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SPECIAL REPORT

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ABOUT THE REPORT

The report is based on a 2014 course presented at the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) Academy for International Conflict Management and Peacebuilding on UN peace operations in the Sahel. The course was cofacilitated by the author and representatives from the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations. The report also draws from interviews conducted by the author at UN headquarters and with senior UN officials in Washington and Africa. It looks at the growing relevance to U.S. foreign policy and national security interests of UN peacekeeping in areas threatened by transnational terrorism and organized crime and calls for increased U.S. engagement and support. USIP research assistants Elizabeth Teoman, Eva Maria Smith, Emily Mella, and Kelly McKone contributed to the report.

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Robert M. Perito

UN Peacekeeping in the Sahel

Overcoming New Challenges

Summary

- In the Middle East and North Africa, the international community is confronted by a region in turmoil from conflicts driven by religious extremism, weapons proliferation, and organized crime. The implications of this development for UN efforts to reestablish sustainable security through peacekeeping have been profound. The response to this challenge has been a new generation of UN operations authorized under the peace enforcement provisions of the UN Charter.
- In Mali, the Central African Republic, and other African countries, the United Nations has worked with the African Union, European Union, and France to combat terrorists and insurgent forces, to protect civilians, and extend the authority of national governments. UN military forces have more aggressive mandates and are equipped with drones and helicopter gunships. UN Police have new authorities to restore public order and establish the rule of law.
- The UN involvement in the struggle against transnational terrorism and crime has enhanced the importance of UN peace operations, but it has revealed shortcomings in UN capabilities and created controversy among member states over the use of force in UN missions and UN involvement in the affairs of member states.
- UN engagement in this critical region has also caused the U.S. government to reevaluate the importance of UN peacekeeping to U.S. foreign policy and national security interests. The United States has launched new programs to assist regional governments and to train African peacekeepers for current and future operations.

Introduction

In the Middle East, North Africa, and the Sahel, the international community is confronted by a region in turmoil, as peaceful democratic transitions have stalled and authoritarian

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regimes and violent extremists have gone on the offensive. In the wake of the Arab Spring revolts, a new military leader has risen to power in Egypt; Syria's civil war appears headed toward a showdown between the government and the extremist Islamic State (IS); and Libya's militias, tribes, and cities have chosen sides for a civil war. Traumatic change has created a region with weak and dysfunctional governments, vast ungoverned spaces, porous borders, and jihadis, militias, and tribal forces.

The violence has occurred at a time of indecision in world affairs, when previous models for foreign intervention no longer apply.¹ The United Nations (UN) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) will not repeat the large-scale peace operations conducted in Bosnia and Kosovo during the 1990s. The United States is unlikely to engage in operations on the scale of Iraq and Afghanistan. These operations were born of euphoric confidence in the superiority of the Western democratic model after the fall of the Soviet Union and were paid for by growing economies.² That confidence has vanished in a time of economic recession and Russian resurgence. At the United Nations on September 24, 2013, President Barack Obama said the United States now has a "hard-earned humility" about its ability to determine events in other countries.³

Beyond a crisis in confidence, the United States is restrained by uncertainty about how to deal with three new drivers of conflict that have emerged in the region: religious extremism, weapons proliferation, and organized crime. In his remarks before the Munich Security Conference on February 1, 2014, Secretary of State John Kerry said, "We are facing threats of terrorism and untamed growth in radical sectarianism and religious extremism, which increase the challenge of failing states and the vacuums they leave behind."⁴ The IS declaration of an Islamic caliphate in Iraq and Syria⁵ marked a turning point in the decade-long war between Iraqi Sunni and Shiite Muslims and their patrons in the Gulf States and Iran. This conflict is part of a historic sectarian struggle and a new scramble for power in the aftermath of the Arab Spring.⁶ Concurrently, the franchising of al-Qaeda-brand jihadis has provided legitimacy, license, and motivation to groups across northern Africa and the Sahel. A RAND study described al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) as indistinguishable from other criminal gangs engaged in kidnapping and cigarette smuggling before its leader announced his allegiance to al-Qaeda.⁷ In the Central African Republic (CAR), armed groups of Muslims and Christians engaged in murderous clashes spurred by political and economic grievances. The country is now divided along sectarian lines; a historic tradition of peaceful coexistence has been wiped away.⁸

