in Mali chose to remain engaged with the newly established military government, perhaps due to concerns that a complete rupture might lead to a worsening of the country context.

The rocky relationship between the UN mission and the military regime would only worsen in the next few years. Implementation of the peace agreement came to a halt, and worries about the conduct of state actors in the conflict were flagrant among the international parties involved in the support to MINUSMA. On the other side, dissatisfaction with the contribution of the MINUSMA and Operation Barkhane for the state's counteroffensive was evident both among host state actors, as well as among civilians. Some sectors of the Malian population expressed frustration with the mission's ability to address the root causes of the conflict and bring about lasting peace. Additionally, the restriction of movement imposed on MINUSMA personnel became a major hindrance to the mission, being secluded from areas that were of special interest to the regime in Bamako.[135]

A most recent, and seemingly permanent, trend in the relationship deterioration between the UN mission and the host state of Mali would initiate most recently in 2021, with the arrival of the first troops of the Russian mercenary group, Wagner.[136] Accused of being involved in multiple instances of war crimes and having close ties with Russia's

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government and military, the presence of Wagner in Mali was widely contested by Western European states engaged with the crisis in Mali.[137] Since their settlement in Bamako, Wagner forces have supported the Malian military regime with personal protection and with support to the government's counter offensive against jihadist and Tuareg militias. This development led to an increasing restriction in the involvement of MINUSMA in the security context of the country, both as a preference for not being associated with the Russian private military group, as well as through movement limitations imposed by the host state.

Human rights concerns arising after Wagner's arrival in Mali would later turn out to be justified, as multiple accounts from crimes against humanity carried out both by Wagner troops and Malian military forces would proliferate over the past two years. The rift between the military junta and the international community would only worsen, now with a considerable part of the Malian civilian population voicing protests over the UN and western presence in the country. In this context, Operation Barkhane was terminated by France and left the country late 2022. As for the troubled relationship between MINUSMA and the Malian government, it would culminate in a request delivered directly to the Security Council by Malian representatives, for the swift termination and exit of MINUSMA from the country.[138] The request is fulfilled through Resolution 15341, from 30 June 2023, announcing a withdrawal of MINUSMA personnel by 31 December 2023.[139]

Chapter 8) MINUSMA - Mission Background and Mandate Evolution

The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Mali is a much peculiar operation in many different ways. Firstly, it was, and still is for now, a peace operation deployed in a virtually ongoing conflict. Even though advanced negotiations were in place to ascertain a way out of the conflict between the Tuareg rebellion and the government in Bamako, among the fragility of the dispositions for peace, the extent of state collapse and the intense proliferation of arms and armed actors of every kind, there is no denying the

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[139] SC/1534130 JUNE 2023

complexity and violent nature of the context in which MINUSMA would be deployed.

Secondly, the UN operation in Mali was deeply involved in a context of ongoing counterterrorist efforts, carried out both by the Malian military, as well as by foreign forces constituted Operation Barkhane, in between French troops and those of the J-5 Sahel group. This aspect is perhaps the key factor in understanding the evolution of MINUSMA's mandate and the poor performance of the operation in addressing the root causes of conflict in Mali. The coexistence of peacebuilding efforts and a counterterrorist campaign is by default extremely problematic, especially considering the fact that the same organisation responsible for endeavouring civilian tasks is also providing operational support and cooperating with foreign troops fighting a war in Mali.

The crises of legitimacy for the UN in Mali can be understood from multiple angles, which in the long run undermined also possibilities to leverage a continuity of the mission in face of the bad relationship between the organisation and the military government. The first one is that of its involvement with counterterrorist actors, which limited the access to specific contexts where the mission initiatives could have caused much impact. Another serious outcome ……

All things considered, it should also be said that the challenges faced by MINUSMA in implementing its mandate are most likely of a degree never before experienced in any other UN operation. Military, civilian and police components had to implement an ambitious mandate having to work around varying levels of cooperation with a host state, wherever it was present, being also very limited in its freedom of movement and having to endorse extensive security measures against the multiple threats to peacekeepers. Despite these challenges, for some periods MINUSMA was actually able to implement local initiatives for constructive peacebuilding, and to some extent fill a vacuum left by the Malian state absence in some locations more distant from the country's main urban areas.

Using the categorisation proposed by Kenkel and demonstrated in the first part of this work, MINUSMA can be classified somewhere in between the fourth generation of large-scale multidimensional operations, and the proposed concept of a fifth generation, concerning hybrid missions, due to its coexistence with the initiatives led by France and other states in the Sahel. In the following paragraphs, a timeline of developments

regarding MINUSMA and its mandate will be presented in more detail, focusing on the shifting approaches taken by the operation in accordance with the demands on the ground.

As discussed in the previous section, MINUSMA was originally envisioned by the Security Council as a follow-up to the AFISMA, deployed in Mali under the authority of the African Union but largely drawing on the military contributions of the ECOWAS. After a successful intervention of France, through Operation Serval, and the AFISMA in Northern Mali, Security Council Resolution 2100 (2013) formally established the deployment of MINUSMA, recognizing the deteriorating security situation and the need for a robust international response under the leadership of the UN. The resolution authorised MINUSMA to take all necessary measures to carry out its mandate, which included also PoC objectives. Despite presenting itself as a peace operation with a different character from AFISMA, the initial military component under the authority of the UN was formed largely of "re-hatted" troops formerly deployed under the AU mission.

The notoriously comprehensive first mandate of the MINUSMA included seven main objectives for the UN Mission; (i) Stabilization of key population centres and support for the reestablishment of State authority throughout the country; (ii) Support for the implementation of the transitional road map, including the national political dialogue and the electoral process; (iii) Protection of civilians and United Nations personnel; (iv) Promotion and protection of human rights; (v) Support for humanitarian assistance; (vi) Support for cultural preservation; and (vii) Support for national and international justice.[140]

As logical as it would be for a peace operation to include such a diverse range of tasks in a context of collapse such as the one in Mali, the mission still faced a chronic issue concerning capability caps and the slow rhythm of force generation. Even in these conditions, MINUSMA achieved some promising initial progress, for example, by managing to establish a significant presence in Northern Mali, occupying a vacuum where no presence of the state or any other similar structure could be found. Data gathered covering the early years of MINUSMA demonstrate how the mission had a clear effect in diminishing the levels of violence in Mali, taking into account the number of reported

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[140] Resolution

conflict-related deaths.[141] Another key trend observable after the deployment of MINUSMA is a significant reduction in the number of IDPs, encouraged to settle back in their original homes due to the presence of UN peacekeepers.

