STIMSON

Prioritizing the Protection of Civilians in UN Peace Operations

ANALYZING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE HIPPO REPORT

Aditi Gorur and Lisa Sharland

FEBRUARY 2016

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The report of the High-Level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations (HIPPO), released in June 2015, observes a growing gap between what is expected of peace operations and what they have delivered. The HIPPO report particularly recognized this gap in its comments on the protection of civilians (POC), which it describes as a "core obligation" of the UN.[1] The report offers a number of targeted suggestions to improve the implementation of protection mandates in its section on POC. However, recommendations that could improve POC were not limited only to that section of the HIPPO report. The report also recommended several other reforms – primarily at the strategic level, in the areas of mandating, planning, and analysis – that are also needed to lay the groundwork for effective protection of civilians. While these strategic level recommendations are not listed under the heading of POC in the HIPPO report, this Stimson Center report argues that they are critical to create conducive conditions for missions not only to implement POC, but to prioritize it.

The HIPPO report's recommendation to produce **phased and sequenced mandates** could allow missions to focus their efforts and resources on POC when protection threats are highest, and to avoid undertaking activities that could undermine protection objectives. However, phased and sequenced mandates are only likely to succeed if they provide strategic objectives for missions to achieve, rather than detailed lists of tasks for missions to implement. Moreover, the adoption of phased and sequenced mandates can only lead to effective prioritization of POC on the ground if it is tied to reform in three additional areas highlighted by the HIPPO report.

First, effective prioritization of POC depends on a **political strategy** that identifies whether and how POC is envisioned to contribute toward the mission's political goals. In addition, the political strategy should anticipate tensions that might arise between the two core mission objectives of protecting civilians and supporting political solutions. Mission activities to support political solutions aim ultimately to create a more secure environment for the population, but can undermine protection objectives in the short-term. Where tensions arise, missions should treat POC as their highest priority in order to minimize harm and maintain legitimacy.

Second, effective prioritization of POC depends on how POC is approached in mission **planning and analysis**. Changes are needed to both the process and the content of conflict analysis tools that guide mission planning. The new analysis and planning capacity in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General may help to address some of the problems with process. A new conflict analysis framework should be created that includes atrocity indicators, broader conflict indicators, and an assessment of how mission capabilities could influence threats against civilians, in order to ensure that protection concerns are considered comprehensively.

Third, effective prioritization of POC depends on **timely deployment** in response to protection crises, since delays in the deployment of protection capacities can force the mission into a reactive posture, allow cycles of violence to become entrenched, and undermine the mission's capacity to protect. Recent initiatives to improve the rapid deployment of uniformed personnel are promising and should be supported. But the rapid deployment of civilian personnel who play important protection functions is just as important, and will require significant reform to the civilian recruitment and hiring system.

By intensifying the focus on POC at the strategic level during mission mandating, planning, and analysis, these recommendations outlined in the HIPPO report could help to bridge the gap between expectations and outcomes for the protection of civilians, and could make a real difference to people whose lives are torn apart by violence. With the support of a range of stakeholders in UN peace operations, these strategic reforms can lay a foundation that allows missions to truly prioritize the protection of civilians.

Recommendations

To the UN Security Council:

1. **Draft mandates that focus on setting strategic objectives to prioritize the protection of civilians.** This should be in contrast to overly detailed mandates that list specific tasks for missions to perform, undermining the ability of mission leaders and planners to make operational decisions.

2. **Apply a sequenced mandate approach** by ensuring that mandates are limited only to objectives that missions can realistically achieve given present conditions on the ground. This will enable missions to prioritize POC or other core mission tasks without taking on too many other activities simultaneously, which can dilute not only resources but also operational focus.

3. **Apply a phased mandate approach** by adopting short-term mandates at the start of a mission's deployment or when there has been a development that has created serious uncertainty about how the mission should proceed. This will provide the UN Secretariat and other stakeholders with the time and space necessary to plan, prepare, and deploy a mission that is responsive to the needs on the ground. This phased response could also facilitate the rapid deployment of personnel and resources needed to protect civilians during the initial phase of a mission that is responding to widespread violence.

4. **Ensure that mandates are developed on the basis of a political strategy wherever possible.** Exceptions may need to be made for some urgent protection crises. In developing political strategies, the Security Council should consider whether POC is an end in itself or a means to another end, and what tensions might arise between POC and other mission priorities, such as support for political solutions.

5. **Develop and adopt mission mandates on the basis of a thorough and realistic conflict analysis** conducted by the UN Secretariat. The Secretariat should reapply the conflict analysis in advance of each mandate renewal or when requested by the Secretary-General or the Security Council.

6. **Share the findings of conflict analyses with troop- and police-contributing countries**. This could be done as part of preliminary meetings with potential troop and police contributors ahead of a mission being authorized, and as part of routine consultations between the Security Council and troop and police contributors ahead of mandate renewals.

To the UN Secretariat:

7. **Continue the start-up of the small analysis and planning capacity in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General.** Further requirements for enhancing the planning and analysis capacity should be

assessed once there is a new Secretary-General, in order to determine if there are appropriate levels of resourcing and whether the capacity should draw on other sources of additional personnel, including through potential secondments.

8. **Ensure that the conflict analysis framework used to guide the planning of peace operations addresses factors that will inform the planning, authorizations, and resources required to protect civilians.** The framework should include an analysis of atrocity risk factors; an analysis of broader conflict dynamics; and an analysis of how civilian, police, and/or military capacities of UN peace operations could influence the threats.