The spread of religious extremism has coincided with the proliferation of weapons looted from Libyan arms depots and arms smuggled into Syria by the Gulf States. In Libya, weapons proliferation has supported the rise of rival militias, terrorists, and tribal forces that have coalesced into Islamist and secular armed factions backing rival governments, parliaments, and central bank governors, supported by foreign patrons that have intervened militarily in the conflict.⁹ Proliferation of the so-called Libyan package—a rocket-propelled grenade launcher, an AK-47, and a handgun—has changed the balance of power where governments have lost the monopoly on the use of force. Weapons proliferation also has fueled the rise of terrorist groups operating in northern Mali, Nigeria, and other parts of the Sahel. Boko Haram has declared an Islamic state in northern Nigeria, engaged in open war against the government and Christian communities, and poses a growing threat to neighboring states.¹⁰

Religious extremists and armed groups have been funded by the expansion of organized crime, particularly trafficking in drugs, weapons, and people. Historically, the Sahel was vulnerable to cross-border smuggling due to weak governance, endemic corruption, grinding poverty, and uncontrolled borders.¹¹ Regional governments tolerated this activity, allowing tribes to earn a living from smuggling as an alternative to providing development assistance.

This changed after the Algerian civil war, the proliferation of weapons from Libya, and the rise of cocaine trafficking from West Africa. The mix of narcotics, weapons, and ideology created a dangerous trade in high-value commodities that generates illicit wealth and provides financial resources for insurgent and terrorist activities. Along the region's porous borders, where guns were once a rarity and smugglers traded in gasoline, cigarettes, and old clothes, new heavily armed and well-financed groups now pose a serious challenge to poorly trained and equipped government patrols.

A New Environment for UN Peace Operations

The implications of the regional turmoil for UN efforts to reestablish sustainable security, promote effective governance, and support the rule of law are profound. The deployment of a UN peacekeeping mission to Mali has raised concerns about whether the United Nations is prepared to operate in areas threatened by transnational terrorist groups linked to al-Qaeda and IS. A UN Foundation–led study conducted at Princeton University noted that Islamist terrorist organizations pose a fundamentally different challenge than armed groups the United Nations has faced in the past. Their objectives, regional and global reach, and designation of the United Nations as a priority target make the threat to UN operations far more formidable.¹²

Extremist Islamist groups challenge the existing world order, the UN Charter, and the UN state-centric structure. The 1648 Peace of Westphalia, which ended the Thirty Years War, created an international order based on individual and sovereign nation-states. The United Nations is an international organization composed of member states. In contrast, IS and al-Qaeda seek to establish a global caliphate that would replace the existing international state structure.¹³ Extremist Islamist groups ignore national borders and can disperse and reassemble in vast areas like the Sahel that are beyond the control of national governments.

Previous UN efforts to resolve international disputes involved groups with objectives that fell within the parameters of the existing state system. National liberation movements wanted to seize control of existing states or establish new ones that would join the international community. That extremist Islamist groups are driven by an alternative view of world order makes them reject compromise based on political concessions. Their objectives are irreconcilable with traditional UN approaches to negotiated solutions.

In addition to challenging the existing world order, transnational Islamist terrorists reject international law and internationally recognized human rights. Instead they seek to impose a new moral order based upon a radical interpretation of sharia that excludes non-believers and imposes severe restraints on women. UN appeals based on respect for UN conventions on human rights and fundamental freedoms have no effect. Transnational terrorist groups also reject humanitarian law and routinely target nongovernmental organizations that provide relief and development assistance. These groups have proven deaf to appeals made on humanitarian grounds and have justified murdering prisoners and enslaving women based on their own interpretations of religious texts.

That transnational Islamist terrorist organizations receive funding for providing protection for drug shipments and other services—as well as directly engaging in criminal activities, such as kidnapping international workers for ransom—acts as a conflict multiplier by financing spoilers, promoting corruption, and delegitimizing local government officials and security forces. UN Police, whose primary mission is restoring public order, cannot control cross-border trafficking or counter sophisticated criminal organizations based outside their mission area. On December 19, 2014, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2195 (2014) that acknowledged the threat posed to UN missions and regional states in North

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Africa and the Sahel from illicit trafficking in arms, persons, drugs, and artifacts. The resolution called for international action to break the links between terrorists and international organized crime.¹⁴

Meanwhile, Islamist extremist groups have attacked UN facilities and killed UN personnel. On October 3, 2014, nine UN peacekeepers were killed when militant gunmen ambushed their convoy. This incident brought the number of UN troops killed in Mali to thirty, with over ninety wounded since the start of the UN mission.¹⁵ Attacks on UN troops and police have negatively affected the willingness of troop contributing countries (TCCs) to contribute forces to UN missions. This has required the United Nations to rely on the African Union (AU) and subregional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) that see threats to their national interests and are willing to engage in combat operations and suffer casualties.