Along the first year of deployment and through 2014, one of the key concerns of MINUSMA was supporting the peace efforts brokered by Algeria. The mission''s involvement in the Algiers peace negotiations, engaging the Malian government and armed groups fighting alongside both sides of the Malian conflict, including the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) representing the Tuareg rebellion, and the Plateform, including groups aligned with the government authority in Bamako. Both sides agreed to engage in talks mediated by the Algerian government, and these negotiations sought to tackle key underlying motivations for the 2012 rebellion, such as political representation, demand for decentralisation, security sector reform.

Positioning itself as a neutral, impartial actor, the UN played a vital role in supporting the negotiations by providing logistical support, technical expertise, and political guidance to the peace process. Mission representatives served as mediators and bridge-builders, encouraging trust-building measures and fostering an environment conducive to productive negotiations. The organisation's expertise in conflict resolution, governance, and human rights contributed significantly to the discussions, ensuring that the negotiated outcomes aligned with international standards and best practices. However, MINUSMA's involvement extended beyond facilitation and technical support. The operation's physical presence and engagement in the field during the negotiations were fundamental for sustaining the peace process, through its physical presence and force projection, MINUSMA helped create a conducive environment for the negotiations and deterred potential spoilers who sought to disrupt the political will of actors involved in the peace process.

MINUSMA's support to the Algiers peace negotiations was intimately aligned with its mandate to promote stability, protection of civilians, and political processes in Mali. Even though later evaluations would consider that the whole negotiation process didn't significantly involve concerns and interests of civil society and local communities, the

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peace accord was still conducted including a wide range of groups and successfully resulted in the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in 2015. Besides addressing key issues related to conflict causes, the agreement also included provisions in the reintegration of former combatants (DDR) involved in the Malian conflict. It served as a major positive milestone for MINUSMA, and the mission's support for its implementation was reiterated explicitly in SCR 2227 (June 2015). [142]

To the disappointment of initial optimist expectations surrounding the signature of the peace agreement, the implementation of its dispositions was severely undermined by an increase in terrorist attacks and the activity of armed groups not included in the peace process. While the Algiers agreement aimed to accommodate the demands of a range of different groups along the conflicts' main caveats, it did not succeed in establishing a unified path for peace in Mali, as some well-established armed groups were left out of the process, including those considered terrorist or islamists entities. Although the presence of such groups that would undoubtedly be treated as spoilers in the conflict in Mali is a fact, specialists noted how the fluidity of armed factions in Mali contributed to a blurred perception of the fundamental nature of armed groups in the country.

By not engaging with some groups, and deliberately choosing those that would be left out of the peace process, the UN and other agreement parties favoured the fragmentation and splintering of various entities, which would refuse to abide by an agreement not comprehending their needs, and choosing instead to resort to violence. This phenomenon resulted not only in an increase in terrorist activities in general, but also those specifically targeting MINUSMA personnel and installations. Being even more limited in its movement and now unable to reach many locations, the UN was not able to properly support the implementation of the Algiers accord. Considering that the organisation was, in the absence of a Malian state outreach, the only actor capable of promoting the dispositions for the agreement, its implementation came to a halt.

In this context, some provisions were particularly sensitive for sustaining the pathway towards peace, such as the dispositions regarding DDR efforts. The slow implementation of such initiatives created fertile ground for disillusionment and frustration on behalf of the

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[142] Resolution

parties to the agreement, and reportedly some former combatants, feeling marginalised, disappointed, and excluded by the peace process, resorted to joining or aligning themselves with terrorist groups, feeding into the rising instability and violence. Furthermore, the implementation of provisions related to security sector reform and the establishment of effective governance structures faced significant setbacks. Weak institutional capacity, corruption, and the continued presence of armed groups in certain areas hindered the deployment of state security forces, a MINUSMA presence, and the establishment of rule of law, thus creating security vacuums that were exploited by terrorist groups, allowing them to further expand their influence.

These groups were also favoured by the limited presence of state institutions in some areas, resulting in the the absence of basic services and economic opportunities, which would in turn provide fertile ground for the recruitment and radicalization of vulnerable populationsThe lack of effective governance and development initiatives in these areas undermined the credibility of the peace agreement and eroded trust in the peace process among civilians in more remote regions. Already limited in regards to capacities, and now constantly threatened by terrorist attacks, MINUSMA was unable to properly address the situation.

The collapse of the fragile peace process was exploited by a plethora of these groups, taking advantage also of porous state borders to establish themselves in Mali. By 2016, it is evident that the proliferation of armed groups is posing a looming threat to the Central and Southern regions of Mali, as pointed out by reports alerting to the expansion of terrorist and criminal activity in the regions, together with an increase in the levels of inter-communal violence. The shifting perspective on the ground is indicated in SCR 2295 (June 2016), calling for a mission refocus towards Central Mali and implementing a Quick Reaction Force (QRF).[143]

Upon requests from France, and considering the deterioration of the security context of the country, the Security Council authorised in 2017 the deployment of troops under the command of the G5 Sahel Force, a joint military initiative by the five Sahelian countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger) to address the growing challenges in

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[143] resolution

the region. SCR 2359 (June 2017) authorises the deployment of 5.000 uniformed elements, between police and military forces, to enhance regional cooperation and coordination, conduct joint military operations, and support efforts to restore security and stability in the Sahel.

