

Defining the

# BOUNDARIES

of UN Stabilization Missions

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STIMSON

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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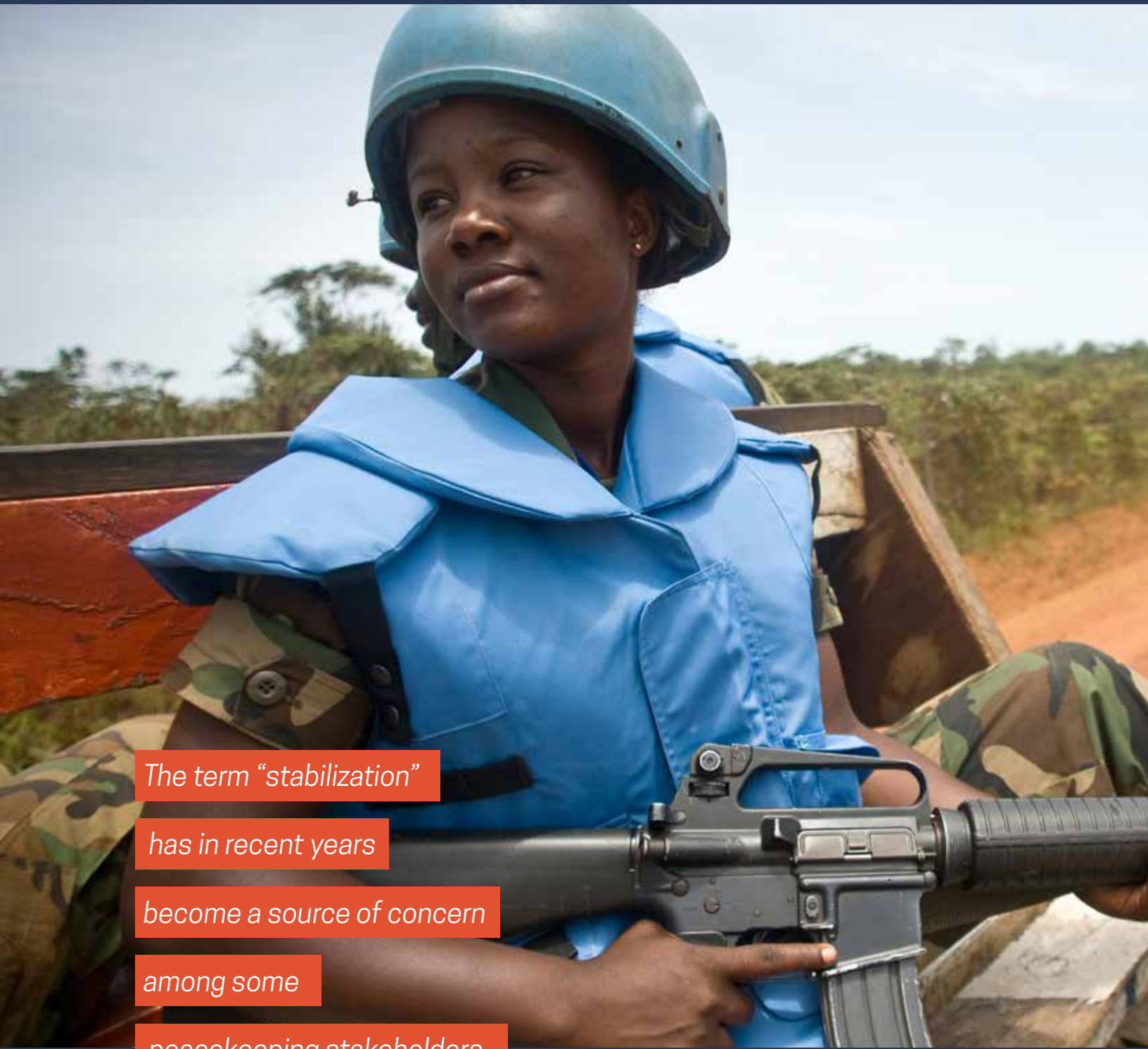
In 2004, the United Nations (UN) Security Council authorized the first stabilization mission in Haiti. Since then, it has authorized three more in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, and the Central African Republic. Yet the Security Council has never defined the term “stabilization,” explained how stabilization missions differ from other UN peace operations, or elaborated on the outcomes it expects stabilization missions to achieve.

This report argues that there is no consensus as to what stabilization means, and that there is a wide gulf between understandings in New York (where it is often viewed as involving offensive military force) and in the field (where it is often viewed as civilian-led and development-focused work). In the absence of a clear definition of stabilization, it is unclear to many stakeholders whether these missions violate the core principles of peacekeeping. The lack of a definition creates a risk of unrealistic expectations for what missions will accomplish and makes it impossible to evaluate success. It can contribute to a mismatch between mission objectives and capabilities, lead to ad hoc and ineffective implementation of mandated tasks on the ground, and discourage countries from authorizing or contributing troops to these missions. Recognizing these problems, the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations declared last year that “the usage of this term by the United Nations requires clarification.”<sup>1</sup>

Drawing on understandings of stabilization in concept and in practice, this report proposes a new definition of stabilization in the context of UN peacekeeping: supporting the transfer of territorial control from spoilers to legitimate authorities. This definition, unlike others proposed, is consistent with the mandates and activities of existing stabilization missions and also respects the core principles of peacekeeping outlined in the Capstone Doctrine. Stabilization by this definition is a strategic objective, not a discrete task. It seeks to achieve a political outcome by leveraging the different capacities of missions’ civilian, police, and military components. Thus stabilization, the protection of civilians, and any other priority strategic objectives will need to be incorporated into an overarching political strategy. Stabilization should not be conflated with the protection of civilians, and indeed is likely to create additional risks to civilians in the short term. As such, stabilization missions must take extra precautions to mitigate unintended harm to civilians.

This report recommends that:

1. In the context of a peacekeeping operation, the term “stabilization” should mean: **supporting the transfer of territorial control from spoilers to legitimate authorities.**
2. The UN Security Council should identify peacekeeping operations as stabilization missions by including the term “stabilization” in the name of the mission only if stabilization as defined above is among the mission’s highest-priority objectives.
3. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations should revise the Capstone Doctrine to incorporate this definition of stabilization.
4. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support should produce a policy on stabilization in the context of UN peacekeeping, including how the use of force, impartiality, and consent should be approached by stabilization missions.
5. In policies and guidance on the protection of civilians, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support should clarify how protection differs from stabilization activities and how mandates to protect civilians should be implemented in contexts where stabilization activities are underway.