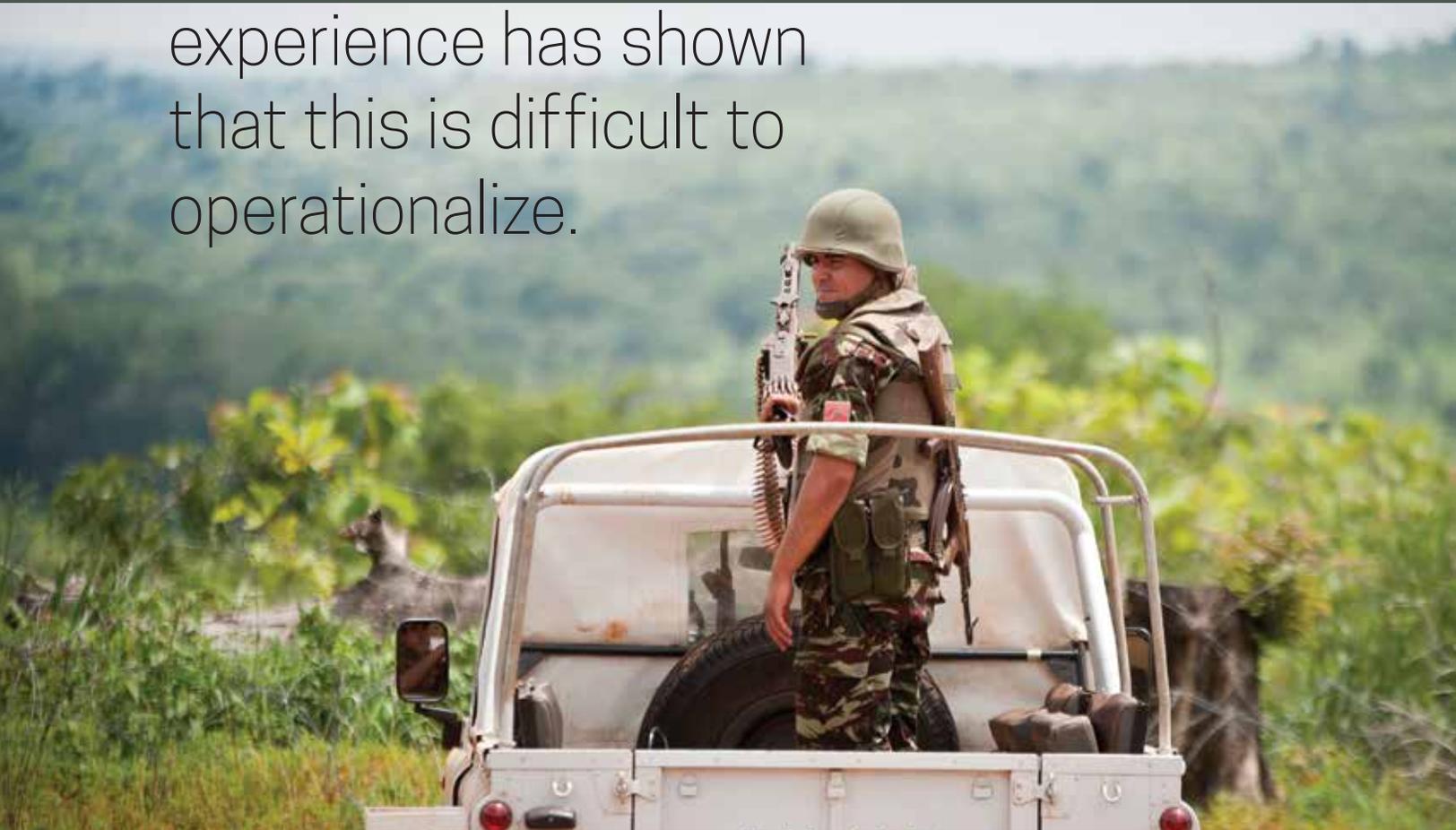### *To all stakeholders, including troop- and police-contributing countries:*

9. **Apply the term "sequenced mandates"** to refer to mandates with limited activities that are expected to change or grow over time depending on the conditions on the ground, in contrast to current wide-ranging mandates.

10. **Apply the term "phased mandates"** to refer to temporary mandates that are intended to be revised after a short period of time (e.g., three or six months).

11. **Identify resources and capabilities that can be made available to UN peace operations on short notice for rapid deployment,** such as critical enablers and assets to support improved situational awareness. For member states, this should include engaging with the new Peacekeeping Capabilities Readiness System to prepare personnel and make clear commitments.

12. **Request that the Secretariat put forward proposals to ensure more agile field support and flexible administrative arrangements,** including significant reform of the civilian personnel recruitment and hiring system to ensure that appropriately qualified civilians can be hired to fill critical posts in a timely manner, both at the international and national levels. An independent team that includes human resources professionals should assess the current system and suggest a blueprint for a redesigned system.

Even though the UN Security Council has explicitly made POC the first priority in the mandate of several UN peace operations, experience has shown that this is difficult to operationalize.

INTRODUCTION

In June 2015, the High-Level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations (HIPPO) released its report on the future of United Nations (UN) peace operations following the first comprehensive review in 15 years. The report notes that the protection of civilians (POC) is a "core obligation" of the United Nations and that significant progress has been made to develop norms and frameworks.[2] But it also suggests that results on the ground have been mixed, with a growing gap between expectations and delivery.[3]

On the issue of POC, the report recommends that missions work closely with local communities and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to build a protective environment; that the UN Secretariat present clear assessments on needs and resource requirements in missions with a POC mandate, ensure troop- and police-contributing countries are trained and equipped to deliver on their responsibilities, advise the UN Security Council of any obstacles to fulfilling the mandate, and present assessments of necessary changes; and that hidden national caveats be treated as disobedience of lawful commands if not disclosed in advance.[4]

The HIPPO report's list of recommendations on POC provides a useful guide to some reforms that could significantly improve the implementation of protection mandates. But there are several other recommendations put forward by the HIPPO that are also needed at the strategic level to lay the groundwork for effective protection during the early stages of mission mandating, planning, and analysis. In particular, the HIPPO report offers a number of recommendations that, if implemented correctly, could create conducive conditions for UN peace operations not only to *implement* POC mandates more effectively, but to *prioritize* POC above other mission activities in situations where civilians are under widespread threat of violence.