From the beginning, the G5 Sahel Force and MINUSMA initiated a comprehensive partnership in order to address the security challenges in Mali. Both entities would cooperate on the areas of intelligence-gathering, provision of expertise and would in many occasions conduct joint operations and capacity-building activities. Of key importance to France's interest, MINUSMA provided fundamental support to the establishment of the G5 Sahel Force, up to the point of conducting joint operations and sharing field facilities. SCR 2364 (June 2017) and SCR 2391(December 2017) would welcome this partnership promoted by the Security Council, who had given up on the creation in MINUSMA of a battalion following the format of the FIB in MONUSCO.

In hindsight, the effect of this experience was extremely negative for the UN mission. Close cooperation with the G5 Sahel Force and Operation Barkhane would significantly undermine the legitimacy for MINUSMA, and would further support the discourse that the mission was directly participating in counterterrorism efforts. Investigations carried out by MINUSMA itself concluded that Malian soldiers, under the command of the JF-G5S had arbitrarily executed 12 civilians at the Boulkessy cattle market" in retaliation for the death of a fellow soldier in an earlier attack.[144] The association with the French military would also prove problematic, as was evidenced by a notorious episode later in 2021, when an airstrike by Barkhane forces targeted a wedding celebration with dozens of civilians.[145]

In spite of the continuity of a poor security context, MINUSMA played a crucial role in supporting the realisation of the 2020 elections in Mali, which were seen as a critical step towards consolidating democracy and stability in the country. The mission's involvement encompassed logistical assistance, technical expertise, and security arrangements aimed at facilitating a free, fair, and transparent electoral process. On the perspective of the UN, a

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[144] Bate Felix and Aaron Ross, "UN says Malian forces executed 12 civilians at a market," Reuters, 26 June2018, https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-mali-security-un-un-says-malian-forces-executed-12-civilians-at-a-market-idUKKBN1JM2LA
[145] https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/30/french-air-attack-in-mali-killed-19-civilians-un-probe-finds

successful ballot following the end of IBK first term on the office would provide public confidence in a reestablishment of Malian state capacities, and would in turn contribute to the establishment of a democratic and peaceful environment in the country.

Hopes of a positive outcome would soon crumble, as the elections were marred by an electoral crisis that had wide-ranging implications, including in the continuity of MINUSMA. Multiple political parties contested the election results, alleging irregularities and fraud, leading to a protracted political deadlock favouring the ruling regime and leading to a loss of public trust in the electoral process. The crisis exposed deep-seated divisions within Malian society and underscored the challenges of democratic consolidation in a fragile context, culminating in a military coup in 2023.

The coup, orchestrated by elements within the military, resulted in the overthrow of the civilian government and exacerbated the country's already precarious state of affairs. This development had significant ramifications for the relationship between MINUSMA and the government of Mali, as well as for the overall security and stability of the country. Swiftly condemned by the international community and the UN, the coup was yet a point of definitive rupture between the UN and the Malian military government. It led, however, to a cessation of any military cooperation between MINUSMA and the Malian armed forces,

The erosion of constitutional order severely disrupted the political processes involved in the implementation of the peace process, creating difficulties in vital areas such as governance, security sector reform, and reconciliation efforts. UN peacekeepers were impeded to work in certain areas of the country, especially in Central Mali. For three years after the coup, the relationship between the UN and the ruling junta would gradually worsen. On the side of the Malian government, just as for sections of the Malian population, attrition was caused by the lack of direct involvement of the MINUSMA in the combat against jihadist groups. From the perspective of the UN mission, a great concern existed in regards to respect to human rights standards. This issue was exacerbated to a maximum after the arrival of Wagner in 2021.

The reliance on Wagner and the perceptive perspective shift away from the Western states previously involved in the international response to the terrorist groups established

throughout the country motivated France's termination of Operation Barkhane in 2022. The worsening of the relationship between the UN and the Malian government, together with mounting protests over the presence of the mission in the country, would culminate in a request presented by the Malian foreign minister directly to the Security Council, requesting the UN to withdraw its mission "without delay". The termination of MINUSMA would be formalised some weeks later, following the cessation of host state consent, through SCR 2690 (June 2023).

Chapter 9) MINUSMA - The Effect of Stabilisation

After observing the timeline of the conflict in Mali and discussing the evolution of MINUSMA, it becomes evident that, just like the example of later developments of MONUSCO in the DRC, the concept of stabilisation as demonstrated in Chapter 3 is thoroughly present across all dimensions related to to the planning, evolution, and practical objectives established by the MINUSMA along its decade of existence. The primary difference between the two case studies, in this matter, is that, differently from the case of MONUSCO, the presence of the stabilisation concept is evident in MINUSMA ever since the mission's conception.[146]

Despite consisting of very particular security and sociopolitical contexts, several parallels can be drawn between the approach of the UN in MONUSCO and in MINUSMA. Both operations share attempts to conciliate military objectives and civilian initiatives in the areas of peacebuilding and statebuilding. In the case of Mali, albeit facing significant capacity limitations, the UN operation placed particular emphasis on the "reconstruction" of local state institutions in its mandate. In the case of MINUSMA, these activities were especially challenging considering the extremely non-permissive environments in which the mission would operate, and also considering the absolute absence of state institutions in some areas.

Considering all the presented difficulties, it is impressive how MINUSMA managed to some extent support the reestablishment of Malian state institutions and at least in the

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146

Northern part of the country provide conditions for a certain extension of state presence. Unfortunately, it seems that some valuable lessons from past experiences, such as the case of MONUSCO were not fully taken into account during the prioritisation of mission activities. It became clear with time that simply reestablishing the Malian state and expanding its institutions proved insufficient in addressing the deep-rooted causes of conflict among populations that had for generations been deprived of access to state services and institutions.

Moreover, the extension of the Malian state, plagued by governance issues and corruption, served to undermine possibilities of galvanising popular support for the UN efforts, creating a rift between the aspirations of the populations in the Northern and Central regions, and the practical reality coming from the reestablishment of Malian state entities. This undermined the mission's efforts to foster a sense of inclusion, trust, and cooperation among all parties involved, and condemned a full implementation of the Algiers Peace Agreement's dispositions. The approach assumed by MINUSMA, and also other parties in the accord, in not including a more comprehensive list of parties on the discussions, among them islamist groups, was paramount to the subsequent rise in the number of spoilers to the agreement's implementation.