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## INTRODUCTION

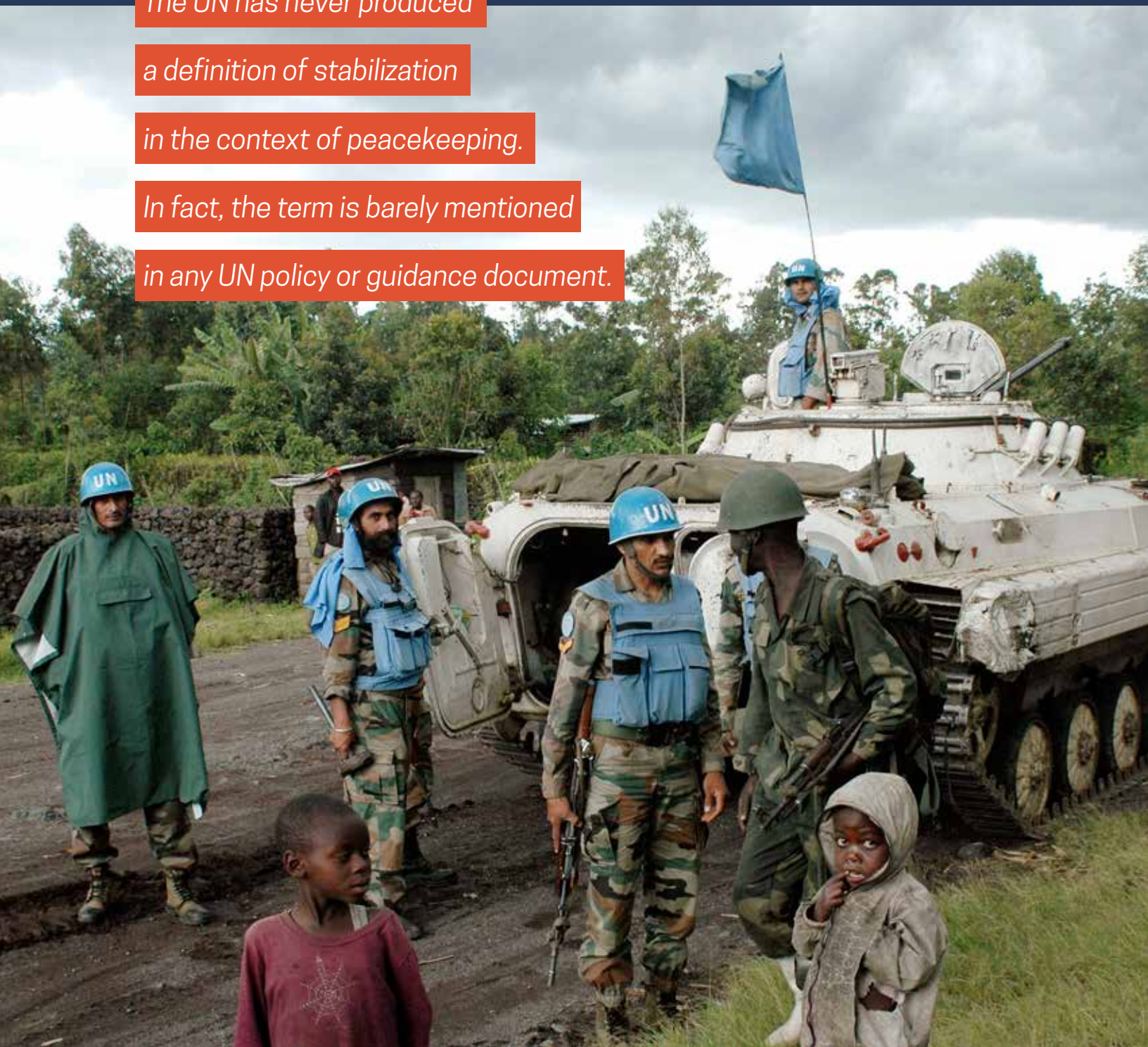
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The UN Security Council has been authorizing peacekeeping missions since 1948, but in 2004 it decided to distinguish one peacekeeping mission – the mission in Haiti – by putting the term “stabilization” in its name. In 2010, it again included “stabilization” in the mandate of the UN peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) – and then again in 2013 and 2014 for the missions in Mali and the Central African Republic (CAR). It never offered an explanation for why it selected these four missions to be called stabilization missions, nor what it expected these missions to do in the name of stabilization.

The term “stabilization” has in recent years become a source of concern among some peacekeeping stakeholders. The UN missions in Mali and CAR were authorized before peace agreements had been reached, and were deployed into areas with high levels of violent conflict, breaking from UN peacekeeping tradition. The same year that it authorized the Mali mission, the Security Council also decided to authorize a Force Intervention Brigade for the UN mission in the DRC with an offensive mandate that was in some respects new in UN peacekeeping. There was no specific indication that these developments had anything to do with stabilization (after all, the DRC mission had been a stabilization mission for three years before the authorization of the Force Intervention Brigade), and the Security Council continued to leave the term unexplained. Nevertheless, some stakeholders became concerned that stabilization entailed a new breed of missions that took peacekeeping into uncharted territory and potentially violated the core principles that define peacekeeping.

This report aims to address the question of what stabilization means in the context of UN peacekeeping. It is based on a memorandum produced by Aditi Gorur and Alison Giffen and submitted to the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) in 2015. The report begins by setting out the current confusion about the meaning of stabilization in the context of UN peacekeeping, both in theory (in UN mandates; in the domestic doctrines of the United States, the United Kingdom, and France; and in academic literature) and in practice (within UN stabilization missions in the field). It then identifies the consequences of leaving stabilization undefined, proposes a clear and limited definition to distinguish stabilization from other peacekeeping objectives, explains how this definition can avoid violating the core principles of peacekeeping, discusses the need for stabilization to be situated within a broader political strategy, and finally examines the relationship between stabilization and the protection of civilians.

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## STABILIZATION IN CONCEPT

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The UN has never produced a definition of stabilization in the context of peacekeeping. In fact, the term is barely mentioned in any UN policy or guidance document. As a result, there is no conceptual clarity as to what stabilization means or what objectives the Security Council intends for a stabilization mission to fulfill. This section examines the diverse conceptual understandings of stabilization by looking at UN peacekeeping mission mandates, the domestic doctrine of Security Council penholders, and academic literature.

### UN Peacekeeping Mission Mandates

The Security Council has so far authorized four UN peacekeeping missions that it has chosen to call stabilization missions. In the absence of UN policies or guidance on stabilization, the mandates of these four missions constitute the most authoritative statement of what stabilization means in the context of UN peacekeeping. However, as the following summaries demonstrate, the four missions' mandates do not offer a clear or consistent vision of what stabilization means or what activities it comprises. Stabilization is associated with a wide range of tasks, from the restoration and extension of state authority to security and justice sector reform to the protection of civilians. The Security Council has seemingly understood the term stabilization quite differently from one mandate revision to the next, and even, in one case, in separate references within the same mandate.

#### *MINUSTAH*

The UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) was authorized in April 2004 to take over operations from the Multinational Interim Force that had been operating in Haiti for two months.<sup>2</sup> It was the first peacekeeping mission that the Security Council authorized with “Stabilization” in its title, but the mandate offered no information as to how the term was to be interpreted.<sup>3</sup>

MINUSTAH's mandate was divided into three thematic categories: 1) secure and stable environment (which included supporting the transitional government and national police in reestablishing law and order, along with the protection of civilians), 2) political process (which included assisting with the political process underway in Haiti, the organization of elections, and the extension of state authority), and 3) monitoring human rights. To date, MINUSTAH mandates have not expanded on what is meant by stabilization, and the mission's thematic priorities remain the same.

