

# IMAGINING THE FUTURE OF PEACE OPERATIONS

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## INTRODUCTION

The strategic direction of peace operations will take on great importance in the coming years. Peace operations are being called on more frequently to deploy to complex and active conflict zones while at the same time facing an increasing complexity of tasks and expectations. The findings of the UN's 2015 High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO), which are now being implemented, called for holistic and tailored operations enabled by timely and flexible partnerships among key global stakeholders and mandating institutions.

Peace operations have direct relevance to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 and their ability to effectively provide peace and stability in conflict-affected countries indirectly influences performance on the other SDGs. This brief examines the challenges confronting modern peace operations and recommends actions that would reduce the impact thereof.

## FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

The largest and most expensive UN peacekeeping operations (PKO) today are deployed on the African continent. The UN and African Union (AU) peace operations in Africa are constantly confronted with insufficient funding. While the AU Commission is developing a roadmap to implement its 2015 decision that African member states shall fund up to 25 per cent of its peace operations by 2020, the HIPPO report urges the international community to agree on a financing modality that would cover 75 per cent of the costs. The policy process going forward must seek agreement on sustainable financing modalities, whether from the UN assessed contributions budget and/or partners and donors. On one hand, since the European Union (EU) is scaling down its co-funding through the Africa Peace Facility mechanism, the financial situation of PKOs could become critical. On the other hand, emerging actors such as China and Indonesia are willing to increase their financial contributions to UN peace operations. It is important for future peace operations that the UN embrace these new geographic financing shifts.

The inadequacy of resources available for peace operations has known consequences on the number and severity of troop and police casualties. For instance, improvised explosive device-related fatalities are higher among African peace operations troops than among Europeans deployed in UN peace operations, in part because the UN is better equipped to withstand the attacks. Moreover, insufficient force enablers make African countries dependent on their many partners and donors for technical and strategic airlifts and resources.

Mission roles and mandates also present challenges. To date, peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities have operated in different UN spheres and this fragmentation has negatively impacted their implementation. The Liberia disarmament, demobilisation, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR) programme, for example, shows how peace operations sometimes lose speed and do not smoothly transition to peacebuilding activities. As seen in Libya, the Central African Republic and Somalia, peace operations also risk being co-opted into the counterinsurgency (COIN) and countering violent extremism (CVE) operations. Although there is consensus that violent extremism threatens global peace and security, there is disagreement about the appropriate responses and the actors best suited to implement them. The HIPPO report clearly states, 'the Panel believes that United Nations peacekeeping missions, owing to their composition and character, are not suited to engage in military counter-terrorism operations'. How the HIPPO findings will be incorporated into UN peace operations is yet to be determined. The ongo-



ing debate is focused on how best to optimize the comparative advantages of regional organizations, including the possibility that African regional actors could take on counterinsurgency and CVE efforts.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Follow-through on proposed reforms that have not yet been implemented.

- Extensive reviews of UN peace operations, including the HIPPO report, a mini-review on UN policing, and the Global Study on Resolution 1325, have already generated important recommendations.
- To the extent that it could put constructive pressure on the UN Security Council, generate additional external analysis to confirm or deny the need to implement recommendations already put forth in the aforementioned UN reviews.

### 2. Integrate peace operations and their various components both horizontally and vertically within related policy frameworks and coordinate efforts amongst key stakeholders.

- Mobilize political support for peace operations as a tool to facilitate implementation of the 2030 Agenda, given that political dynamics are constantly changing among the Security Council's Permanent Representatives.
- Pick 'low-hanging fruit' when it comes to peacebuilding within the UN framework. Find ways to include peacebuilding in peace operations mandates in a way that does not require reform. In certain circumstances, it may be beneficial to incorporate peacebuilding activities into peacekeeping mandates, while in others there may be strong reasons to keep the roles and responsibilities separate.
- Although the primary responsibility for peace operations rests with the UN Security Council, the international community needs to recognize the abilities of the European Union, African Union and other regional organizations and raise awareness about their practical responsibilities, based on Chapter VIII of the UN Charter.
- Improve linkages between uniformed missions and other types of missions.
- Connect peace operations with the humanitarian operations. This includes enhancing knowledge about and respect for international humanitarian law among troop-contributing countries and police-contributing countries.

### 3. Peace operations should espouse a 'people-centred' approach.

- Link UN peace operations to the people most in need of support and to strengthen structures of 'active agents of security' in-country. Civil society organizations can play a significant role in articulating local perspectives, needs and interests. Women, youth and opposition groups should be consulted with regard to peace operations at the local and regional levels.
- Pay attention to opportunities and risks for local actors. Peace operations need to identify means of developing closer connections with communities without compromising the security of local actors. Given the limits of engagement by external actors, it is important to empower local actors to support peace within their own communities. For locals, engaging with external actors is a security risk.
- Peacekeeping troops must be trained to a certain standard, particularly around preventing sexual exploitation and abuse.