In regards to jihadists in Mali, the predominantly militaristic approach undertaken by the MINUSMA and other partners proved itself extremely inadequate for addressing the problem of islamist radicalisation in the long-run. If any effect can be attributed to the efforts carried out jointly by Operation Barkhane, the FG5 and Malian military, it was to galvanise grievances against the actors responsible for the counterterrorism campaigns in the country, including also MINUSMA. As pointed out by studies, the focus on military objectives in such cases completely eclipsed peacebuilding efforts that could be promoted in the scope of UN initiatives, and all while the actors involved in the counterterrorism campaign never fully try to handle the factors that made possible a high proliferation of extremist groups, such as for example lack of access to education, fragile economic conditions and overlapping cycles of violence.

MINUSMA also faced significant challenges due to insufficient funding and inadequate resources to fulfil its comprehensive mandate including initiatives in a very diverse range of areas. Due to security conditions, at one point the mission was forced to dedicate

approximately 80% of its resources just for the creation safe zones, pockets of safety consisting of a radius of a couple kilometres, with the aim of facilitating the protection of civilians, spearheading the reestablishing of Malian state presence and enabling the work, to some extent, of its civilian contingent. This allocation of resources had a direct impact on the mission's ability to effectively address the underlying causes of the conflict and engage in comprehensive peacebuilding efforts.

The Prevalence of Militarisation over Peacebuilding

The coordinated militarised approach adopted by MINUSMA and other actors in Mali had several problematic implications that undermined UN peacebuilding efforts. Firstly, the heavy emphasis on military operations and the allocation of a significant portion of resources to security-related activities limited the capacity to address the root causes of the conflict and promote sustainable peace. The prioritisation of military logic and objectives directly harmed efforts in areas of governance, institution-building, and community engagement. It also created challenges in terms of perceptions and trust-building. The use of force, including airstrikes and military operations, often resulted in civilian casualties, contributed to resentment and mistrust among local populations.

This undermined the mission's credibility and hindered efforts to establish meaningful dialogue and cooperation with local communities. The disregard for the rights of communities, in some cases only limitedly related to islamist groups, helped inflaming the jihadist discourse and galvanised discontent against the foreign actors involved in Mali, thus creating a cycle of radicalisation and distrust in regards to the UN and the Bamako regime. While the security aspect is extremely important regarding the threat of terrorist groups, a predominantly militarised approach is not the best solution for the long-run. Tackling the social causes leading to radicalisation of individuals should be a leading objective in the case of Mali, and the failure of the international community's course of actions in the country was only proved through time. Without an approach focused on inclusive political processes, reconciliation, and addressing grievances, the international community, MINUSMA, France and the other Sahel states contributed only to perpetuating a cycle of violence rather than achieving sustainable peace.

Focus on Electoral Processes and the Expansion of State Authority

Following in the footsteps of different operations, MINUSMA placed a significant emphasis on supporting elections and providing support to reestablishment of a government in Mali ever since

its first mandate.The mission worked towards creating an environment conducive to credible and inclusive elections, providing technical assistance, logistical support, and security arrangements. These efforts aimed to promote democratic governance, strengthen the legitimacy of state institutions, and foster political stability.

The issue, however, is that even though democratic institutions are a crucial element in the maintenance of democratic accommodation of different political interests, values and perspectives, it shouldn't be expected for these elements to establish a peaceful political environment in itself. For even in established democracies, political stability and the maintenance of peaceful accommodation of grievances only occur through a combination of different factors, such as good levels of governance, a clear division of labour between powers, democratic tradition, in between others. Therefore, what has been argued by critics, with reason to some extent, is that MINUSMA's approach to Mali didn't adequately address the deep-rooted social causes and complex dynamics that fueled the Tuareg rebellion and the proliferation of armed groups in the country.

Insufficient attention was given to addressing issues such as systematic marginalisation, inequality, historical grievances, and intercommunal tensions, which were among key underlying drivers of the conflict. The mission's heavy reliance on institutional initiatives related to the extension of state authority were also devoid of significant effort to improve standards of governance and to assure proper access to basic state services, thus working towards the extension of an ineffective state, and continuing a cycle of friction between the regime in Bamako and more distant communities.

It is not possible, however, to directly pinpoint if this logic endured due to the limited mission resources, lack of proper political engagement, or even the desire to achieve milestones for an eventual operation drawdown. The fact is that by prioritising elections and the simple consolidation of state institutions, MINUSMA's approach repeatedly neglected the need for broader societal and structural transformations. The focus on sustaining state authority without addressing social and economic grievances indirectly contributed to the perpetuation of a political scenario that marginalised certain communities and perpetuated cycles of violence.

Amore comprehensive approach, especially in regards to the Algiers Peace Agreement, including dialogue, reconciliation, and inclusive participation of all stakeholders, particularly local communities, would most likely have been helpful in creating a more welcoming peace agreement, laying better conditions for significant peacebuilding and also providing room for more initiatives from the part of MINUSMA.

Mission Limitations and Exacerbated Expectations

Having presented all the issues pertaining to MINUSMA's failure in supporting transformative processes in Mali, it should be mentioned that one of the most critical characteristics of the operation, intimately linked with the stabilisation logic, is the vast gap existing between the realistic mission capacities and the extremely broad mandate and necessities on the ground.

The high expectations placed upon the mission contributed to the exacerbation of its limited operational capacities, assigning it tasks ranging from the assurance of security and stabilization to human rights and humanitarian assistance. In hindsight, the mission was severely undermined by the dissonance between these broad aspirations and its practical constraints. The deterioration of the security conditions in the field, insufficient resources of all kinds, lack of equipment, lack of funding and the complex security environment, including the presence of multiple armed groups and the persistent threat of terrorism, posed significant challenges to the mission's operations.