Terrorist attacks on the United Nations have affected the organization's ability to recruit staff and interact with local counterparts. The UN response has been to restrict staff to heavily fortified compounds or locate them in neighboring countries and rely on short visits and electronic communications. The situation has required the United Nations to harden its sites, deploy guard forces, travel in armored vehicles, and rely on helicopter transport. This militarization of UN field missions contradicts the public image that the United Nations would like to project. It also makes it difficult for local officials and civil society to visit UN compounds and interact with UN advisers, an essential element in capacity building and development programs.

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A New U.S. Perspective on North Africa, the Sahel, and UN Peacekeeping

The emergence of North Africa and the Sahel as a nexus for transnational terrorism and organized crime has caused the United States to focus on the region and reevaluate the importance of UN peacekeeping to U.S. foreign policy and national security interests. In his May 28, 2014, graduation speech at West Point, President Obama said the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan would enable Washington to address emerging threats in the Middle East and North Africa.¹⁶ On August 6, 2014, during the African Summit in Washington DC, President Obama announced the Security Governance Initiative (SGI), a partnership with six African nations—Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Tunisia. The SGI would offer a comprehensive approach to countering terrorist groups and illicit trafficking in drugs, weapons, and people. It also would improve the capacity of security sector institutions to protect citizens and confront challenges with integrity and accountability.¹⁷

On the same day, the White House announced that the United States would spend \$550 million to help African nations develop peacekeeping forces that could deploy rapidly as part of an AU or UN peacekeeping force. In partnership with Senegal, Ghana, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda, Samantha Powers, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, said the United States would help the United Nations and the AU deal with threats to African countries posed by terrorist groups like al-Shabaab and Boko Haram.¹⁸ The White House press release noted that the United States was the largest financial contributor to UN peacekeeping with a fiscal year 2015 budget request of \$2.9 billion, or 28 percent of the peacekeeping budget. The new program would build upon the U.S. Global Peace Operations Initiative and the Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance Program that trained 248,000 African peacekeeping troops and the International Police Peacekeeping Operations Support program that trained and equipped 1,100 African UN Police before their deployment to Sudan and Mali.¹⁹

On September 26, 2014, Vice President Joe Biden joined Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in cohosting a summit meeting in New York on UN peacekeeping. Vice President Biden said

that the United States viewed UN peacekeeping as more important than ever for maintaining international peace and security and strongly supported the UN peacekeepers who are deployed in larger numbers and in more challenging environments than ever before.²⁰ The secretary-general said that with 130,000 troops, police, and civilian staff deployed in sixteen missions, and a total budget of over \$7 billion, UN peacekeeping efforts were at a historic high. The environments UN personnel were operating in required enhanced capacity for rapid deployment, air and land mobility, medical support, countering asymmetrical warfare, and improved intelligence against terrorism and organized crime. The secretary-general announced the appointment of a new High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations to better understand these challenges and comprehensively assess UN peacekeeping today and the requirements for the future. The panel will be led by Nobel Peace laureate and former Timor-Leste head of state José Ramos-Horta. It is to report in September 2015 on the fifteenth anniversary of the Brahimi Report, the last comprehensive evaluation of UN peacekeeping.²¹

A New Set of Challenges for UN Peacekeeping

Renewed U.S. interest in peacekeeping and the secretary-general's call for an assessment come in response to changes that occurred in UN peacekeeping over the past decade. These changes have made UN peacekeeping more relevant to U.S. national security interests, but they have involved areas where it is more politically and practically challenging for the United Nations to operate. UN peace operations in North Africa and the Sahel have created tensions within the organization and revealed shortcomings in UN authorities and capabilities. In the 1990s, UN peace operations in the Balkans, Haiti, and Central America were conducted in small countries that were readily accessible and shared Western values. In most cases, the UN missions were deployed to implement peace agreements that assured there was a peace to keep. While these operations were challenging, their mandates were within the United Nations' traditional authority and existing capability. The new generation of peacekeeping operations—missions established in Sudan, Mali, the Central African Republic, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)—presents political, cultural, and geographic challenges that have required the United Nations to push the limits of its authority and develop new capabilities.

The most recent UN peace operations are taking place in large countries with harsh terrain and vast expanses. They are located in the interior of the African continent, where it can be difficult to access widely scattered, endangered populations. They present extreme logistical challenges for deploying multinational missions that require nearly everything, from food and water to housing and munitions, to be externally supplied. Away from a few metropolitan centers, the countries have poor internal communications, a lack of roads, few airports, and unmarked and porous borders. In rural areas, the countries have traditional, tribally-based societies with generally low levels of education and high levels of poverty. Populations are primarily Muslim, but with historic Christian minorities. The countries have little experience with democracy, free elections, and issue-based political parties. Portions of the populations may have distinctly different views about the best way to organize society.