Even though the UN Security Council has explicitly made POC the first priority in the mandate of several UN peace operations,[5] experience has shown that this is difficult to operationalize. Efforts to implement other mission tasks, such as activities to extend state authority, build host-state government capacity, or assist with elections, can come into conflict with efforts to protect the civilian population from immediate physical violence. In situations where some mission tasks may adversely impact protection efforts, difficult decisions need to be made about the sequencing and timing of activities. This requires the Security Council to provide strategic direction in order to give mission leadership clear objectives, as well as to manage international and local expectations about what the UN peace operations can deliver when it comes to protecting civilians.

This report by the Stimson Center examines how some of the recommendations proposed by the HIPPO can support a more comprehensive approach by the UN system to prioritize POC. The report begins by examining how POC can be prioritized during the mandate development process, exploring the HIPPO's recommendation to produce **phased and sequenced mandates**. It argues that this idea of sequenced mandates can only lead to effective prioritization of POC on the ground if it is coupled with reform in three key areas highlighted by the HIPPO. First, the report contends that effective prioritization of POC depends on a **political strategy** that identifies whether and how POC is envisioned to contribute toward the mission's political goals, and anticipates tensions that might arise between the two core mission objectives of protecting civilians and supporting political solutions. Second, it argues

that effective prioritization of POC depends on how POC is approached in the **planning and analysis** stage, examining the HIPPO's recommendations regarding conflict analysis. Third, it maintains that the effective prioritization of POC depends on **timely deployment** in response to protection crises, and examines recommendations and recent initiatives related to the deployment of military, police, and civilian capacities for protection. Drawing on this analysis, the report provides some recommendations for the consideration of peace operations stakeholders, including member states, the UN Security Council, and the UN Secretariat, in order to improve the prioritization of POC in peace operations.

Many of the ideas discussed in this report are derived from the Stimson Center's submission to the HIPPO, proposing sequenced mandates as a way to prioritize the protection of civilians. For more detail, please see Alison Giffen, "Prioritizing the Protection of Civilians in UN Peace Operations: Submission to the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations," Stimson Center, March 2015.

On the issue of POC, the HIPPO report recommends that missions work closely with local communities and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to build a protective environment.

PHASED AND SEQUENCED MANDATES*

Many of the HIPPO report's recommendations reflect and reinforce suggestions that had been made previously by practitioners and analysts. Indeed, the HIPPO report identifies many of the same problems that the Brahimi report[6] – which summarizes the findings of the first comprehensive review of peace operations – identified 15 years earlier, such as the importance of taking greater preventive action and the need for improved planning and analysis. The HIPPO's repetition of many of the themes from the Brahimi report highlights how much progress remains to be made on these issues.

One of the strongest themes emerging from both the Brahimi report and the HIPPO report is the need for clear and achievable mandates. Both reports suggest producing mandates in two stages as a way to accomplish this goal. However, the specific problem that each report attempts to address with these recommendations is quite different. The Brahimi report suggests producing mandates in two stages to give troop- and police-contributing countries greater opportunity to provide input on what capacities could be feasibly generated, and therefore to try to ensure that the mandates matched available resources.[7] The HIPPO report's recommendation to produce "sequenced" mandates in two stages primarily aims to mitigate the problem of "cookie-cutter" mandates that are simultaneously bloated with too many tasks and disconnected from the reality of conditions on the ground.[8]

Viewed closely, the HIPPO's recommendation on sequenced mandates is one of the boldest and most novel in the report. Sequenced mandates have the potential to be a very helpful tool in promoting the effective protection of civilians and more effective peace operations generally.[9] They can reduce the number of activities that place pressure on limited mission resources at the beginning of a mission (critical to delivering physical protection and project force), and can prevent the inclusion of activities that may undermine protection objectives if undertaken at the wrong time. Yet the concept of mandate sequencing has not been fully developed.

The language of UN Security Council mandates has evolved in response to the changing nature of mission environments and political concerns within the Security Council. Mission mandates can fulfill a series of different aims for different actors engaged in peace operations. For mission leadership, the Council mandate provides authorization for a mission to undertake certain actions, and sets out a series of broad objectives to be fulfilled. This is particularly important in instances where the Council is providing authority to use force, which it is empowered to do through the application of Chapter VII of the UN Charter. The requirements of the mission mandate are then translated into a series of guidance documents for the mission, such as the concept of operations and rules of engagement. For the broader Secretariat, mission mandates can set out a range of objectives or tasks, used to allocate resources and posts to a field mission. Since Security Council products – including the resolutions used to adopt mandates – are often the only pronouncement of the Council's position on an issue, mandates subsequently become the most identifiable means of managing expectations among the international community, the host-state authorities, and local communities. If a mandate includes a comprehensive list of tasks, including the protection of civilians under threat of physical violence, then there are often very high expectations about what a peace operation will be able to achieve. Yet these expectations are

---

* Sequenced mandates were proposed by Alison Giffen in "Prioritizing the Protection of Civilians in UN Peace Operations: Submission to the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations," Stimson Center, March 2015. This section builds on that analysis.

often unrealistic. As the HIPPO report notes, the gap between expectations and the ability of missions to deliver on the ground is widening.[10] This is in part due to the inclusion of too many tasks at the initial stage of mission mandates, raising hopes about what can be delivered rapidly on the ground. Sequencing mandates may assist in better managing these expectations.

In the wake of the HIPPO report, UN stakeholders have been using the term "sequenced mandates" to refer to two separate processes. The first is the introduction of different activities into a peace operation mandate at different times so that activities are undertaken in sequential order that reflects evolving conditions on the ground, rather than including a very wide range of activities from the initial authorization of a mandate. The second process is the authorization of an initial bare-bones mandate with the stated intent that it will be revised after a short period (e.g., three or six months) after the mission has deployed and has a more nuanced understanding of the context. This latter process is referred to in the HIPPO report as a "two-stage" mandating process. The HIPPO report's own use of the term "sequenced mandate" builds in aspects of both processes (for more discussion, see the "Approaches to Phased and Sequenced Mandates" section of this report, on page 16).