Insufficient resources, including personnel, equipment, and funding and the limited cooperation, including even sometimes hostile attitudes from certain parties involved in the conflict further hindered the mission's effectiveness. Taking it all into account, it should come as a surprise that, to some extent, and under specific conditions at certain points in time, the UN mission was actually able to create meaningful impact and promote improvement of life conditions for civilians, most notably in some areas of Northern Mali.

Chapter III) Issues Arising between stabilisation, lasting peacebuilding, Human Rights and Peacekeeping principles

As evidenced by the points raised during the first sections of this research, it is clear that the integration of a stabilisation concept and perspective within an UN peace operations paradigm has had far-reaching implications, reshaping the approach and strategies employed in missions worldwide. Building upon the insights provided by the overview of UN efforts in the DRC and in Mali, presented in Part II, this third and final part of this research has the objective of conducting a comprehensive examination of the impact of stabilisation on UN peace operations. Moreover, it aims to offer a critical analysis of the effects resulting from the assimilation of stabilisation into UN's operational framework,

while also highlighting potential future directions for the evolution of the organisation's missions.

Drawing on the lessons learned from diverse missions drinking from the fountain of stabilisation principles, including the ones mentioned previously in Part II, but also other major operations such as United Nations Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), we broaden our perspective to encompass a range of experiences in the application of stabilisation logics. This comprehensive exploration enables us to gain valuable insights into the wider implications of stabilisation within the UN peace operations paradigm.

The first section of this chapter will critically examine the primary and most significant impact of stabilisation: a departure from the traditional principles mentioned previously as the "holy trinity" behind the notion of UN peace operations. Historically, the UN has upheld principles of non-use of force, impartiality, and consent as foundational pillars of its missions, even in occasions most challenging for these notions. However, with the integration of stabilisation, the interpretation of these principles undergo significant transformations. The use of force becomes a viable option, albeit with inherent challenges and complexities, while impartiality is redefined to adapt to the realities of conflict-affected contexts. Particularly noteworthy is the subversion of consent logic, shifting its meaning for a host-state consent logic, whereby stabilisation missions actively contribute towards the creation of state legitimacy, both domestically and internationally.

The second section delves deeper into a clear trend observed across the case studies: a disproportionate focus on achieving milestones related to elections and the extension of state authority, often at the expense of comprehensive governance improvements and addressing key underlying causes of conflict. While the realisation of elections and the establishment of functional state institutions are crucial elements in post-conflict settings, according also to key UN doctrinal documents, they must be accompanied by efforts to strengthen governance, promote inclusivity, and tackle the root causes of conflict. It will be argued that failure to address these critical aspects can undermine the long-term sustainability of peace and undermine possible gains from statebuilding and the support of electoral processes.

The third and final section of this chapter will conduct an assessment in the scope of the performance of large-scale multidimensional peace operations, specifically in terms of human rights promotion and long-term impact across dimensions other than that of strictly physical protection. As argued repeatedly, the promotion of human rights is a core component in UN missions, and these operations should play a vital role in upholding these principles. Agreeing that realities on the ground often present immense challenges for these endeavours, including fragile security environments and the presence of armed non-state actors, this assessment seeks to examine the extent to which stabilisation missions can uphold the protection and promotion of human rights.

As a final chapter in this research, the core objective of the next sections will be to shed light on the multifaceted impact of stabilisation on UN peace operations. It underscores the need for nuanced approaches that navigate the tension between stabilisation imperatives and peacebuilding objectives. Furthermore, it provides valuable insights for future peacebuilding efforts within the UN system, highlighting the importance of striking a balance between short-term stabilisation measures and long-term sustainable peace.

Chapter III.1) A Departure from the "Holy Trinity" of Peace Operations

The influence of stabilisation conceptualisations within the framework of UN operations has contributed to reshaping the interpretation of fundamental principles that are the pillars of these same missions. This current section will explore in more detail the said effects over the so-called "holy trinity" of peace operations, as mentioned previously in the first Chapter of this work.[147] These three key principles treasured by the UN itself as quintessential for their mission are in simple terms described as consent, non-use of force, and impartiality.

Observing the evolution of a ruling peace operations paradigm, as depicted earlier in the first chapter of this research, it becomes evident that stabilisation is clearly not the only principle bent and reinterpreted by the UN through time. Influential concepts such as that

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of PoC and R2P, for example, have profound effects in the interpretations of these principles, abandoning a Westphalian conception of sovereignty and conditioning the respect to state's rights to the respect of individual and collective rights of its population.

The conceptualisations of stabilisation, however, push for a doctrinal evolution in the opposite direction. What can be identified through the interpretation of different excerpts defining stabilisation doctrines, and made clear through the practical approaches assumed by stabilisation missions, is that the logic of stabilisation is generally responsible for a pragmatic perspective favouring the establish of a sovereign entity, which would in turn act as a catalyst for advancements in areas such as security, access to basic services and respect to human rights. While the relationship between stability and the absence of conflict/violence is indisputable, the logic behind this perspective is one reestablishing a Westphalian logic, one treasuring the primacy of a sovereign state authority, instead of a human-centred approach such as the one proposed among members of the international community in the first decade of the millennium. The effect of stabilisation over each of the key principles will be discussed in more detail below.

Consent

The conception of consent, rooted in the initial conception of the UN Charter and contextualised in the organisation's role in mediating conflicts between states, undergoes significant reinterpretation with the integration of stabilisation principles in UN peace operations. Traditionally, consent has been associated with the principles applied more integrally by traditional peacekeeping missions. However, the evolution of the peace operations paradigm, and shifting realities in theatres of operations, have relativized the notion of consent, naturalising, in some instances, its disregard in the case of possible threats to civilian populations and human rights, for example.

Despite a shifting understanding over the nature of consent, the UN has historically preferred to deploy peace operations in common agreement with a local state government. In this sense, problems arise in situations of contested sovereignty or even state collapse, when identifying a host partner becomes a challenge. A response to this situation is embedded on the notions of stabilisation, by promoting an approach devoting substantial efforts and resources to support and legitimise these an identified partner host government.