Contemporary UN peacekeeping missions occur in places where there is little or no peace to keep and high levels of violence. The new generation of peace operations has been authorized under the peace enforcement provisions of the UN Charter (Chapter VII), which authorize the Security Council to deploy armed forces without the consent of parties in a conflict to restore peace and security. Previous UN peacekeeping missions were conducted under Chapter VI, which authorizes the United Nations to intervene with the consent of

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the parties to the conflict, normally contained in a diplomatic agreement. The robust peace operations in Bosnia and Kosovo, which included peacebuilding, administrative, and law enforcement activities, were said to constitute Chapter 6.5 missions. The growing involvement of the AU and subregional organizations in African peacekeeping has involved Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, which enables the Security Council to authorize regional organizations to undertake peace operations.²² The charter does not contain the term peacekeeping. Its drafters expected future international conflicts to occur between countries; the guiding concept was collective defense against World War II–style aggression. No thought was given to UN involvement in intrastate conflict, especially involving member states.

The United States and Western countries have promoted the aggressive interpretation of the UN Charter. The Russians, Chinese, and the Non-Aligned Movement have resisted it. These countries demand that the United Nations continue to honor the three core principles that have governed UN peacekeeping: consent of the parties, particularly the host government; impartiality; and nonuse of force except in self-defense and defense of the mandate. They point to the ever-widening gap between these principles, which appeared in the Security Council resolutions authorizing the most recent UN missions, and actual practice in the field. Major TCCs—India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Ethiopia—have opposed exceeding the United Nations’ traditional peacekeeping roles of monitoring and training. These countries accuse Western Security Council members and major funders, such as Japan, of placing UN forces at risk while being unwilling to put their own troops in harm’s way.

While the controversy simmers, UN mandates to impose peace in conflict zones require military forces that are professionally competent and willing to fight in difficult terrain and inhospitable conditions. The troops must be equipped for asymmetrical warfare. They need vehicles resistant to improvised explosive devices, body armor, and modern assault rifles. They must have mobility, airlift, and logistic support. The missions entail unique medical challenges, from pandemics like the Ebola outbreak to battlefield medical evacuations and sophisticated care for wounds from bomb attacks. The current annual UN demand for 130,000 uniformed personnel to staff missions worldwide creates massive requirements for recruitment and transport of contingents. That troops from many countries serve on six-month rotations exacerbates the problem.

The United Nations has met the need for forces that can defend themselves against heavily armed terrorists and tribal militias in two ways. First, as mentioned above, it has relied upon the AU and subregional organizations such as ECOWAS to provide combat forces and conduct military operations, while the United Nations provides authorization, funding, administrative support, and training. This was the case early on in Mali and the Central African Republic and currently in Somalia. AU troop contributors in Somalia—Kenya, Uganda, and Burundi—have suffered heavy casualties in fighting against al-Shabaab, including seventy-six Burundian soldiers killed in a single incident in 2011. However, the reliance on regional organizations and subregional forces has brought its own problems. AU troops are generally less well trained, armed, and equipped than UN military units. There have also been problems with partisanship and deportment. In the Central African Republic, there were allegations that Chadian AU units sided with Muslim fighters, attacked refugees, and included child soldiers.²³

Alternatively, the United Nations has partnered with European militaries—primarily France, which provided five thousand troops to stop the AQIM advance in northern Mali. French troops operated under a Security Council mandate to stabilize population centers in northern Mali and prevent the return of armed elements.²⁴ After two months of fighting in early 2013, Operation Serval had driven Islamist militants from northern Mali cities, destroyed terrorist bases, and captured weapons and equipment. Subsequently, the French

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redistributed their forces to other Sahel countries, but a residual force of sixteen hundred conducted operations with the Malian army to prevent the terrorists' return.²⁵ On December 11, 2014, French troops killed the military commander and cofounder of the Islamist Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa, a major blow to the group's operations.²⁶

The UN Response to New Environments and Security Challenges

Beyond the reliance on regional and European troop contributors, the United Nations has introduced several innovations to deal with the challenges of the new peacekeeping environment, including a UN combat brigade, unarmed drones, and helicopter gunships. The United Nations has also sought out force enablers, such as engineer and medical units, communications and logistics capabilities, strategic and tactical intelligence units, special operations forces, formed police units, and women peacekeepers.