To avoid confusion, we propose that the term "sequenced mandates" be used only to refer to the first process – the authorization of mandates with limited activities that change or grow over time depending on conditions on the ground – and that the term "phased mandates" should be used only to refer to the second process – the authorization of temporary mandates with the stated intent that they will be revised after a short period.[11]

Potential Risks and Opportunities

Sequencing has the potential to improve the effectiveness of peace operations, but it also comes with significant risks attached to overly specific mandates. Members of the UN Security Council may not have the context-specific expertise, information, or time needed to produce a detailed analysis of which specific tasks should take place in what order. Moreover, the UN bureaucracy is large and slow-moving, and cannot easily respond to changes in conditions on the ground, whereas missions need to retain flexibility to adjust to new political and security developments as they see fit.

To mitigate this risk, the Security Council should avoid detailing specific tasks it expects the mission to undertake at different times in the mandate, and should instead focus on strategic objectives. For example, rather than detailing that a UN mission should first support disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of armed groups and then security sector reform (SSR), the mandate could authorize the mission to focus initially on supporting efforts to reduce violence against civilians committed by rebel groups or members of the armed forces, then on supporting the government to develop accountability and professionalism within the security sector, and finally on building the capacity of the armed forces to maintain security. By focusing on objectives, the Council would give missions greater flexibility to develop appropriate activities to meet those objectives.

Although sequencing is still a new concept, there is already evidence of the risks that a micromanaged approach to sequencing can produce. The mandate of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) was significantly reconfigured in May 2014 in response to the civil war that began in December 2013. The revised UNMISS mandate suspended the mission's state-building activities and limited the mission to a smaller number of activities related to POC.[12] This revised mandate can be seen as a type of sequenced mandate, aiming to focus the mission's efforts and resources on POC while violence was at its

highest, and leaving room for the mission to re-engage on state-building if and when circumstances permitted. By suspending state-building activities, the Security Council also intended to ensure that the mission would not provide (or be perceived as providing) support to a party in a civil war that was committing deliberate violence against civilians. However, because the mandate took the approach of identifying specific tasks rather than outlining strategic objectives, it constrained the mission's ability to undertake certain activities. For example, the UNMISS police component was largely restricted from engaging with national counterparts to monitor their activities, and the mission's human rights division was prevented from taking opportunities to sensitize national authorities on their human rights obligations, because of concerns that these activities would be deemed to be capacity-building activities that were not permitted by the revised mandate. Mission leaders were likely better positioned than Security Council members to make decisions about whether these specific activities advanced mission objectives, and whether they would have been perceived as providing support to the South Sudanese government in the context of the civil war.

The UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUS-CA) has also experienced problems stemming from a sequenced mandate that identifies specific tasks rather than strategic objectives. The original mandate for MINUSCA authorized the mission to undertake numerous tasks, including POC, support to the political process, and DDR, and authorized the mission to support SSR as an "additional [task] as conditions permit."[13] This mandate translated SSR into a lower priority in the mission's internal prioritization framework, as well as affecting the levels of human and financial resources allocated to SSR within the mission.[14] Because SSR objectives and activities were closely interwoven with the mission's intended priorities, particularly DDR, this complicated the mission's ability to fulfill core functions.

Despite the risks, if phased and sequenced mandates are approached thoughtfully, they have the potential to significantly improve the ability of UN peace operations to protect civilians.

Adopting an approach to mandating that focuses on strategic objectives instead of specific tasks may cause concern among some Security Council members that the Council's influence on mission budgets could be reduced. For example, the existing practice of setting an authorized budget ceiling for military and police in mission mandates provides the Council with direct influence on some aspects of the budget. But most aspects of mission planning – including the allocation and deployment of assets, resources, and professional and generalist civilian capabilities – are left to the relevant departments in the UN Secretariat, as well as the mission, to identify what is needed to fulfill the mission mandate as part of the Secretary-General's annual budget for each mission (which, under current practice, is then scrutinized by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the UN General Assembly's Fifth Committee). These processes should continue and should be strengthened, guided by comprehensive mission analysis and planning that draws on a conflict analysis framework (for more discussion, see the "Prioritizing POC in Mission Planning and Analysis" section of this report, on page 23).

Phased mandates involve three primary risks. First, adjusting mandates too frequently might leave missions unable to plan ahead successfully. Second, political attention to a crisis may decline over time, and so Security Council members may not pay as much attention to the content of mandate revisions as they paid to the initial mandate. Third, conditions on the ground may change rapidly and missions may be constrained by mandates that are narrowly tailored to different circumstances, as opposed to the generalist mandates that are currently more common. To mitigate these risks, phasing should be used only in two limited circumstances: at the beginning of a mission's deployment (in order to give the mission and Secretariat planners time to better analyze conditions on the ground), and when there has been a significant development (such as a rapidly escalating threat to civilians) that has created serious uncertainty about how the mission should proceed. In these instances, the Security Council

For now, the concept of phased and sequenced mandates remains new and mostly untested, and the UN Secretariat and member states should remain open to a variety of approaches depending on the circumstances.

should proceed with adopting a new mandate or reconfiguring an existing mandate as soon as possible to ensure that the mission is positioned to address threats to civilians, but note that it intends to revise the mandate after a short period of time, when it has had an opportunity to better assess the circumstances on the ground.

Despite the risks, if phased and sequenced mandates are approached thoughtfully, they have the potential to significantly improve the ability of UN peace operations to protect civilians. First, they could make mandates more limited and achievable, breaking away from the trend toward authorizing large, multidimensional missions with very wide-ranging mandates. For example, the mandate of the UN mission in Mali includes supporting, monitoring, and supervising the implementation of cease-fire arrangements; supporting the implementation of a peace agreement; facilitating reconciliation among all stakeholders; protecting civilians; stabilizing population centers and preventing the return of armed elements to those areas; promoting and protecting human rights; facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance; and protecting cultural and historical sites from attack.[15] Reducing the number of tasks given to a peacekeeping mission and ensuring that the tasks given are achievable at that time would help to ensure that the protection of civilians can be prioritized and implemented more effectively. This would also contribute to closing the gap between expectations and delivery on the ground.