While this approach is understandable given the absence of a formal government that can support the deployment of a large-scale operation, it diverges from the original visions in UN doctrine, and has a considerable potential to tip the balance in local conflicts, favouring one specific group or political project over the others. This selectivity in support raises concerns as well about the UN's capacity to navigate complex political landscapes and engage with various stakeholders involved in the conflict, considering its involvement in support of a specific conflict party.

In this sense, the reinterpretation of consent is closely intertwined with the principle of impartiality. Stabilisation efforts can involve supporting specific regimes or actors at the expense of other political alternatives, and such selectivity in support raises concerns about the impartiality of UN missions, undermining their capacity to navigate complex political landscapes and engage with various stakeholders and conflict parties.

Striking a balance between the need for consent and the imperative to protect civilians and address human rights concerns becomes a crucial challenge in navigating the complex dynamics of stabilisation-oriented missions,considering concerns on how consent is generated, who provides it, and the implications for the legitimacy and effectiveness of UN missions in achieving objectives beyond technical milestones.

Impartiality

The principle of impartiality traditionally entails maintaining a neutral stance and avoiding taking sides in a conflict. In the case of stabilisation missions, on the other hand, core strategic objectives often involve supporting specific regimes or actors deemed essential for achieving stability and countering threats. The permeation of this approach in UN missions unavoidably led to the establishment of logics in which peace operations would find themselves providing substantial support to statebuilding processes, which in turn would largely depend on providing support to certain political actors or groups, potentially at the expense of other political alternatives. This selectivity in support raises concerns about the impartiality of UN peace operations, making it difficult for them to maintain legitimacy and safely navigate complex political landscapes and engage with diverse stakeholders involved in the conflict.

This problematic dynamic repeated itself in the case of many peace operations such as in the case of MONUSCO as displayed in Chapter II and also in UNMISS, for example. Through support in electoral processes, the UN managed to provide democratic legitimacy to political projects and went beyond the original designs of acting simply as a neutral mediator where deployed. UN peace operations became an active participant in shaping the political landscape of host countries, and placed themselves in a particularly delicate position of dependance from the host state they supported so extensively. For a while, it seemed that the organisation had been reluctant to recognise the troubling situation in which it was placing itself, even though in some operations the effects of enabling a predatory host state became widely recognized and acknowledged.

The latest developments in these trends have occurred in the context of MINUSMA. The poor performance of the UN mission in Mali is largely linked to an extensive focus on statebuilding initiatives, without any political engagement or substantial effort to promote better standards of governance within the Malian state. Through the provision of support to an actor which has been behaving itself just as a de facto conflict party, a troublesome one in this regard, it should serve as a wake up call for the UN that the statebuilding support provided by its operations should aim not facilitating a regime, but the reestablishment of institutions that can positively affect the life conditions of fragile populations.

By engaging the way it has been in the occasion of different missions, the UN is blurring the lines between impartiality and technical engagement with statebuilding initiatives. In order to retain legitimacy and improve its transformative potential, the UN must navigate the complexities of local politics while upholding the core principles of neutrality and fairness. Achieving this delicate balance is crucial to ensuring the credibility, legitimacy, and long-term success of peace operations in promoting sustainable peace and stability.

Non-use of force

The principle of non-use of force is significantly challenged by the introduction of stabilisation doctrines in UN peace operations. Traditionally, peacekeeping missions were characterised by their non-combatant nature and their focus on diplomatic and peaceful

means to resolve conflicts. However, having to cope with extremely non-permissive mission environments, and with the appearance of stabilisation conceptions, there has been a shift towards a more militarised approach, one in which the UN has been actively becoming a part of the conflict in which it is interceding.

This perspective, of course, occasions many challenges, as stabilisation efforts can involve robust military support aimed at countering, or "neutralising" armed groups, restoring state authority, and providing security to the local population. The experience of the FIB in MONUSCO is the apex of this trend, even though operational support provided in the context of other missions falls just shortly of the same degree of military cooperation in state-led campaigns. The militarised approach tin the context of stabilisation creates significant impact on the context of the alleged neutrality of UN missions as well, considering that troops deployed by the UN increasingly engage in offensive military actions, it should also be expected that these troops are treated just as another conflict party, including their consideration as a valid military target. This is extremely problematic in the context of multidimensional peace operations and severely undermines the capacity of UN missions to tread beyond the sphere of influence of the host-state to carry out civilian tasks.

While stabilisation proponents argue that the use of force is necessary to create a secure environment for peacebuilding and development, critics argue that it undermines the fundamental principles of UN peace operations. The introduction of offensive military actions can escalate violence, heighten tensions, and potentially exacerbate conflicts, rather than leading to sustainable peace.The emphasis on security-centric approaches can neglect the need for comprehensive and inclusive strategies that encompass political, social, and economic dimensions of peacebuilding, and overshadow the necessity to address the root causes of conflicts.

3.2) The Gap Between Peacebuilding and the Stabilisation of Regimes

The focus on statebuilding and the extension of state authority has been a central aspect of recent UN multidimensional peace operations. Taking into account the fact that most of the recent UN peace operations have been deployed in a context of severe state collapse, it

should be understandable for statebuilding tasks to be a part of comprehensive mandates. In spite of this practical demand, as demonstrated in the case studies and argued by scholars on the topic, statebuilding in itself is not a significant indicator of a success in promoting peace and significantly addressing root causes of conflict.

Empirical experience shows that the most successful peacebuilding experiences in the scope of peace operations are not necessarily linked to a reestablishment of state institutions. Notwithstanding, recent missions working under a stabilisation mandate have time and again placed a great significance on the extension and support of state authority, without any major consideration on how and why certain types of reforms and projects would create a positive impact at a local level. The predominance of QIPs and high-visibility activities highlights a tendency towards the lack of in-depth planning and consideration for these activities.

This occurs in contradiction to more broad concepts of peacebuilding, instead, missions devote significant effort to the promotion of democratic technicalities, such as the realisation of elections. This demand for an electoral process, in turn, is significantly relevant for host entities in conflict-affected countries like Mali, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic (CAR), which can galvanise international support and resources. On the perspective of addressing the so-called root causes of tensions, while efforts to support elections and strengthen state institutions are important, they often fall short of addressing these underlying sources of hostility.