Force Intervention Brigade

In November 2013, the Security Council authorized the first UN offensive combat force to defeat rebel militias that had paralyzed the eastern Congo and preyed on civilians. The Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) was composed of three thousand soldiers from South Africa, Malawi, and Tanzania and was led by Brazilian Lieutenant General Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz, who had used UN military forces to pacify the slums of Haiti in 2007. Regional states that had a national security interest in pacifying areas on their borders provided troop contingents for combat operations. In its first test, operating in support of DRC government troops, the FIB was credited with quickly defeating the M23 Movement, a militia regarded as the most powerful rebel force. The participation of South African special forces armed with sophisticated, high-powered weapons quickly reversed the military equation that previously had favored the rebels.²⁷

The FIB's success sparked a UN debate about the use of combat forces in peace operations. Supporters argued that the FIB amounted to a model for defeating armed groups that threatened civilians and UN personnel that could apply in other missions. Opponents complained that the FIB endangered other UN military forces in the DRC that operated under a traditional peacekeeping mandate and were unprepared for combat. Humanitarian groups voiced concerns that the FIB's combatant status would make foreign assistance workers potential targets. Russia questioned whether the FIB violated the core peacekeeping principles of impartiality and nonuse of force. International law experts argued that the FIB made the United Nations a party to the conflict, undercutting the legal protection afforded peacekeepers based on their neutrality.²⁸

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles

In the DRC, Mali, and Central African Republic, the United Nations introduced unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs)—that is, drones—to track militias, provide forward intelligence to UN patrols operating in hostile environments, and document refugee movements. In the DRC, drones enabled UN forces to conduct surveillance over mountainous jungle regions that were inaccessible to ground reconnaissance but provided safe havens for rebel forces. UAVs freed scarce piloted air assets for other duties. They also deterred armed groups, which curtailed operations to avoid discovery. In Mali, UN, French, and Dutch forces benefited from U.S. drones that operated from bases in neighboring Chad. Unarmed drones could patrol vast desert stretches to detect terrorist movements and monitor illicit trafficking.²⁹

Helicopter Gunships

In spring 2014, the Netherlands sent four AH-64D Apache attack helicopter gunships and three CH-47 Chinook transport helicopters to Mali. The aircraft provided the UN mission with reconnaissance capability, fire support, transportation, and medical evacuation. The Dutch also sent 378 troops, including special forces, crew members, and intelligence analysts, to protect, operate, and maintain the helicopters and to process information obtained from surveillance missions.³⁰ UN operations in Africa are critically short of helicopters, a significant disadvantage for peacekeepers operating without situational awareness and fire support. The United Nations hoped other NATO nations would follow the Dutch lead and transfer equipment and personnel from Afghanistan. For the Netherlands, the Mali mission enabled the Dutch military to maintain the capability to deploy military units abroad, a capacity that might be lost after the Afghanistan withdrawal. On January 21, 2015, UN Dutch helicopter gunships carried out their first airstrikes in Mali, attacking Tuareg rebels who had shelled peacekeepers in the town of Tabankort. The United Nations said the action was consistent with the mandate of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali to protect civilians and UN personnel.³¹

Intelligence Collection

Historically, member states have balked at providing the United Nations with an intelligence-collection mandate at either the strategic (headquarters) or operational (field) level. However, the increased size, length, and complexity of peacekeeping operations, compounded by the severe security threats to UN personnel, made a stronger UN intelligence capability necessary and increasingly acceptable. In 2005, the United Nations created a new multidisciplinary structure, the Joint Mission Analysis Centre (JMAC), with a mandate to produce mission-wide integrated intelligence for the senior management of peacekeeping missions. The model is unique in that JMAC teams are composed of military, police, and civilian team members, who share the same physical office space and exchange information. They give UN forces integrated and finished intelligence as a basis for their operations.

Women Peacekeepers

There is no question that women peacekeepers enhance the effectiveness of UN peace operations. The presence of women in UN military and police forces improves situational awareness and the acceptance of and access to local communities. Women peacekeepers can undertake sensitive security roles, such as conducting body searches that are off-limits to men in traditional societies. They are also more effective at working with victims of gender-based violence and with women combatants, prisoners, and war victims. The all-women formed police units from India and Bangladesh serving in Liberia and the DRC are perhaps the most visible examples of women in peacekeeping.³²

Case Study: Mali

The military challenges and innovations that characterize the new generations of UN peace operations are exemplified in UN involvement in Mali. On December 20, 2012, the Security Council adopted Resolution 2085,³³ authorizing deployment of the AU-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) to assist Malian defense forces in stabilizing the country. At that point, Islamist terrorists and Tuareg insurgents had seized control in northern Mali, and a military coup had toppled the government in Bamako. Almost immediately, however, Islamist terrorist forces began moving south, capturing the city of Konna and prompting Mali's interim president, Dioncounda Traoré, to request French military intervention.³⁴ On

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January 11, 2013, French president François Hollande launched Operation Serval to repel the terrorist advance. Some eighteen hundred French troops deployed from Burkina Faso, Chad, and the Ivory Coast. On January 29, AFISMA forces deployed from Niger to meet French and Malian forces in Kidal. Between January 26 and mid-February, the combined force recaptured the principal northern cities of Gao, Timbuktu, Kidal, and Tessalit. The terrorists and insurgents retreated into the mountains and switched to guerilla tactics. The French-led coalition continued to launch air strikes and by April started rebuilding the Malian military and reinstating government control. The European Union sent two hundred trainers to enhance the capabilities of the Malian police and armed forces.