#### *MONUSCO*

The UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) was established in 1999.<sup>4</sup> In May 2010, the mission transitioned to the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) “in view of the new phase that [had] been reached”<sup>5</sup> in the country. This rebranded mission was tasked with two main priorities: 1) protection of civilians and 2) stabilization and peace consolidation.<sup>6</sup> Under the latter heading, the mission was authorized to support security and justice sector reform (within the military and the police), support the consolidation of state authority, support local elections, and prevent the provision of support to armed groups in the east of the country.<sup>7</sup>

In March 2013, in response to the armed group M23's incursion into the city of Goma, the Security Council renewed MONUSCO's mandate and authorized a Force Intervention Brigade.<sup>8</sup> Although the mission had previously been authorized to use all necessary means to protect civilians from physical violence, this new mandate explicitly authorized the Force Intervention Brigade to act offensively to “neutralize” armed

groups.<sup>9</sup> The mandate described MONUSCO's objectives as including "stabilization through the establishment of functional state security institutions in conflict-affected areas, and through strengthened democratic order that reduces the risk of instability, including adequate political space, observance of human rights and a credible electoral process."<sup>10</sup> The purpose of neutralizing armed groups was also articulated as making way for "stabilization activities."<sup>11</sup>

A revised MONUSCO mandate in 2015 included under the stabilization heading such tasks as using good offices and support to the host-state government to develop a comprehensive response to area-based stabilization efforts; support to the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement, and reintegration process; and support to the government to fight impunity and child recruitment.<sup>12</sup>

### *MINUSMA*

In April 2013, the Security Council authorized the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to replace the African Union mission operating in Mali at the time.<sup>13</sup> MINUSMA's first priority was the stabilization of key population centers and support for the reestablishment of state authority throughout the country.<sup>14</sup> This included deterring threats and taking active steps to prevent the return of armed elements, as well as supporting disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) and security sector reform activities.<sup>15</sup>

In June 2014, MINUSMA's revised mandate identified its first priority task as "Security, Stabilization, and protection of civilians [sic]."<sup>16</sup> Under this heading, the mission was tasked with expanding its presence in the north, assisting in implementing the peace agreement, and building the capacity of the Malian armed forces, among other activities.<sup>17</sup>

In the June 2015 and June 2016 iterations of the mandate, stabilization was grouped together in a heading with the protection of civilians.<sup>18</sup> In June 2015, tasks under this heading were focused on gaining control over urban centers in the north.<sup>19</sup> Stabilization was also mentioned in a separate heading in the same mandate, "Humanitarian assistance and projects for stabilization," under which the mission was tasked with "projects aimed at stabilizing the North of Mali, including quick impact projects."<sup>20</sup> This resolution thus appeared to display two different interpretations of stabilization (one linked to the protection of civilians and military-led activities, and the other linked to development projects and civilian-led activities) in the same mandate.

In June 2016, the heading specified "Protection of civilians and stabilization, including against asymmetric threats."<sup>21</sup> Under this heading the Council mandated MINUSMA to "stabilize the key population centres and other areas where civilians are at risk, notably in the North and Centre of Mali, and, in this regard, to enhance early warning, to anticipate, deter and counter threats, including asymmetric threats, and to take robust and active steps to protect civilians."<sup>22</sup> This most recent mandate thus specifically identified the protection of civilians as a component of stabilization.

### *MINUSCA*

In April 2014, the Security Council authorized the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).<sup>23</sup> The original MINUSCA mandate did not specifically identify any tasks under a stabilization heading. The mandate included several tasks commonly included in peacekeeping mandates, such as the protection of civilians, support to the transition process, support for the extension of state authority, facilitation of humanitarian assistance, promotion of human rights, support for the rule of law, and support to DDR.<sup>24</sup>



Members of Mali's National Guard and Police attend a crowd control training conducted by UNPOL Training Team of MINUSMA in Bamako. For the first time in Mali, 86 members of National Guard were trained by UNPOL Officers. The training was attended by 46 Police members as well. Photo by UN Photo/Marco Dormino

In 2016, the Security Council altered the MINUSCA mandate to group stabilization together with reconciliation. The mission was mandated to provide “support for the reconciliation and stabilization political processes, the extension of State authority and the preservation of territorial integrity.”<sup>25</sup> Under this heading, the mission was mandated to support efforts to address the root causes of the conflict, support efforts to address marginalization, and support the training and redeployment of the state security forces.<sup>26</sup>

The various ways in which stabilization has been referenced in the four missions’ mandates show that the Security Council does not apply a consistent meaning of the term. The mandates reveal sometimes incompatible interpretations – for example, the view expressed in several MONUSCO mandates is that stabilization is an objective distinct from the protection of civilians, in contrast with the view expressed in the most recent MINUSMA mandate that the protection of civilians is a component of stabilization. The Security Council has at times been extremely vague about stabilization (for example, in MINUSTAH mandates), and at other times quite specific about identifying tasks that fall under the heading of stabilization – but the tasks identified are generally the kind that are commonly assigned to all peacekeeping missions (such as support to DDR).

Nevertheless, there are some consistencies among the mandates of the four stabilization missions that can be drawn on, in conjunction with the missions’ activities in practice, to develop a definition of stabilization in the context of UN peacekeeping. These similarities are explored in a later section, “Defining Stabilization,” on page 21.

### *Stabilization in the US, the UK, and France*

In the US, the term “stabilization” is understood as an effort to address drivers of internal conflict within a host nation. Joint Publication 3-07 on Stability defines stabilization as “the process by which military and nonmilitary actors collectively apply various instruments of national power to address drivers of conflict, foster [host nation] resiliencies, and create conditions that enable sustainable peace and security.”<sup>34</sup> Stability actions by the military may be one contribution to a broader, integrated US government stabilization effort.<sup>35</sup>

In the UK, the Stabilization Unit within the Foreign and Commonwealth Office laid out the government’s approach to stabilization in a 2014 document. This document defines stabilization as “one of the approaches used in situations of violent conflict which is designed to protect and promote legitimate political authority, using a combination of integrated civilian and military actions to reduce violence, reestablish security and prepare for longer-term recovery by building an enabling environment for structural stability.”<sup>36</sup> It identifies the central challenge of stabilization as bringing about “some form of political settlement in a pressured and violent context.”<sup>37</sup> The document states that it “draws on evidence and lessons from experience in a range of situations over the past ten years, including Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kosovo, Libya, Pakistan, Somalia and South Sudan.”<sup>38</sup>

The French Ministry of Defense notes that the term stabilization has multiple definitions related to managing state dysfunction following intrastate conflict, and defines stabilization as one of several crisis management processes that aims to restore the minimum viability of the state (or region) by putting an end to violence as a mode of conflict and laying the foundations for a return to normal life through a process of reconstruction.<sup>39</sup> The French Joint Doctrine on the Contribution of the Armed Forces to Stabilization notes that stabilization is primarily a political process to be led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>40</sup> It cites examples such as operations in the former Yugoslavia, Cote d’Ivoire, Haiti, and Afghanistan.<sup>41</sup>

## Domestic Doctrine of Security Council Penholders

The “P3” Security Council member states – the US, the UK, and France – collectively exercise the greatest influence over the content of peacekeeping mandates. France is the penholder for three of the four stabilization missions (in the DRC, Mali, and CAR), and the US is the penholder for the fourth (Haiti).<sup>27</sup> Given the P3’s influence on mandates, it is worth considering how these countries use the term stabilization in their own domestic contexts.

The concept of stabilization as a type of conflict intervention began to take root in the US, the UK, and France in the 1990s. All three nations participated in the NATO-led Stabilization Force deployed to Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1996,<sup>28</sup> and “stability operations” appeared in the US National Military Strategy as early as 1997.<sup>29</sup> The term has been used frequently in the context of the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>30</sup> The US Department of State established the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization in 2004,<sup>31</sup> which was subsumed under the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations in 2011.<sup>32</sup> In 2007, the UK’s Post-Conflict Reconstruction Unit, jointly owned by the Department for International Development, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the Ministry of Defense, was renamed the Stabilization Unit.<sup>33</sup>

The three countries’ domestic doctrines and guidance on stabilization are summarized in the text box on the left side of this page. While there are minor differences between each country’s approach, they have considerable overlap on key substantive points:

- All refer to stabilization as a means of responding to intrastate conflict.
- All define stabilization as aiming to achieve an ultimate political outcome.
- All delimit stabilization very broadly as a comprehensive set of integrated or coordinated civilian and military activities to influence a wide range of conflict drivers.