Second, phasing and sequencing could make mandates more flexible and relevant. For example, in response to the outbreak of civil war in South Sudan, the Security Council issued a stripped-down mandate focusing on core protection activities and suspending capacity-building activities until the political situation could be resolved – in essence, sequencing the mission's activities.[16] Once the parties reached a tenuous agreement, the Council issued a new phased mandate that added activities to support the implementation of the peace agreement, but called for the mandate to be revised two months later so that it could respond to an internal review of the mission's capacities and observe to what extent the parties were complying with the peace agreement.[17]

Third, phased and sequenced mandates could provide an opportunity for the Security Council to give more active consideration to the actions of the host-state government and other political parties, and their willingness to comply in good faith with their responsibilities. Many missions' mandates are written broadly without much reference to these factors, but changes in the willingness of host-state authorities to comply with status-of-forces agreements or oppressive behavior on their part should in some cases affect the way the mission prioritizes its activities. Where appropriate, a phased or sequenced mandate could send a strong message and offer the mission political backing; for example, a phased or sequenced mandate that responds to changing political dynamics by modifying or suspending capacity-building activities may preserve the perception of the mission's impartiality and ensure that the mission is not perceived as implicated in human rights abuses.

The Security Council and UN system have some experience in phasing and sequencing mission mandates, but this has primarily been applied during mission drawdowns and transitions, in a largely different context. Lessons emerging from those experiences have demonstrated the importance of having clear mandates focused on strategic objectives, which articulate the conditions for success in a mission.[18] The Council has subsequently applied some of these lessons in the case of several missions currently in a drawdown phase (such as those in Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, and Haiti), identifying benchmarks as the mission prepares to hand over to national authorities.[19] One of the

reasons it has been somewhat easier for the Council to adopt a more considered and consultative approach at the transition or drawdown of peace operations is that it often has more experience to draw on (both within the Council and the UN Secretariat), as well as a better understanding of the local conflict dynamics, as a consequence of the extensive duration of a mission (on average, more than a decade). The Council also is not under urgent pressure during drawdown to quickly draft a mandate in order to respond urgently to sudden developments. While there are stark differences in mission needs at the beginning and end of a peace operation, particularly when it comes to the protection of civilians, there is value in taking stock of the lessons that have been learned and applied during the drawdown of peace operations when considering how to sequence during the early stages of a UN peace operation.

Approaches to Phased and Sequenced Mandates

The HIPPO report proposed a model of phased and sequenced mandates with two stages:

> Under this model, the mission should be given an initial mandate with an overall political goal, a limited number of initial priority tasks and an explicit planning mandate that requests the Secretary-General to return within six months with a proposal for sequenced activities based on a limited number of achievable benchmarks for mission performance. This approach can ensure an initial UN presence on the ground while providing time for the Secretariat to conduct consultations with the host government, civil society and as far as possible, parties to the conflict, and to develop detailed assessments of the situation on the ground with partners. Planners should conduct scenario planning exercises with stress tests to make sure that the mandate and the configuration of the mission is tailored to context. Within six months, clear options and recommendations should be presented to the Security Council for mission activities, linked to a clear assessment and requisite resources and capabilities.[20]

This two-stage model could help to address some of the problems with the current mandating process, but it also leaves many issues unresolved. Mandates should already in theory be able to be revised each time they are considered for renewal, but in practice the Security Council tends to extend previous mandates in the absence of major shocks, and there is nothing in the model proposed by the HIPPO report that would facilitate change in that respect. On the contrary, there is the risk that, having revised the mandate once after the six-month reassessment period, the Council would stop paying close attention when the mandate is being considered subsequently.

Under the proposed model, the Council is expected to authorize more limited initial tasks with a view to expanding those tasks over time, but it remains just as susceptible as it is now to overcrowded initial mandates. Indeed, member states, advocacy groups, members of the Secretariat, and other stakeholders with interests in the inclusion of specific tasks will have two opportunities to ensure that their issues of interest are included in the mandate – at the initial mandate stage and then again six months later. Moreover, mission personnel deployed with the initial mandate are likely to be influenced by their loyalties to and professional interests in their own sections, and thus to recommend a continuation and expansion of the originally authorized tasks rather than a reduction of their sections and the addition of new tasks to be performed by other sections.

These problems are tied to fundamental features of the UN system and can never be fully remedied, but they can be mitigated by trying to reduce the influence of institutional loyalties among planners

within the UN Secretariat; increase the accountability of members of the UN Security Council with respect to the quality and relevance of the mandates they produce; and ensure as far as possible that the mission's mandate is based on a thorough and realistic conflict analysis. (These issues are explored in the "Prioritizing POC in Mission Planning and Analysis" section of this report, on page 23.)

For now, the concept of phased and sequenced mandates remains new and mostly untested, and the UN Secretariat and member states should remain open to a variety of approaches depending on the circumstances. Different approaches to phased and sequenced mandates could include, for example:

- Authorizing an initial mission that focuses on supporting political settlements, protecting civilians, and monitoring and reporting on human rights in a country whose government is perpetrating abuses against its population; and as parties to the conflict demonstrate their commitment to the peace process and good governance, gradually building in elements of capacity-building.

- Authorizing a smaller initial mission based in the capital city to support a political settlement in a country experiencing internal conflict; and once a viable peace agreement has been reached, authorizing activities to extend the mission's presence across the country to support the extension of state authority.

- Authorizing an initial military-heavy presence to protect civilians in a particular region of the country experiencing violence perpetrated against civilians by rebel groups; and once security conditions improve, authorizing greater civilian presence in that region and other regions as appropriate to support local reconciliation and good governance.