Given the successes of the French and AFISMA forces, interim president Traoré on February 12, 2013, requested the United Nations transform AFISMA into a UN peacekeeping operation.³⁵ On April 25, 2013, the Security Council passed Resolution 2100, authorizing the UN Multi-dimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), a Chapter VII peace enforcement mission that would assist the Malian government in implementing its plans for national reconciliation.³⁶ On July 1, 2013, MINUSMA took over AFISMA's operations, retaining many of its personnel. The new mission would have 11,200 troops and 1,440 police; most of its personnel would be stationed in the north with the mission headquarters in Bamako.

At U.S. and French insistence, Mali held presidential elections at the end of July 2013 despite indications that the country was ill prepared.³⁷ Many Tuareg boycotted the election because of poor security and their aspirations for an independent state. After failing to achieve a majority on the initial ballot, former prime minister Ibrahim Boubacar Keita won an August 2013 runoff. In May 2014, the situation in the north took a negative turn when rebels attacked Kidal during a visit by Mali's vice president and the Malian army withdrew with heavy losses after failing to recapture the city. May also marked the beginning of a series of targeted attacks on UN forces. The drawdown of French forces at the end of Operation Serval contributed to increased instability.

On June 25, 2014, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2164, which extended MINUSMA and expanded its mandate, but the mission encountered difficulties.³⁸ There was a three-month gap in leadership between the departure of Bert Koenders and the appointment of former Tunisian foreign minister Mongi Hamdi.³⁹ Military and police deployments lagged, creating a shortfall of 3,100 uniformed personnel.⁴⁰ Mali experienced an Ebola scare that affected operations and recruiting. A Guinea-formed police unit was delayed because Senegalese trainers were afraid of contracting the disease. In November, the fourth round of Algerian-mediated peace talks resulted in a draft peace and reconciliation agreement, but the sides remained far apart on the fundamental issues of federalism and allowing greater autonomy for the North.⁴¹ Meanwhile armed clashes occurred between the pro-government Imghad and Allies Tuareg Self-Defense Group (GATIA) militia and Tuareg rebels and between French troops and Islamist insurgents. On December 11, French troops killed the leader of the jihadist Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa; on February 3, a French operation reportedly killed twelve extremists. UN helicopter gunships were in action against Tuareg fighters attempting to retake the town of Tabankort from the GATIA.⁴²

UN Initiatives for Establishing Public Safety and Justice

Of all the areas in which the United Nations has achieved progress in organizing and conducting peace operations, the increased capacity to protect civilians and provide justice stands out. This has involved the reorganization of the UN Secretariat, adoption of new UN principles and doctrines, expansion of Security Council mandates, and deployment of UN armed police units and experts on courts and prisons. In the aftermath of conflict and

violent regime change, the goal for both new governments and the United Nations is to provide security and justice for local citizens by establishing police, courts, and prisons. The immediate need is to make it possible for people to go about their daily affairs without fear and to create judicial institutions that can resolve disputes peacefully. If these basic needs are not met, combatants may refuse to relinquish their arms, and people may not trust the new government institutions. Extremist groups may impose summary justice. In Libya, as militias refuse to disarm and the public distrusts the national government, UN-led peace talks are the last chance of avoiding civil war.⁴³

In 2000, the landmark Brahimi Report recommended that the United Nations take an integrated, holistic approach to establishing the rule of law in peace operations.⁴⁴ In 2007, the new Department of Peacekeeping Operations' Office of the Rule of Law and Security Institutions (OROLSI) brought together the UN Police Division; the Criminal Law and Judicial Advisory Service; the Security Sector Reform Unit; the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Section; and the Mine Action Service.⁴⁵ OROLSI colocated UN practitioners concerned with police, courts, and prisons, the three parts of the criminal justice system. Including the Security Sector Reform Unit provided capacity to take a comprehensive view of restoring the civilian security institutions in postconflict states. In 2012, the secretary-general combined the relevant parts of OROLSI with their counterparts in the UN Development Program to create the Global Focal Point (GFP), a one-stop shop for rule of law issues. At UN headquarters, the GFP provided rapid, unified responses to requests from the field for police and justice programs.⁴⁶