These definitions of stabilization would accurately describe any modern, multidimensional UN peacekeeping mission, including those that do not have “stabilization” in their names. Domestic doctrine and guidance may therefore be helpful in understanding the assumptions and experiences that inform the P3’s approach to peacekeeping generally – but they are not very helpful in understanding the P3’s use of the term “stabilization” in the context of UN peacekeeping.

## Academic Literature

The modern concept of stabilization has its roots in liberal peace theory, a Western ideological concept that brings together neoliberalism, democratization, and free market capitalism.<sup>42</sup> Stabilization as a term was first used in the mid-1990s to refer to reinforcing economies to withstand shocks.<sup>43</sup> The concept has since expanded, positing that stability derives from a complex relationship between national security, economic development, and physical and human security, and that poverty and underdevelopment pose potential threats to international security.

Recently, a few scholars have tackled the question of interpreting stabilization in the context of UN peacekeeping specifically. There are three broad schools of thought within this literature on how to understand stabilization in the context of UN peacekeeping. Each of the three schools defines stabilization in a way that is inconsistent with the wording of Security Council mandates and/or the reality of UN peacekeeping missions’ actions.

### *Stabilization as Pre-Peacebuilding Intervention*

Some scholars define stabilization as a pre-peacebuilding phase in peacekeeping interventions. According to Robert Muggah, stabilization “appears to constitute a ‘transition’ from large-scale peacekeeping operations in areas affected by widespread insecurity to smaller-scale program [sic] with targeted security and development packages.”<sup>44</sup> Muggah situates stabilization within a broader trend toward UN peacekeeping becoming “increasingly multidimensional, combining robust operations with peacebuilding and statebuilding activities.”<sup>45</sup> This definition, with its emphasis on development projects to reduce state fragility, is consistent with how many peacekeeping personnel in the field interpret stabilization (see “Stabilization in Practice” on page 15). However, it is inconsistent with the fact that MINUSCA and MINUSMA were dubbed stabilization missions even though they were authorized long before hostilities ended and peacebuilding could be expected to start according to this phased view of conflict. It would not be possible to generalize that the four stabilization missions have been assigned more “pre-peacebuilding” tasks than the non-stabilization missions. On the contrary, MINUSCA’s original mandate, for example, instructed the mission to delay some tasks like security sector reform because of the volatile conflict environment.<sup>46</sup>

### *Stabilization as Active Conflict Intervention*

Others believe that stabilization constitutes an active conflict phase in peacekeeping interventions. Arthur Boutellis argues that what “UN ‘stabilization’ missions have in common is that they operate in the midst of on-going conflicts and therefore have to maintain a ceasefire and support a peace process rather than simply supporting the implementation of a peace agreement.”<sup>47</sup> Cedric de Coning claims that stabilization missions “operate in the midst of on-going conflicts.”<sup>48</sup> Alex Bellamy and Charles Hunt also argue that “stabilization missions are intentionally directed towards countries where there is no ... peace [to keep] and therefore they operate in active conflict zones.”<sup>49</sup> This definition of stabilization is inconsistent with the authorization of MONUSCO, which took place at a time of relative stability in the DRC. Indeed, the change from MONUC to MONUSCO in 2010 came about as a result of a compromise with President Kabila, who

was insisting that the mission was no longer needed.<sup>50</sup> The introduction of “stabilization” into the peacekeeping mission’s name was thus intended to signal that conflict was less active, not more active.

### *Stabilization as Robust Use of Force*

Several scholars believe that the robust use of force is what distinguishes stabilization from non-stabilization missions. De Coning argues that the use of force has been applied and justified differently in stabilization missions.<sup>51</sup> Charles Hunt considers the rise of the “stabilization logic” a key component of the recent “robust turn” in peace operations.<sup>52</sup> John Karlsrud defines stabilization as “using military means to stabilise a country.”<sup>53</sup> Although he acknowledges that “there is no link between the degree to which a UN peacekeeping operation can use force and whether it is labelled a ‘stabilisation’ mission or not,”<sup>54</sup> he nevertheless argues that the “mandates for MONUSCO, MINUSMA and MINUSCA intensify the use of force in UN peacekeeping operations and could arguably be the beginning of an era of UN peace-enforcement missions.”<sup>55</sup> De Coning, Hunt, and Karlsrud all argue in particular that the robust use of force in support of a particular party to the conflict (usually the host-state government) is a distinguishing factor of stabilization.

This definition of stabilization linked to robust use of force is inconsistent with the reality that non-stabilization missions such as UNMISS (in South Sudan) and UNOCI (in Côte d’Ivoire) have been authorized and expected to use force both robustly and very proactively. Non-stabilization missions have also used force robustly specifically in support of the host-state government and against armed groups, just as the four stabilization missions have. For example, MONUC (the pre-stabilization predecessor to MONUSCO) used force robustly against armed groups in eastern DRC in 2005 when it “compelled disarmament of militias through aggressive cordon-and-search operations, intended both to force armed groups to join the DDR program and to pre-empt attacks on local civilians.”<sup>56</sup> While Karlsrud argues that the stabilization missions in the DRC, Mali, and CAR use force in practice in a way that pushes the boundary between peacekeeping and war-fighting,<sup>57</sup> UNOCI arguably pushed that boundary even further in 2011 when it fired on a camp occupied by pro-government forces and on the president’s residence, in fulfilment of its mandate to neutralize heavy weapons.<sup>58</sup> In addition, both de Coning and Karlsrud also focus on the Force Intervention Brigade – a component of MONUSCO with a more offensive use-of-force mandate – as characterizing the stabilization aspect of the mission, ignoring the fact that MONUSCO became a stabilization mission three years before the Force Intervention Brigade was authorized.<sup>59</sup>

This examination of stabilization as a concept shows a wide range of opinions. The academic literature offers several schools of thought, some of which are mutually incompatible (for example, one school of thought views stabilization as a post-conflict and pre-peacebuilding phase, while another views it as an intervention in active conflict). The domestic doctrines of the P3 show an understanding of stabilization as an intervention that brings together military and civilian capacities to achieve a stable political outcome in an intrastate conflict – a term that describes all modern, multidimensional peacekeeping missions and offers no clarity on what distinguishes those designated as peacekeeping missions. Most concerning of all, the mandates of the four peacekeeping missions offer an abundance of meanings of stabilization – linked to everything from the protection of civilians, the use of force, and military operations to strengthening democratic institutions, implementing Quick Impact Projects, and demobilizing combatants. Such a diversity of opinions offers no clear vision to guide peacekeepers in the field tasked with implementing these stabilization mandates.

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## STABILIZATION IN PRACTICE

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The previous section demonstrates that there is no consensus about what stabilization means conceptually with respect to UN peacekeeping. This section explores how stabilization is conceived and applied in practice by peacekeepers in the field.

The four UN peacekeeping missions mandated to conduct stabilization have approached stabilization activities differently in practice. For two of the four – MINUSTAH and MINUSCA – there is no indication from reports of the Secretary-General or from their organizational structures as to which activities they consider to constitute stabilization. Neither mission has any titles or offices that contain the word “stabilization,” nor are there stabilization strategies. MINUSCA personnel have twice requested funds for a Stabilization Support Unit (SSU), but these requests have been rejected.<sup>60</sup>

MINUSMA has a Stabilization and Recovery Section, within the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator, which “promotes synergies between the United Nations and other Technical and Financial Partners (TFP) in order to support inclusive dialogue, State authority restoration and return of basic social services among communities most affected by the conflict, particularly in northern Mali.”<sup>61</sup> This section identifies projects to support through MINUSMA’s Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) funds, the UN Trust Fund for Peace and Security in Mali, and the UN Peacebuilding Fund. The different funding streams target different kinds of projects, but the mission’s own QIPs funds are largely used by the Stabilization and Recovery Section to support projects to improve infrastructure and access to basic services.<sup>62</sup>

MONUSCO is the most advanced of the four stabilization missions in attempting to articulate a vision of stabilization and implement activities that it identifies as stabilization. It has created an SSU within the mission to lead its stabilization efforts, and participated in the development of a revised International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy (ISSSS) in 2013.<sup>63</sup> (It is worth noting that the original ISSSS was developed in 2008-2009, before MONUC became MONUSCO, and was developed in coordination with various international partners;<sup>64</sup> as such, the ISSSS is not a definitive statement of what the “Stabilization” in MONUSCO’s title means. However, MONUSCO personnel were heavily involved in developing the revised ISSSS, and it offers some insight into how current mission personnel interpret the term “stabilization” when implementing their mandate.)