Effective prioritization
of POC depends on a
political strategy that
identifies whether and
how POC is envisioned
to contribute toward the
mission's political goals.

POLITICAL STRATEGY

The previous section explored the potential rewards that phased and sequenced mandates can offer in ensuring that POC mandates are prioritized when the situation demands, as well as the risks attached to the idea. The following three sections identify three HIPPO recommendations that will be crucial if phased and sequenced mandates are to be implemented effectively: the development of political strategies, improved planning and analysis, and rapid deployment of mission personnel. Without improvements in these three areas, phased and sequenced mandates are unlikely to result in improved prioritization of POC on the ground.

The HIPPO report recommends that political strategies must form the basis of mission mandates.[21] In this context, a political strategy is essentially a vision for how the mission will be able to use its capacities to support a political outcome that can sustain peace. This recommendation springs from the HIPPO's emphasis on the fact that peace operations are political instruments intended to facilitate a political resolution to conflicts. The Security Council and Secretariat must, wherever possible, be guided by a political strategy for how the peace operation can bring about such a result during the mandating, planning, and analysis processes. Without a political strategy, it is unlikely that the right priority tasks will be identified for the mission and that the right sequence will be envisioned for their implementation. Thus, effectively phased and sequenced mandates require an underlying political strategy to guide the identification of mission priorities.

This common-sense idea of political strategy requires some unpacking in relation to POC. Two central questions need to be considered. First, where does POC fit into a political strategy? Second, how should POC be prioritized in a mission mandate against other tasks that aim to bring about the political outcome identified by the political strategy?

Determining How POC Fits Into Political Strategies

If the Security Council is to develop political strategies that underlie and guide the mandate development process, it will need to clarify how the POC agenda fits in. In particular, the Council will need to consider whether, in a given conflict, POC is a *means* or an *end*. In other words, does the Council want a mission to protect civilians in order to facilitate a political solution, or does it want the mission to protect civilians as a stand-alone activity and for its own sake?

The HIPPO report clearly favors POC as a means to a political end, arguing that:

> Protection mandates must be linked explicitly to political solutions. To do otherwise denies the mission a viable exit strategy and provides only palliative protection for civilians. Absent a serious political strategy for resolving the armed conflict that gave rise to the threats to civilians in the first place, a mandate focused exclusively or even predominantly on the protection of civilians is likely to lead to a long, drawn-out and ultimately unwinnable campaign.[22]

However, this categorical rejection of protection as an end in itself may not be justified. Although many analysts have criticized the Security Council for increasingly authorizing peacekeeping missions where there is no peace to keep,[23] the reality is that there are few other tools available to address many conflicts in which civilian lives are threatened. This limitation has emerged most recently in debates

around how to respond to the escalating violence against civilians in Burundi, with the UN Secretariat acknowledging to the Security Council that it will be limited in its ability to respond to violence against civilians in the absence of a political framework and strategic consent of the main parties to the conflict.[24]

In certain situations, if a political process has not yet begun, or does not appear viable, the Security Council may still find it necessary to deploy a peace operation to protect civilians despite less-than-ideal conditions. Particularly in situations where violence against civilians includes the risk of atrocities, deploying a peace operation with a POC mandate may be warranted even if it is not obvious how POC can be expected to contribute toward a political outcome. This means that there may be situations where the Security Council deems it necessary to deploy a peace operation with a POC mandate but without a clear idea of how the immediate protection of civilians will fit into a political strategy. By employing a phased mandate approach in these situations, the Security Council could facilitate a rapid response to urgent protection threats while allowing time to develop a political strategy as the mission starts up.

An analysis of whether and how POC might facilitate a political solution could help the Council identify how to develop a phased and/or sequenced mandate that fits the situation. For example, how would a protection intervention be perceived by the parties to the conflict, and how would it affect their view of the mission as a credible and impartial political mediator? Does a conflict analysis suggest that immediate physical intervention by peacekeeping troops to protect civilians, using force if necessary, would create the space for political dialogue? Are there other mission designs or other actors that are more likely to facilitate a political solution?[25] In identifying the priority tasks for the mission to tackle and considering at what stage in the conflict those tasks should be implemented, it is important to consider how POC fits into a political strategy, starting from the question of whether it is viewed as a means or an end.

POC and Political Solutions: Competing Priorities?

The HIPPO report emphasizes the central role of political processes in sustainably resolving conflicts, noting correctly that the only way to ensure that civilians are protected in the long term when a country is experiencing politically motivated violence is by supporting the resolution of the political dispute. At the same time, POC has emerged since the late 1990s as a primary obligation for UN peace operations. POC is listed as the highest priority, or among the highest priorities, of several peacekeeping missions (including the UN missions in the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic), and UN Security Council Resolution 1894 states that POC must be prioritized over other mission activities in decisions about how to allocate mission resources. The HIPPO report's emphasis on the "primacy of politics" has thus generated discussion about what it means to prioritize support for political solutions while also prioritizing POC.

Ideally, mission activities to support political solutions and to protect civilians will be complementary and mutually reinforcing. The policy on the protection of civilians produced by the UN Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support lays out three tiers of POC action. Tier I (protection through dialogue and engagement) and Tier III (establishment of a protective environment) can both involve mission support to political processes.[26] The policy thus positions support for political processes as a form of protection. However, while political engagement can directly protect civilians (for example,

by persuading combatants to lay down their arms), the relationship between the two agendas can be more complex than the policy describes – and in some cases the two agendas may come into tension.

UN Security Council mandates have identified a range of objectives in an attempt to bring about a political solution through the deployment of a peace operation. These can be categorized broadly along the following lines: (1) facilitating dialogues and reconciliation processes through mediation or the use of the Secretary-General's good offices; (2) helping to build and strengthen institutions that allow political disputes to be resolved peacefully (for example, by assisting with elections and constitutional development processes); and (3) supporting the extension, consolidation, and/or establishment of state authority in accordance with a peace agreement (for example, by supporting the establishment of formal governance structures in areas formerly controlled by armed groups, or the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of former rebels). While these activities can facilitate efforts to find a political solution and ideally increase the long-term security of civilians, some may also increase immediate risks to civilians, depending on their timing and application.