In order to properly convert these institutional gains into positive impact in this sense, it is crucial for them to accommodate the need for transformative engagement and processes. Moreover, the focus on technical aspects of state presence can inadvertently support fragile regimes, which may acquire a certain level of autonomy but lack the capacity to address root causes of conflict. Instead of breaking cycles of violence, these regimes may further impose predatory dynamics, prioritising their political interests over the well-being of the population. This is evident in cases where host governments act against human rights principles and impose their political agenda, undermining the originally envisioned support to tackle the root causes of conflict. The international community is then left hostage to the interests of a strengthened predatory state.

The first problematic aspect of the focus on statebuilding is the lack of follow-up support and engagement in actually expanding and supporting a state that can create a positive impact on conflict situations. While elections and the extension of state authority are essential, they do not create lasting solutions in a vacuum. Sustainable peace requires addressing the underlying causes of conflict, such as governance issues, social inequality, and marginalisation. Without transformative engagement, the international community risks superficial state presence that fails to bring about positive development.

Moreover, the focus on technical aspects of state presence can inadvertently support fragile regimes, which may acquire a certain level of autonomy but lack the capacity to address root causes of conflict. Instead of breaking cycles of violence, these regimes may further impose predatory dynamics, prioritising their political interests over the well-being of the population. This is evident in cases where host governments act against human rights principles and impose their political agenda, undermining the originally envisioned support to tackle the root causes of conflict. The international community is then left hostage to the interests of a strengthened predatory state, having integrally supported statebuilding efforts in its favour.

In a practical example as observed in the case of Mali, despite efforts to establish a government and success to hold the 2020 elections, the persistent governance deficits and social inequalities have hindered the achievement of sustainable peace and weakened the conditions for the continuity of democracy, considering the succeeding political crisis in the country.

Across different missions, the focus on technical aspects of statebuilding and electoral processes has not been accompanied by sufficient measures to address the underlying causes of conflict. As a result, governance standards remain deficient, and the grievances of marginalized communities continue to fuel instability and violence. A similar account can be observed in the case of South Sudan, where the international community also supported to a great extent the establishment of a new governmental framework. Despite efforts, the failure to address ethnic tensions, political exclusion, and unresolved grievances has resulted in a fragile state that is actively contributing to the persistence of cycles of violence, undermining the long-term prospects for peace and development.

In all these cases, the focus on statebuilding has prioritized the establishment of formal state structures and the conduct of elections, often neglecting the broader dimensions of peacebuilding. This narrow approach fails to address the complex socio-political dynamics, structural inequalities, and historical grievances that contribute to conflicts. To overcome these limitations, UN peace operations need to adopt a more holistic and transformative approach that goes beyond technical aspects of statebuilding. This requires engaging with local communities, addressing governance issues, promoting social inclusion, and tackling root causes of conflict. By doing so, UN missions can contribute to sustainable peace, promote social justice, and build resilient societies.

Chapter III.3.2) The Effectiveness of Stabilisation Operations

As the conception of UN peace operations evolved over time, a wide range of objectives and activities have become integral parts of missions deployed by the United Nations. The so-called multidimensional peace operations, which go beyond traditional peacekeeping, have significantly reshaped the nature and goals of UN missions, and taken over the ruling paradigm for the organisations' deployments. Being introduced by decision-makers in the scope of the Security Council over the past decades, the concept of stabilisation occupies an important place within the framework of most of these missions. Similar to the effort of evaluating the effectiveness of a multidimensional peace operation, evaluating the impact of stabilisation mandates and activities involved with the concept is an extremely challenging task.

This challenge occurs due to different reasons. Firstly, it is impossible to directly compare the outcome of a mission with a hypothetical scenario in which the mission was not deployed. The multifaceted nature of conflicts and the diverse array of factors influencing their resolution make it difficult to isolate the specific contributions of a single mission. Additionally, mission success depends on numerous external factors, such as the political will of host governments, regional dynamics, and broader socioeconomic conditions. These factors can significantly influence the outcomes of stabilisation missions, making it challenging to attribute specific results solely to the mission's efforts.

Furthermore, evaluating the effectiveness of stabilisation missions requires considering the goals and objectives of these missions. Establishing key milestones and exit strategies,

while common practice in UN peace operations, may not provide a coherent framework for evaluating missions. Often, these goals focus on short-term objectives related to statebuilding, such as conducting elections or extending state authority, as discussed in the previous section. Taking a example of the inadequacy of mission exit strategies to evaluate an operation's performance, the collapse of the security sector in Haiti shortly after the exit of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) exemplifies the limitations of relying solely on planned exit strategies and specific programmatic goals, as these don't normally comprehend underlying causes of conflict and trends towards long-term stability.

A Framework for Assessing Stabilisation Missions

To overcome these challenges and evaluate the effectiveness of multidimensional peace operations, including stabilisation missions, scholars and practitioners have developed analytical frameworks trying to better access the performance of these operations through a series of quantitative factors. One of these analytical alternatives is proposed by Brosig and Sempijja[148], considering not the specific actions endeavoured by peace operations, but considering detectable outcomes across a diverse range of sectors, such as Safety and Rule of Law; Democratic Participation; Human Rights; Sustainable Economic Opportunities and Human Development. The framework proposed by the authors emphasizes the importance of measuring the cumulative and individual effects of stabilisation missions. It employs a before-after research design to attribute effects to the deployment of peacekeeping missions accurately, and by comparing indicators before and after the mission's deployment, it becomes possible to identify changes associated with the missions' activities.

The framework also considers the baseline against which these effects are measured. Instead of assessing mission success solely based on specific programmatic goals, the framework looks at sector-specific changes in the hosting countries. This broader perspective allows for a more comprehensive evaluation of the impact of multidimensional missions and the findings obtained by them are in clear accordance with the phenomena's enumerated along this research.