The SSU coordinates internally between different sections of MONUSCO, and between MONUSCO, the DRC government, and international partners, to ensure that projects undertaken by different actors are in alignment with the ISSSS and agreed-upon stabilization goals.<sup>65</sup> It also manages a stabilization coherence trust fund and tries to ensure that projects are deconflicted from each other and, where possible, complement each other.<sup>66</sup> The current ISSSS is an area-based strategy, targeting priority areas for stabilization identified in conjunction with the DRC government. The ISSSS largely supports development and infrastructure projects. However, unlike the previous iteration of the ISSSS, which was focused on building infrastructure to support the physical restoration of state authority, the new ISSSS focuses more on projects aiming to restore the social contract among communities, and between communities and the state.<sup>67</sup>

To get a better understanding of how the personnel who implement stabilization missions’ mandates understood the term, Stimson Center researchers conducted open-ended interviews with peacekeeping personnel in the three more recent stabilization missions: MONUSCO, MINUSCA, and MINUSMA. (Time and cost constraints prohibited travel to MINUSTAH.) These interviews revealed two main findings. First, the view of stabilization in the field is very different from the mainstream understandings found at UN Headquarters or in much of the academic literature. Second, interpretations of stabilization in the field vary

widely within and between different missions. There is no agreed-upon definition of stabilization in practice, even among those personnel who are tasked with implementing it. Some of the commonly expressed views offered by peacekeeping personnel are summarized below.

### *Restoration or Extension of State Authority*

Several peacekeeping personnel viewed stabilization as synonymous with the restoration and extension of state authority. For example, in MONUSCO and MINUSMA, personnel pointed to infrastructure projects aimed at increasing the presence of state authorities – such as building a police station – as examples of stabilization projects. One MONUSCO representative emphasized that stabilization aimed to build trust between local communities and the state.<sup>68</sup> Another noted that mission personnel associated stabilization only with civilian efforts to extend or restore state authority, not military efforts (e.g., using force to remove armed groups).<sup>69</sup> Some MONUSCO personnel noted that the mission's force often conducted military operations against armed groups without reference to or coordination with civilian sections' stabilization efforts.

### *Protection of Civilians*

Some peacekeeping personnel related stabilization to the three-tiered definition of the protection of civilians articulated in the 2015 peacekeeping policy on the protection of civilians.<sup>70</sup> For example, one MINUSCA representative saw stabilization as comprising the various activities that fell under the third tier of this definition, which involves building a protective environment.<sup>71</sup> A MONUSCO representative also suggested that when viewed through a preventive lens, stabilization is essentially the same as the protection of civilians.<sup>72</sup>

### *Addressing the Root Causes of Conflict*

One opinion expressed by several UN personnel on the ground was that stabilization is synonymous with peacebuilding. Several analysts across the three stabilization missions identified the purpose of stabilization as addressing the root causes of a conflict.

In MONUSCO, where stabilization and the protection of civilians are understood as the two key pillars of the mandate, some personnel saw the protection of civilians as a short-term objective (immediate protection of civilians against imminent threats of violence), and saw stabilization as a longer-term objective (addressing the drivers or the root causes of the conflict).<sup>73</sup> While most personnel within MONUSCO viewed protection and stabilization as overlapping agendas, they observed that the two concepts were separated within the mission's strategic framework. One MONUSCO representative distinguished the protection of civilians agenda from stabilization by saying that the former involved the protection of civilians from violence and the latter involved the prevention of violence.<sup>74</sup>

### *Comprehensive and Coordinated Peacekeeping*

In MONUSCO, where the SSU plays an important coordinating function, some peacekeepers saw stabilization as a comprehensive approach to peacekeeping that emphasizes coordination between different civilian sections, and between the civilian, police, and military components. A MONUSCO representative asserted that stabilization could only succeed if it is implemented through a targeted, holistic, and integrated mission-wide approach.<sup>75</sup>

Perhaps influenced by the function of the SSU in MONUSCO, several MINUSCA personnel seemed to view stabilization similarly as potentially playing a coordination role. One representative expressed the



need for MINUSCA to better coordinate its activities across offices and with NGOs, and believed that a stabilization unit would achieve that function.<sup>76</sup> Another believed that stabilization was essentially synonymous with integration, and conveyed the opinion that MINUSCA was struggling to coordinate its activities in part because it did not have a stabilization unit.<sup>77</sup> Still another noted that many Western militaries have replaced the term stabilization with the concept of a comprehensive approach.<sup>78</sup>

Some MINUSMA representatives also expressed the desire for stabilization to be interpreted as a comprehensive, coordinated approach. One described stabilization as a multidimensional and integrated process that “isn’t just peacekeeping.”<sup>79</sup> Another noted that it would be better if the stabilization team were part of the front or integrated office and fed substantively into the entirety of MINUSMA’s strategy and activities.<sup>80</sup>

These views from mission personnel demonstrate that interpretations of stabilization in the field are often quite different from interpretations at UN Headquarters. In particular, stabilization is generally not understood in the field to refer to robust use of force or offensive military operations, but rather to civilian-led and often development-focused activities. Several MONUSCO personnel, for example, expressed surprise and confusion when Stimson researchers raised the topic of the Force Intervention Brigade in the context of stabilization. One MONUSCO representative explained that, while the mission’s force component uses a “clear-hold-build” approach, the mission as a whole had “rejected that as an idea of stabilization.”<sup>81</sup>

Yet none of the main field interpretations summarized above offers a workable definition of stabilization that could be adopted by the UN. The extension or restoration of state authority and the protection of civilians are clearly mentioned in peacekeeping mandates as tasks or agendas separate to stabilization, and are often assigned to non-stabilization missions. Defining stabilization as synonymous with these other established agendas would create confusion and make it very difficult to understand mandates that contain language on both stabilization and the restoration of state authority or the protection of civilians.

Interpreting stabilization as addressing the root causes of conflict or adopting a coordinated and comprehensive approach runs into the challenge that all multidimensional peacekeeping missions – not just stabilization missions – should be aiming to do those things. It would be counterproductive to signal that only certain missions – those dubbed stabilization missions – are expected to have strong coordination between civilian, police, and military components. Similarly, it would be strange to suggest that non-stabilization missions should aim to address only the symptoms of conflict while stabilization missions aim to address the deeper causes.

UN peacekeeping guidance is often based on practices pioneered by peacekeepers in the field. In the case of stabilization, there is considerable disagreement in the field about what the term means, and many of the more common interpretations would lead to even greater confusion if adopted in guidance. Interpretations of stabilization by peacekeepers in the field do not, therefore, provide a solid basis for developing a definition of stabilization.