For example, support for peace and reconciliation initiatives usually involves tensions between reaching an agreement quickly and supporting a process that is more inclusive of different stakeholders (such as a wider range of combatants and civil society representatives). Prioritizing a speedier political agreement can result in violence against civilians by those who perceive the process as illegitimate or believe they were unfairly excluded. Moreover, mission leaders have limited political capital and must sometimes make hard choices about whether to spend that capital on drawing attention to violations against civilians or shepherding peace negotiations to a conclusion. Election support often comes with the risk of increased violence in the lead-up to elections as parties attempt to dissuade voting or delay the process. The extension of state authority comes with risk such as facilitating the installation of abusive government officials who create threats to civilians; creating a security vacuum between the ousting of an informal governance actor and the extension of the formal government; and collateral damage to civilians if non-state actors attempt to retake control of an area from state authorities. In the case of activities such as disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of armed actors to consolidate state authority, there may be risks of collateral damage to civilians as armed actors resist disarmament, as well as harm to civilians if the disarmament of one community leaves it vulnerable to attack by another.

It cannot, therefore, be assumed that support for political solutions and POC will always be complementary mandated tasks for a peace operation, and mission leadership will sometimes need to make decisions about how to balance these priorities against one another. The HIPPO report recognized that a political resolution to the conflict is the ultimate objective of a peace operation and the only way to sustainably ensure people's security. However, it is important that the protection of civilians continues to be treated as a mission's highest priority in places with widespread violence against civilians, even while acknowledging that the support of political solutions is the mission's ultimate objective, for two reasons. First, a mandate, concept of operations, and mindset among mission leadership that reflect the idea that POC is the mission's highest priority helps to ensure that missions remain credible and legitimate in the eyes of the host country's population – a necessary condition for missions to play an effective role in supporting political processes.

Second, in conditions of high levels of violence and intractable parties, missions may need to prioritize immediate POC in order to create the space for political dialogue. For example, UNMISS has

been unable to play a substantial role in supporting the national-level political process since civil war broke out in the country in December 2013. Its role in the physical protection of civilians has also been constrained, and largely limited to protection of the civilians who fled to its bases to escape violence. Nevertheless, the protection of these civilians within and near UNMISS bases allowed the mission to mitigate the impact of the violence on civilians while the two major parties to the conflict and their affiliate militia groups attempted to defeat each other militarily. As the violence continued, and the international community exerted greater diplomatic pressure, President Salva Kiir and former Vice President Riek Machar finally signed a peace agreement in August 2015. Although the agreement was deeply flawed and the cease-fire has already been violated numerous times, the agreement still represents significant progress toward resolving the conflict politically. Had the people seeking protection from UNMISS been left unprotected, the effect on the parties engaged in the conflict and on members of the targeted tribes would likely have exacerbated cycles of revenge and made a political solution even more unfeasible.

Prioritizing POC does not mean necessarily that missions will avoid undertaking any activities that create potential short-term risks to civilians, but it does indicate that missions should only undertake such activities after carefully considering the risks to civilians, deciding that the longer-term benefits to civilians outweigh the immediate protection concerns, and implementing strong measures to mitigate the risks.

Prioritizing POC does not mean necessarily that missions will avoid undertaking any activities that create potential short-term risks to civilians.

PRIORITIZING POC IN MISSION PLANNING AND ANALYSIS

The Security Council's capacity to develop phased and sequenced mandates that respond successfully to priority threats on the ground depends heavily on the advice it receives from the UN Secretariat. At present, the Secretariat's planning and analysis frequently fails to result in effective mandates that reflect the highest priority threats on the ground. This is despite the development of a range of planning tools and frameworks intended to support a more integrated UN institution approach to conflict and post-conflict situations. The inadequate planning and analysis stem from two issues: the *process* of analyzing conflicts and planning new missions, and the *content* of the conflict analysis framework applied.

With regard to process, several factors contribute to overambitious or poorly designed mandates. Personnel participating in strategic assessment missions (SAMs) and technical assessment missions (TAMs) that form the basis of planning are provided from different offices, and their analysis is frequently influenced, often unintentionally, by institutional lenses and by natural biases and loyalties. UN Secretariat personnel involved in assessments and planning may be overly optimistic about the impact that a UN mission is likely to have, and are sometimes more focused on the tools available to them than on the problem that needs solving. These personnel also have only a short time on the ground during which to produce their assessments. The guidance that is offered to the Security Council may be overly influenced by the Secretariat's understanding of what kind of response the Council is inclined to authorize and what resources are likely to be available – often because Council members make their intentions with regard to the mandate explicit to the Secretariat before and during the assessment process. Finally, once the guidance reaches the Security Council, it is not always clear that the mandate produced takes into account the Secretariat's assessment (with the Council either accepting and modifying the assessment as necessary, or providing a rationale for why it did not follow the advice of the Secretary-General). On the contrary, Council members often add to or modify mandates to reflect their national interests or to accommodate requests from special interest groups. All too often, members of the Security Council resort to reproducing language from previously authorized peacekeeping missions to guide their responses to new crises.

There have been several attempts at addressing gaps in mission planning and analysis within the UN system over the last two decades. These have included the adoption of a range of directives and policies aimed at generating a more integrated approach across the UN system.[27] The most recent evolution of these policies has been the UN Policy on Integrated Assessment and Planning, approved by the UN Secretary-General in April 2013. The purpose of the policy is "to define the minimum and mandatory requirements for integrated conduct of assessments and planning in conflict and post-conflict settings where an integrated UN presence is in place or is being considered, and to outline the responsibilities of UN actors in this process." However, as the HIPPO report notes, despite the existence of such policy tools and frameworks, efforts by the UN Secretariat to undertake strategic analysis and assessments often fall short because of weak implementation and a lack of time, resulting in rushed assessment missions.[28]

The Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the HIPPO's recommendations notes that he has decided to establish a small "analysis and planning capacity" within the Executive Office of the Secretary-General to improve planning and analysis processes. The Security Council has subsequently encouraged the Secretary-General to proceed in improving analysis and planning.[29] The new capacity's roles and responsibilities are still being defined, and its scope is limited. The capacity is being formed

as Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon prepares to leave office. Although discussions of a major restructuring of the wider peace and security architecture in which the capacity operates are ongoing, any significant changes are likely to be deferred until the next Secretary-General takes office. As such, it will likely serve in the short-term as an initial, placeholder capacity that supports improved quality within the existing UN approaches to analysis and planning, while further changes might be considered by a future Secretary-General.