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[148] Brosig & Sempijja (2017)

The Impact of Stabilisation Mandates

Drawing upon data obtained through the Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG), the authors could draw a comprehensive portrait of the effectiveness of multidimensional peace operations and highlight tendencies for areas of impact in which the missions are way more effective than others. Not surprisingly, the multidimensional missions considered by them, most including to some extent stabilisation mandates, have been quite effective improving dimensions related to the national security of the host state, and levels of political participation.

This finding corroborates the arguments presented in the past sections framework to evaluate the effectiveness of stabilisation missions reinforces the claims made throughout this research. Firstly, it reveals a growing trend of large-scale missions adopting stabilisation mindsets. This is evident in the significant increase in democratic participation and improvements in national security demonstrated by IIAG data, however, the analysis also highlights the shortcomings typical of stabilisation logics in other areas. The framework reveals that most of the large-scale multidimensional missions often exhibit poor performance in other crucial dimensions of peacebuilding[149]. One concerning trend is the short-term positive impact followed by a sudden deterioration in the conditions of the host state. In some cases, the situation even worsens to levels that surpass the pre-mission conditions, indicating the failure to address the root causes of conflict effectively[150].

For instance, while stabilisation missions may initially succeed in establishing a semblance of stability and improving security, they may fall short in promoting sustainable economic opportunities and human development in the long-term. By evaluating indicators such as public management, business environment, infrastructure, rural sector, welfare, education, and health, the authors demonstrate that the already slow performance identified generally in multidimensional peace operations worsens depending on the scale of militarised focus undertaken by the mission.

149

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One possible explanation for these shortcomings is the narrow focus on technical aspects and the lack of transformative engagement. Stabilisation missions tend to prioritize the establishment of state institutions and the provision of basic services, which are crucial steps in stabilizing conflict-affected regions. Nevertheless, these efforts often overlook the underlying structural issues, socioeconomic disparities, and political dynamics that perpetuate conflicts. Without addressing these root causes, stabilisation missions may inadvertently reinforce existing power imbalances and predatory dynamics within the host state, leading to a limited and unsustainable impact.

Moreover, the lack of transformative engagement can be observed in cases where the international community supports fragile regimes that prioritize their political interests over human rights and the pursuit of sustainable peace. In such instances, the UN and other actors may compromise their impartiality by aligning themselves with specific regimes, undermining the original intent of promoting inclusive and accountable governance. This selective support not only hinders genuine peacebuilding efforts but also leaves the international community vulnerable to the interests of predatory states that have been strengthened through their own efforts.

To address these challenges and enhance the effectiveness of stabilisation missions, a paradigm shift is needed. It is crucial to move beyond the technical aspects of state presence and embrace a more holistic approach that addresses the root causes of conflict, promotes inclusive governance, and fosters sustainable development. This requires engaging with local actors, civil society organizations, and marginalized communities to ensure their meaningful participation in decision-making processes. Additionally, the international community must prioritize the protection of human rights and actively work towards dismantling predatory dynamics that hinder peacebuilding efforts.

CONCLUSION

In an ever-evolving global landscape, and in increasingly volatile security contexts, the introduction of the stabilisation concept in the mindset of Security Council decision-makers, and the subsequent mainstreaming of the keyword across different organisational

dimensions, created a lasting impact in the way peace operations were conceived and expected to perform.

Through a comprehensive analysis and critical evaluation of relevant literature, case studies, and empirical data, this thesis intended to contribute to the ongoing discourse on the future trajectory of UN peace operations, with a specific focus on the concept of stabilisation. By exploring the historical developments, doctrinal foundations, practical implications, and challenges surrounding stabilisation efforts, this research endeavoured to offer insights and recommendations for improving the effectiveness of UN peace operations in conflict-affected societies.

Albeit the introduction of new concepts through time, such as stabilisation and PoC, UN peace operations keep drawing legitimacy and legal basis in the terms established upon the organisation's foundation. The UN Charter lays the groundwork for peace operations by outlining the principles and guidelines under which they operate, considering Chapters VI, VII, and VIII, the ones responsible for a legal framework for the UN's intervention in conflicts, emphasizing the importance of peaceful settlements, collective security, and regional cooperation. Throughout the history of UN peace operations, different generations have unfolded according to significant demands in the field and experiences endured by the organisation.

This research proposed the attainment to a distinctive approach considering the existence of four generations of peace operations, leaving room for a possible fifth, with each generation reflecting important milestones and shifts in a ruling peace operations paradigm for the UN. One key introduced concept among the elements arising through recent decades in this context is the concept of stabilisation, the main concern of this research.

The notion of stabilisation has gained prominence in the strategies of various international actors, including NATO, the United States, the UK, and also within the UN, albeit the lack of a precise doctrine defining it. Understanding the diverse perspectives on stabilisation is essential to comprehending its application within the UN framework. By exploring the differing conceptualisations taken by these key actors, this research aimed to shed light on the possible source of definition for what could be understood as a stabilisation approach from the perspective of the UN.

To illustrate the practical implications of this prominent conceptualisation, this study focused on two case studies: the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). By thoroughly analysing the history of conflicts in which the UN would attempt to intervene, and following in detail the evolution of peace operations' mandates, these case studies provided for an in-depth understanding of the applications of stabilisation conceptualisations in these two contexts.

Utilizing these findings as a starting point, the last chapter of this study was dedicated to more broadly delimiting the impact of stabilisation in the rationale of UN peace operations. Trends identified by institutional reports and scholars on the topic suggest that the application of stabilisation notions is closely linked with a prioritisation of statebuilding objectives related to the support and strengthening of a local host-regime, closely linked with the provision of operational or military support to said entity. Additionally, the mentioned approach also has a secondary effect of disregarding peacebuilding objectives envisioned by UN capstone doctrines, such as the promotion of human rights and more comprehensive civilian initiatives.

By examining the long-term impact on conflict-affected societies, it becomes evident that stabilisation efforts can significantly shape the trajectory of post-conflict environments in a negative manner. Understanding these effects is crucial for a review in the posture undertaken by the international community in those settings. While peacebuilding often focuses on long-term development and institution-building, stabilization strategies often prioritize establishing security and stability in the immediate aftermath of conflict, and an optimal approach should take advantage of both perspectives.

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