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## THE PROBLEM WITH CONFLICTING UNDERSTANDINGS OF STABILIZATION

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The previous section laid out the conflicting understandings of stabilization that exist in theory and in practice. Some stakeholders within the UN system, both at Headquarters and in the field, believe that there are advantages to leaving the term undefined. Permanent Security Council members and many within the UN bureaucracy believe that this “constructive ambiguity” provides flexibility, allowing the UN system to “introduce a new approach to UN peace operations without having to say so explicitly.”<sup>82</sup> Both traditionalist and pragmatist thinkers agree on the value of “not trying to define the concept, or to try and make sense of it in the context of the UN peacekeeping doctrine.”<sup>83</sup>

However, there are also serious consequences arising from the confusion about stabilization and what it means in the context of UN peacekeeping. This section explains why the lack of definition leads to perceived erosion of the core principles of peacekeeping, tensions among UN member states, and reduced effectiveness of peacekeeping missions.

### Violating the Principles of Peacekeeping

The Capstone Doctrine lays out three core principles of peacekeeping related to consent, impartiality, and the limited use of force.<sup>84</sup> In the absence of a clear definition of stabilization, some peacekeeping stakeholders have become concerned that UN stabilization missions violate these core principles.

The HIPPO Report calls for clarification of the term “stabilization” in the context of concerns about the use of force by a new generation of peacekeeping missions, particularly those tasked with active “conflict management.”<sup>85</sup> The HIPPO Report notes that “[i]n a number of contemporary missions, UN peacekeeping has moved far beyond a clear peace to keep. However, the challenges and implications of this new operating environment have not yet been well-defined or internalized.”<sup>86</sup> These concerns about the use of force by stabilization missions are echoed by a number of scholars such as Cedric de Coning and John Karlsrud, as discussed on page 14.

Several scholars have also expressed concern that stabilization activities are inherently in conflict with the principle of impartiality. De Coning, for example, distinguishes UN stabilization missions from other peacekeeping missions by labeling the latter as inherently impartial while the former cooperates closely with a host government in an attempt to remove an aggressive actor.<sup>87</sup> Alex Bellamy and Charles Hunt argue that explicit partiality is one of the defining characteristics of stabilization.<sup>88</sup> Charles Hunt believes that firm partnership with host-state governments epitomizes the stabilization logic and hinders a mission’s ability to be impartial.<sup>89</sup>

The violation of the Capstone principles is a serious concern in and of itself, since these principles represent a consensus across the wider UN membership about the objectives and limitations of UN peacekeeping. It may also have follow-on consequences for member state participation in peacekeeping and for mission effectiveness.

### Member State Tensions

A lack of common understanding surrounding stabilization at UN Headquarters could also make member states hesitant to authorize and support peacekeeping missions. For example, in a study exploring Security Council discourse on stabilization, David Curran and Paul Holtom found that Russia demonstrates fairly

consistent skepticism about stabilization, feeling that the concept poses “a number of unresolved legal, technical, staff and logistical issues for the organization that have adverse effects on mission effectiveness, image and security for peacekeepers.”<sup>90</sup> The study found that representatives from South Asian member states tend to agree with this view.<sup>91</sup>

Because stabilization missions are viewed by some as inherently more robust, member states may also be more hesitant to offer troops to serve in stabilization missions. If stabilization missions are perceived as operating in areas where there is no peace to keep, troop-contributing countries may not want their troops to serve in environments they perceive as riskier, and some member states that view peace enforcement as out of bounds may not wish to participate for ideological or principled reasons. When member states do acquiesce to send troops to a stabilization mission, they may specify greater caveats on where and under what conditions their troops must be stationed in response to the perceived increased risk. Conversely, countries sending their troops to non-stabilization missions may wrongly think that their troops are not required to use force as robustly, with potentially dangerous consequences for civilians in need of robust physical protection.



Members of the MINUSMA Formed Police Unit (FPU) from Benin patrol the airport as the delegation from Bamako leaves Kidal in the aftermath of the terroristic attack during which six peacekeepers from Guinea were killed and many other injured in Kidal, in the northern part of Mali. Photo by UN Photo/Marco Dormino

## Undermining Mission Effectiveness

A 2009 study on the protection of civilians in peacekeeping operations found that the lack of a clear definition of that concept resulted in poor planning and implementation of protection mandates.<sup>92</sup> Similar problems are likely to arise in relation to stabilization if the Security Council's intent is unclear.

Without clear direction from the Security Council, the UN Secretariat does not know whether it should be designing a stabilization mission differently from other peacekeeping operations. Should the footprint of the mission look different? Does stabilization require different military assets? Should the UN recruit mission leadership and personnel with specific background and skills?

Confusion about the meaning of stabilization makes it impossible to develop an effective strategy for the mission. As one MONUSCO representative observed, if there is no agreed understanding of what stabilization is, it is impossible to tell whether the mission has achieved it.<sup>93</sup> Arthur Boutellis notes that in the absence of a UN-wide doctrine, stabilization is often confused with the restoration of state authority, but such a conflation may actually undermine the mission's strategy if the weak and contested state authority is in fact a major part of the problem.<sup>94</sup> Robert Muggah also argues that the absence of a definition may create opportunities for host-state governments to define stabilization to suit their own personal interests, rather than the Security Council's intended objectives.<sup>95</sup>

As with the protection of civilians, an unclear concept of stabilization can also lead to ad hoc and ineffective implementation of the mandate. Without guidance, peacekeeping leadership and personnel will likely be unsure how to prioritize resources for stabilization-related activities in relation to a long list of other objectives and tasks. Mission leadership and personnel may also be unsure how they should engage with the host-state government and non-state armed actors.

In response to a lack of clarity and guidance, some missions, sections, or personnel may ignore stabilization as a mission objective altogether. For example, some MONUSCO personnel believe that when Martin Kobler took over leadership of MONUSCO in 2013, he found the stabilization mandate unclear and chose essentially to disregard it.<sup>96</sup> Similarly, one MINUSCA representative said that the mission essentially operates as if it were any other peacekeeping mission, without acknowledging the "S" that is part of the mission's name.<sup>97</sup> If the Security Council had some set of tasks in mind when it gave stabilization mandates to the four missions, it is not clear to those missions' personnel what those tasks are.

Finally, the use of an ambiguous term can also raise unrealistic expectations that undermine a mission. UN peacekeeping operations have long struggled with expectations that exceed what they can deliver. Such expectations can undermine the credibility of a mission in the eyes of the host-state government and the local population. For example, the associations made between stabilization and robustness or offensive use of force may have contributed to the Malian government's repeated calls for MINUSMA to engage in counterterrorist operations.<sup>98</sup>

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## DEFINING STABILIZATION

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Despite the UN's lack of clarity in concept and in practice around stabilization, a close examination of UN stabilization missions shows that they do share a common thread. This common thread should be the starting point for defining stabilization.

### A Proposed Definition

The mandates of the four stabilization missions and the conditions under which they were authorized reveal a common pattern of supporting the host-state government to reclaim territory controlled by non-state armed actors that have been deemed politically illegitimate by UN member states, the host-state government, and/or parties to a peace agreement. MINUSMA's mandate is the most explicit on this point. It includes the "stabilization of key population centres and support for the reestablishment of State authority throughout the country"<sup>99</sup> as a category of mandated activities, and specifies that the stabilization of key population centers in support of Malian authorities should include "detering threats and taking active steps to prevent the return of armed elements."<sup>100</sup>

This unusual mandate language goes beyond mandates to merely extend or restore state authority, in that it refers to engaging against armed elements that have previously exerted control of territory. This language, not found in the mandates of non-stabilization missions, is similar to language in the original mandates of MONUSCO ("supporting consolidation of state authority in territory freed from armed group control, developing rule of law institutions and territorial administration")<sup>101</sup> and MINUSCA ("efforts in favour of the extension of State authority and preservation of territorial integrity").<sup>102</sup> Though it is not so direct, the resolution authorizing MINUSTAH<sup>103</sup> also implies assistance to the government to reclaim territory controlled by armed groups, and this is certainly how the mission interpreted its mandate. Other non-stabilization missions have been mandated to support the extension of state authority, but without reference to the control of those areas by armed elements.