Innovations in the UN Secretariat were accompanied by improvements in field operations. Over the past two decades, UN Police have become a standard feature of UN peacekeeping missions, second in numbers only to UN military forces. Currently, 12,513 UN Police are serving in sixteen UN peace operations, compared with only 1,677 police twenty years ago. With greater numbers there has been a growth in responsibilities. The era when UN Police simply monitored local police and served as role models is over. Today UN Police have three primary missions: interim policing and law enforcement; operational support, that is, maintaining public order, riot control, and citizen protection; and reform, reconstruction, and rebuilding entire police services. UN Police missions operate in more complex political, cultural, and social environments. UN Police confront an unprecedented set of security challenges. The emergence of transnational terrorism and organized crime has required UN Police to work with INTERPOL and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and to collect and use police intelligence in conducting operations. UN Police forces now include specialists in counterterrorism and organized crime, forensics, cybercrime, gender-based violence, and human trafficking.⁴⁷

Despite progress, UN policing faces challenges. Member states cannot provide enough police officers who meet UN standards, leaving over three thousand positions authorized by the Security Council unfilled. This shortfall has meant that more than half of UN Police now serve in armed, formed police units (gendarmes), as only unit commanders must satisfy recruiting requirements—primarily the ability to speak the mission language (usually English or French). While responsibilities have increased, the capability of UN Police forces has declined over the past decade due to a sharp drop in the number of U.S. and European personnel and a surge in numbers from South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa.⁴⁸ To help correct these problems, on February 2, 2014, the UN Police Division published the first doctrine on “UN Police in Peacekeeping Operations and Special Political Missions” to make clear to police-contributing states the roles and missions that UN Police should be able to perform.⁴⁹ On November 20, 2014, the Security Council adopted its first resolution on UN policing, which called upon member states to contribute “professional police with the necessary skills, equipment, and experience to implement mission mandates,” including language.⁵⁰

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Beyond the need to counter transnational terrorism and crime, the expansion of UN Police responsibilities has reflected the international community's decision to protect civilians in conflict states even from their own governments. The Rwandan genocide; the massacre at Srebrenica, Bosnia; and the mass killings in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge resulted in a series of initiatives in response. In 2004, the AU Peace and Security Council decided to replace the principle of noninterference in the internal affairs of sovereign states with the principle of nonindifference to the suffering of civilians. In turn, the UN High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change endorsed the norm of a responsibility to protect (R2P) in the event of large-scale killing that a sovereign government was unable or unwilling to stop. In 2005, the UN World Summit accepted R2P, authorizing the Security Council to conduct military intervention against any government that failed to protect its people against genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. In addition to adopting the R2P principle, the Security Council has given increased attention to the responsibility to protect civilians in conflict, a well-established concept of international law. Beginning with resolutions authorizing interventions in Darfur and Libya, the Security Council authorized member states to take "all necessary measures" to protect civilians. Within hours of adopting Security Council Resolution 1973 (3/27/2011) authorizing military intervention in Libya, NATO aircraft destroyed Muammar Gaddafi's tank columns that were poised to attack the city of Benghazi.⁵¹

Case Study: Central African Republic

The UN responsibility to protect civilians in conflict and the enhanced role of police in peace operations have been central factors in the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). In 2012, a coalition of Muslim rebel factions, called the Séléka, united over frustrations with President François Bozizé's failure to improve development and security in the northern part of the country. They argued that the central government discriminated against and excluded them and accused Bozizé of failing to honor a 2007 peace agreement that promised aid and jobs for former rebels.⁵² Joined by fighters from Chad, Sudan, and Uganda, the group seized the capital of Bangui and ousted Bozizé in March 2013. A Séléka leader, Michel Djotodia, declared himself president. With no centralized command structure or ideology, the Séléka regime quickly fractured, and combatants engaged in waves of violence and human rights violations against the country's Christian majority.

In response to the attacks, Christians in the north formed armed militias to fight the Séléka. These groups called themselves the anti-Balaka, the word meaning machete in Sango, the local lingua franca. Violence spread as anti-Balaka forces began targeting Muslims generally, rather than just Séléka fighters.⁵³ While combatants divided along sectarian lines, the conflict, which was fought between marauding disorganized bands, was more the result of longstanding economic and political grievances than religious differences. In January 2014, President Djotodia bowed to international and domestic pressure and stepped down. A transitional assembly elected Catherine Samba-Panza as interim president until elections could be organized.⁵⁴ The former mayor of Bangui, Samba-Panza appointed a technocrat cabinet, but the government largely ceased to function and could not stop the violence.⁵⁵ Between 2013 and 2014 the country's military, police, and court system collapsed; fighters from all factions operated with impunity.