Drawing on these similarities between the four authorized stabilization missions, the term stabilization in the context of UN peacekeeping should be defined as: **supporting the transfer of territorial control from spoilers to legitimate authorities.**

This definition of stabilization serves to distinguish it from other types of peacekeeping missions. It identifies stabilization as a strategic objective, rather than a task. Because stabilization aims to achieve a particular political outcome (the transfer of territorial control from spoilers to legitimate authorities), it is a whole-of-mission objective and not an activity driven by the military component; this definition is thus compatible with (though not identical to) the stabilization doctrines of the P3. The use of force to remove armed groups from an area may not be necessary (e.g., if the armed groups are amenable to political negotiation) and will not be sufficient without complementary political and community engagement.

The proposed definition also avoids naming the host-state government as the actor to whom territorial control is to be transferred, leaving room for situations where other actors (such as legitimate opposition parties or non-state actors) may be better placed to assume control. These issues are explored further on page 23. It is of course not a clear-cut issue whether to consider certain actors "legitimate," but these are judgment calls that the Security Council and/or the leadership of peacekeeping missions may be called upon to make in any peacekeeping mission and thus should not be considered a new controversy attached to this definition of stabilization. For example, MINUSMA, separate from its stabilization activities, is tasked with using its good offices to support dialogue and reconciliation,<sup>104</sup> but chooses for now not to engage politically

with groups that are considered terrorist armed groups and therefore lack legitimacy (though this remains a question of active debate for the mission).<sup>105</sup> Stabilization missions would also likely receive guidance on this question from the Security Council through mandates. While different analysts or stakeholders may have different points of view about who should be considered legitimate, it is nevertheless the case that the UN can and does make those decisions regularly.

The Security Council should identify peacekeeping operations as stabilization missions only if stabilization as defined above is among the mission's highest-priority objectives. If stabilization is not among the mission's highest-priority objectives, then it could be included in the mission's mandated activities but not referenced in the title of the mission.

## Stabilization and the Principles of Peacekeeping

In the context of a peacekeeping operation, stabilization should respect the principles of peacekeeping enshrined in the Capstone Doctrine in order to ensure that all parties (UN member states, the Security Council, the Secretariat, troop- and police-contributing countries, mission leadership, and host-country stakeholders) are clear about the responsibilities and limits of any UN peacekeeping operation deemed to be a stabilization mission.

### *Limited Use of Force*

Although stabilization has been conflated with more proactive or robust use of force, the proposed definition has no inherent relationship to the use of force. All Chapter VII peacekeeping missions, including stabilization missions, can use force in self-defense or in defense of their mandates.<sup>106</sup> For all Chapter VII missions, including stabilization missions, the decision to use force more or less robustly is determined by the nature of the threat posed by the armed actors to civilians, the peacekeeping operation, and the overall implementation of the mandate.

The Capstone Doctrine permits the use of force by peacekeeping operations “to deter forceful attempts to disrupt the political process, protect civilians under imminent threat of physical attack, and/or assist the national authorities in maintaining law and order.”<sup>107</sup> It states that, in the context of peacekeeping, the “ultimate aim of the use of force is to influence and deter spoilers working against the peace process or seeking to harm civilians; and not to seek their military defeat.”<sup>108</sup>

In order to respect this principle and to avoid crossing the line into peace enforcement, stabilization missions authorized under Chapter VII should use force with the objective of influencing and deterring spoilers that control territory, in self-defense, and for any other objectives laid out in their mandates (e.g., to protect civilians), but should not use force with the ultimate objective of seeking the military defeat of the spoilers controlling the territory. If the Security Council wishes to authorize an intervention whose aim is to seek the military defeat of a particular group or groups, it should authorize it not as a UN peacekeeping mission (with or without “stabilization” in the name) but as a peace enforcement mission.

### *Consent*

The Capstone Doctrine requires that peacekeeping operations obtain the strategic consent of the host-state government and/or the main parties to the conflict. The proposed definition of stabilization only allows for the infringement of consent at the local level, and only of spoilers who have been deemed illegitimate, both of which are considered acceptable by the Capstone Doctrine. The Capstone Doctrine states: “The fact that the main parties have given their consent to the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation does not necessarily imply or guarantee that there will also be consent at the local level, particularly if the

main parties are internally divided or have weak command and control systems. Universality of consent becomes even less probable in volatile settings, characterized by the presence of armed groups not under the control of any of the parties, or by the presence of other spoilers.”<sup>109</sup>

### *Impartiality*

The Capstone Doctrine requires that peacekeeping operations implement their mandates impartially. The proposed definition of stabilization may involve a close relationship with the host-state government but still allows the peacekeeping operation to operate impartially. For example, the definition would not require peacekeepers to assist the government in taking control of territory that is held by a legitimate opposition group. Peacekeepers would also still be expected to impartially protect civilians from violence committed by host-state security forces, even if they were acting to support the transfer of territorial control to the government. This kind of impartiality is of course not easy to maintain in practice, but there are similar tensions involved in impartially implementing non-stabilization mandates – for example, mandates to extend state authority or strengthen the capacity of host-state security forces.

## Stabilization and Political Strategy

A peacekeeping mission whose mandated tasks include stabilization will have to think carefully about how stabilization activities fit into the mission’s overarching political strategy. For example, how might stabilization activities complement or undermine other mission objectives, such as facilitating an inclusive national dialogue or providing support to elections? How could stabilization successes or failures affect the country’s peacebuilding trajectory? How should the mission position itself politically in relation to stakeholders (such as the host-state government, opposition parties, and non-state actors) that are affected by the outcomes of stabilization?

Most importantly, stabilization needs to be part of a political strategy that aims to ensure that it is supporting the sustainable transfer of territorial control to a legitimate and accountable authority. For example, stabilization activities should be accompanied by steps to ensure and strengthen the legitimacy and accountability of the authority to which control of the territory is transferred. If a peacekeeping operation supports the transfer of territorial control from one abusive entity to another, it cannot meaningfully claim to have supported stabilization. Stabilization as defined in this report is not a discrete task but a strategic objective, and will almost certainly be one of several strategic objectives that the Security Council wants a given mission to achieve. A political strategy will be necessary to address how stabilization interacts with other (sometimes competing) objectives.

In many cases, the most appropriate authority to assume control may be the host-state government, but other actors may be more appropriate in certain situations. For example, when French forces as part of Operation Serval ousted terrorist groups from Kidal in northern Mali, it was members of the MNLA rebel group rather than the Malian government (which had always had very weak presence in that area) who took control of many towns.<sup>110</sup> The Algiers Peace Accord signed in May 2015 by the Malian government included provisions that conferred some governance powers to the two rebel coalition signatories, granting greater autonomy to the northern part of the country.<sup>111</sup> MINUSMA now works to support the implementation of the peace agreement, including provisions that transfer authority to the two non-state signatories.

Missions undertaking stabilization activities must ensure that they identify the most appropriate authority to assume control of an area and implement stabilization in the context of a longer-term political strategy to 1) strengthen that authority’s accountability and legitimacy as needed, and 2) strengthen civil society and rule-of-law institutions to ensure that they can sustainably ensure the accountability and legitimacy of that authority.

## Stabilization and the Protection of Civilians

The concept of stabilization should not be conflated with the protection of civilians (as it has been, for example, in the most recent MINUSMA mandate).<sup>112</sup> Stabilization aims ultimately to create a secure and stable environment in which civilians are not subjected to violence; however, the strategies and tactics that support the transfer of territorial control from spoilers to legitimate authorities may increase risks to civilians in the short term.

Experience from UN peacekeeping operations, as well as from other interventions such as the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, has shown that stabilization activities can involve serious risks to civilians. For example, a peacekeeping operation may need to use force to compel armed actors to leave an area and deter them from returning. Alternatively, UN peacekeepers may be operating alongside host-state government forces or external military interventions that are undertaking similar tasks. These activities may result in collateral damage or displacement. If spoilers are able to reclaim control of the territory, they could commit retaliatory attacks against the local population. Stabilization activities may also result in violence against civilians perpetrated by the host-state government or by other opportunistic actors if control is transferred to authorities that are weak or abusive.

Given these risks, the protection of civilians should be the first priority of any mission with a stabilization mandate, in order to minimize unintended harm to civilians and protect the credibility and legitimacy of the mission. Implementing a protection of civilians mandate while stabilization activities are underway thus requires both regular protection of civilians activities and additional measures to protect civilians from violence resulting from stabilization activities.

- For UN peacekeeping operations whose mandated activities include stabilization, implementing a mandate to protect civilians should include the following activities:
- Measures to mitigate harm caused by the mission's stabilization activities, including the implementation of a Civilian Casualty Tracking, Analysis, and Response Cell,<sup>113</sup>
- Measures to mitigate harm caused by any other mission activities (such as statebuilding, security sector reform, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration, and election support);<sup>114</sup>
- Measures to mitigate harm caused by the host-state government and/or any other actors involved in stabilization activities; and
- Conflict assessments that engage a range of stakeholders, including conflict-affected communities,<sup>115</sup> to identify priority areas of violence against civilians, and measures (both civilian and military) to protect civilians in those areas, even if they are outside the areas held by spoilers and targeted for stabilization.



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## CONCLUSION

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Even as the Security Council continues to authorize and renew stabilization missions, there remains no consensus about what stabilization means in the context of UN peacekeeping. While practitioners in the field largely see stabilization as the domain of civilian peacekeeping personnel, many stakeholders in New York associate the term with offensive operations or robust use of force, and have become increasingly alarmed that stabilization represents a new and undesirable breed of peacekeeping. These concerns led the HIPPO Report to call for the UN to define stabilization.

This report proposes a clear definition of stabilization that describes a specific strategic objective: supporting the transfer of territorial control from spoilers to legitimate authorities. It ensures that this definition is as consistent as possible – given the diversity of ways in which the term has been used – with the mandates and practices of the four stabilization missions that have so far been authorized. It explains how peacekeeping missions can, by this definition, implement their stabilization mandates without falling afoul of the core principles of peacekeeping. And it offers suggestions for how stabilization can be incorporated into a political strategy and be implemented alongside the protection of civilians. The UN Secretariat should adopt this definition to bring clarity to a term that has been left unexplained for too long.



A MILOBS watches the sunset on the battlefield during an observation mission on Munigi Hill as FARDC conduct an attack on M23 rebel positions in Kanyaruchinya near Goma. Photo by MONUSCO/Sylvain Liechti

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76. Interview with MINUSCA representative, August 17, 2016, Bangui, Central African Republic.

77. Interview with MINUSCA representative, August 19, 2016, Bangui, Central African Republic.

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98. Interview with MINUSMA representative, August 25, 2016, Bamako, Mali.
99. UN Security Council Resolution 2100, UN Doc. S/RES/2100, April 25, 2013, para. 16(a).
100. Ibid., paragraph 16(a)(i).
101. UN Security Council Resolution 1925, UN Doc. S/RES/1925, May 28, 2010, para. 12(p).
102. UN Security Council Resolution 2149, UN Doc. S/RES/2149, April 10, 2014, para. 30(b).
103. UN Security Council Resolution 1542, UN Doc. S/RES/1542, April 30, 2004.
104. UN Security Council Resolution 2295, UN Doc. S/RES/2295, June 29, 2016, para. 19(b).
105. Interview with MINUSMA representative, August 29, 2016, Bamako, Mali.
106. The Capstone Doctrine also makes reference to the idea that peacekeeping operations are limited to using force at the tactical level, as opposed to peace-enforcement missions which may use force at the strategic level. This report avoids discussing this distinction, because there are no clear or useful ways to differentiate between the use of force at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels in the context of UN missions. For example, the Draft Guidelines on Deterrence and Use of Force in UN Peacekeeping produced by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support in 2013 use the terms tactical, operational, and strategic but do not clearly explain the differences between them. These draft guidelines include two use-of-force models "as guides for Mission personnel and in particular for members of the military components . . . the operational level model, which applies to contingents and the tactical level model, which applies to individuals." Given that the Capstone Doctrine seems to restrict the use of force in peacekeeping to the tactical level, interpreting that level to mean the level of individual peacekeepers would place unrealistic and ineffective constraints on a peacekeeping operation. Even if it were possible to clearly define

what was meant by operational-level use of force, the Capstone Doctrine is silent altogether on whether that would constitute peacekeeping or peace enforcement (see Alison Giffen, “Addressing the Doctrinal Deficit,” Stimson Center, 2010, 31).

107. UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and UN Department of Field Support, “United Nations Peacekeeping: Principles and Guidelines,” 34.

108. *Ibid.*, 35.

109. *Ibid.*, 32.

110. Michael Shurkin, “France’s War in Mali Lessons for an Expeditionary Army,” Rand Corporation, 2014, 19.

111. “Accord pour la Paix et la Reconciliation au Mali: Issu de Processus d’Alger,” June 20, 2015, <http://photos.state.gov/libraries/mali/328671/peace-accord-translations/1-accord-paix-et-reconciliation-francais.pdf>.

112. UN Security Council Resolution 2295, S/RES/2295, June 29, 2016, para. 19(c).

113. For more on this, see “Civilian Casualty Tracking, Analysis & Response Cell (CCTARC),” Center for Civilians in Conflict, 2013, <http://www.somaliangoconsortium.org/docs/key/4/2013/1372191101.pdf>.

114. On ways to mitigate harm caused by security sector reform, see Fairlie Chappuis and Aditi Gorur, “Reconciling Security Sector Reform and the Protection of Civilians in Peacekeeping Contexts,” Stimson Center, 2015, <http://www.stimson.org/images/uploads/research-pdfs/CIC-No3-web.pdf>.

115. On ways to engage communities in protection strategies, see Aditi Gorur and Alison Giffen, “Engaging Community Voices in Protection Strategies: Annexes on Lessons Learned,” Stimson Center, 2013, <http://www.stimson.org/PDFs/CIC/CIC-ANNEXES.pdf>.



# Defining the **BOUNDARIES** of UN Stabilization Missions

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In 2004, the United Nations Security Council authorized the first stabilization mission in Haiti. Since then, it has authorized three more in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, and the Central African Republic. Yet the Security Council has never defined the term “stabilization,” explained how stabilization missions differ from other UN peace operations, or elaborated on the outcomes it expects stabilization missions to achieve.

The term “stabilization” has in recent years become a source of concern among some peacekeeping stakeholders. Some member states are concerned that stabilization entails a new breed of missions that takes peacekeeping into uncharted territory and potentially violates the core principles that define peacekeeping.

Drawing on understandings of stabilization in concept and in practice, this report proposes a new definition of stabilization in the context of UN peacekeeping. By adopting this definition, the UN can address member states’ concerns about stabilization missions and bring clarity to a term that has been left unexplained for too long.