In December 2013, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution authorizing the AU-led Mission Internationale de Soutien à la Centrafrique sous Conduite Africaine (MISCA) to stabilize the country. The resolution allowed MISCA and French troops already stationed in the country to "use all necessary means" to restore security, protect civilians, and enable humanitarian assistance.⁵⁶ The European Union also launched a peacekeeping force of one thousand troops, authorized to stay for six months.⁵⁷ In April 2014, there were five

thousand AU troops, one thousand European Union troops, and two thousand French troops operating in the country, but they were unable to stop the fighting and stem the country's humanitarian crisis.⁵⁸ MISCA lacked not only adequate military and police forces but also the civilian components required to address the crisis.

On September 15, 2014, MINUSCA took over MISCA's responsibilities with a mandate to protect civilians and stabilize the country and an authorized strength of ten thousand military and two thousand police personnel.⁵⁹ The mission's mandate emphasized supporting transitional authorities in policing the country and rebuilding the national judicial system to restore the rule of law.⁶⁰ In a letter to the Security Council on April 8, 2014, interim president Samba-Panza requested this emphasis on police and justice, inviting the United Nations to accept temporary authority to maintain law and order by arresting and detaining criminals.⁶¹ The Security Council rejected the offer to take sole responsibility for law enforcement, but it did provide MINUSCA with the authority to take "urgent temporary measures" to maintain law and order and fight impunity. As the country lacked operational police, courts, and prisons, it was clear the UN mission needed to re-create these institutions to restore stability. UN Police were authorized to "monitor, help investigate and report publicly and to the Security Council on violations of international humanitarian law and on abuses and violations of human rights committed throughout CAR." Strict limitations were placed on this authority. It applied only when national forces were not present or operational, on a temporary and exceptional basis, without creating a precedent, and without prejudice to the established principles of peace operations.⁶²

The application of Security Council authority in practice highlighted the new importance and capacity of UN Police but also the limits of the United Nations' ability to assist the entire criminal justice system. When MINUSCA became fully operational on September 15, 2014, a continuing cycle of provocations and reprisals by sectarian and criminal groups required the deployment of most UN military forces to rural areas. In the capital, the United Nations created the Bangui Task Force, assigning primacy for maintaining security to the UN Police and taking the unusual step of placing remaining military units under police command. From October 7 to 16, the task force was tested by an outbreak of anti-Balaka attacks on Muslims that also targeted UN, European Union, and French personnel. The violence left twelve dead, including two UN peacekeepers, and 230 injured. In MINUSCA's first ninety days, UN Police focused on arresting so-called high-value suspects that were responsible for organizing violence, but they also made over two hundred arrests for a range of crimes from murder to weapons possession. Those arrested were turned over to Central African Republic authorities, but the United Nations remained responsible for ensuring their safety. On October 20, 2014, a Central African Republic judicial official requested that MINUSCA arrest a list of fifty-five persons for inciting the October violence. This action raised the issue of the relationship between the UN Police and the Central African Republic judiciary that is yet to be resolved.⁶³

The arrest of offenders highlighted the fact that effective law enforcement requires all three parts of the justice system—police, courts, and prisons. In the Central African Republic, local police scattered, courts were in ruins, and only four of the country's thirty-eight prisons were intact; even these were insecure and in deplorable condition. MINUSCA established a working group with the justice ministry to develop the legislation required to create a special criminal court composed of local and internationally recruited magistrates that would be selected by the Central African Republic but funded by the United Nations from donor contributions. To assist the court, the working group was tasked to develop legislation to create a national special investigative cell to investigate and prosecute serious crimes under national law. At the same time, MINUSCA began the task of reconstituting the local police, rehabilitating eight police stations and three gendarme brigades in Bangui with

the assistance of the European Union. Work on these initiatives has proceeded slowly, while there has been a blurring of the line between ongoing criminal and political violence. This has increased the burden on the UN Police, which at year's end had only 60 percent of their authorized complement of eighteen hundred officers.⁶⁴ Establishing the rule of law in the Central African Republic remains a work in progress.

Conclusion

The implications of the growing involvement of the United Nations and United States in North Africa and the Sahel are profound. New UN peace operations have involved the United Nations directly in the struggle against transnational Islamist terrorism, weapons proliferation, and illicit trafficking by international organized crime. The U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan has brought a shift of attention to emerging challenges in an area that previously received little attention. The convergence of interests in establishing sustainable security, promoting effective governance, and instituting the rule of law has created new opportunities for cooperation but also new challenges. As a permanent member of the Security Council and the largest contributor to UN peace operations, the United States is critically positioned to provide policy guidance and material support to UN operations. The United States will be required to respond to political challenges from member states that oppose expanded UN mandates and to lend its expertise and practical capabilities to UN forces that are operating in harsh and dangerous environments. Initially the United States should focus on the work of the new High-Level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations, which will determine the direction and capabilities of UN peacekeeping for the future. The United States should help shape the report's content and recommendations. At the same time, it must ensure that ongoing peace operations set useful precedents and can accomplish their objectives.

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