The new capacity, which is initially anticipated to be only a small entity, will not replace the operational planning and analysis responsibilities or capacities of the designated "lead department" (the Department of Peacekeeping Operations or the Department of Political Affairs, depending on whether a peacekeeping mission or a special political mission is anticipated to be deployed). As such, in its early stages the capacity should work with the lead departments in helping set a clear quality assurance framework for analysis and ensuring that integrated analysis produced by the lead department meets the Secretary-General's expectations both before and during the planning of a peace operation. The capacity should also ensure the timely triggering of planning processes and ensure that senior management intent for the planning process is translated into clear strategic objectives, key considerations, and parameters and responsibilities for the planning process, both at the start of missions and at key transition points in the mission's lifetime.

Looking ahead, the incoming Secretary-General's transition team should review the planning and analysis capacity to determine how it might be augmented and strengthened. For example, it might be charged to work with the lead departments and other UN entities in horizon-scanning to help the Secretary-General anticipate better UN responses in emerging situations, and in serving as a platform for objective analysis that draws on the capacities of the full UN system. The future shape and composition of an enhanced analysis and planning capacity will likely need to be taken into consideration in light of wider decisions about structural review at UN headquarters. To make it a truly system-wide capacity, the analysis and planning capacity should consider secondments from other UN entities.

The perspectives and analyses of external experts must be amplified to balance out the influence of UN institutional lenses and biases. Lead departments should ensure that the UN conflict analysis process includes consultations with civil society representatives (including women and youth) and country experts who can add depth and local perspectives to conflict assessments. These outside experts can also provide an important counterweight to the UN perspectives that otherwise dominate the assessment process, and can offer new ideas that Secretariat personnel may not have been able to generate on their own. Local civil society representatives, country experts, and NGO workers could brief members of the SAM or TAM in-country, and relevant experts could brief a wider community in New York that could include members of the SAM/TAM, members of the planning and analysis cell, other relevant members of the Secretariat, and members of the Security Council.

With regard to the content of conflict assessments, the UN has a range of conflict analysis tools that it may draw on to guide planning for UN peace operations, with many of these tools identified within the Integrated Assessment and Planning Handbook.[30] However, there is no comprehensive UN conflict analysis tool that factors in the broad range of conflict and atrocity indicators that are needed to plan for peace operations that will effectively protect civilians. Existing policies directed at integrated planning and assessment tend to focus on the integration aspects (to deliver one UN approach) instead of the content or focus of the analysis. Furthermore, personnel involved in conducting assessments

for peace operations have a tendency to view conflicts through specific lenses related to the offices in which they sit, or their background or expertise, and the conflict analyses subsequently produced may be influenced by these perspectives and may not give equal weight to the full range of factors that need to be considered.

If POC is to be prioritized as part of mission planning and analysis, then reforms need to address the content of the analysis being undertaken. From a protection perspective, a conflict analysis framework to guide the planning of peace operations should include the following three components:

- An analysis of atrocity risk factors.[31]

- An analysis of broader conflict dynamics.

- An analysis of how the civilian, police, and/or military capacities of a UN peace operation could influence threats.

Each of these components of analysis is necessary to ensure that missions operating in environments of widespread violence against civilians are properly designed and equipped. An atrocity analysis can help planners to ensure that the mission has the capacity to prevent and mitigate the most serious crimes as a priority, both as a moral imperative to protect populations under threat and as a pragmatic necessity to maintain the credibility of UN peace operations. A broader conflict analysis can help to ensure that the mission can plan for the diverse threats that civilians often face in conflict environments. Finally, an analysis of whether and how the capacities of a peace operation could influence the conflict (positively or negatively) can help guide decisions about which activities to prioritize and what type of mission design would be most effective.

Creating a comprehensive framework for assessing conflict conditions would undoubtedly be a long and arduous process, and would involve many rounds of review and sign-off within the UN system. However, producing such a framework would ensure that threats to civilians are considered comprehensively and consistently, and would reduce opportunities to insert additional tasks into the mandate that do not reflect priorities on the ground. This strength would be reinforced if the results of the conflict analysis were shared more broadly than the Security Council – for example, with troop and police contributors during routine meetings with the Council – to increase the transparency of the assessment process and the accountability of Council members for the mandate they eventually produce.

Once deployed, missions should be required to reapply the same conflict analysis framework before each mandate renewal and report the results to the Security Council. Current mission reporting under the results-based budgeting framework concerns mission outputs and does not provide the information that the Council needs in order to make meaningful changes to mandates. The reassessment would reinforce the Security Council's capacity to produce mandates that remain tailored to conditions on the ground.

Rapid deployment has consistently been a major challenge for UN peace operations, but recent initiatives may improve the UN's ability to intervene to prevent violence from escalating.

DEPLOYING CAPACITIES FOR PROTECTION

The HIPPO report recognizes the importance of ensuring that peace operations respond quickly to crises, noting that "Slow deployment is one of the greatest impediments to more effective peace operations. When a mission trickles into a highly demanding environment, it is dangerously exposed on the ground and initial high expectations turn to disappointment, frustration and anger."[32] This is particularly true in situations where there is a high risk of atrocities and a failure to deploy quickly can have devastating consequences. It is also true in other situations with widespread violence against civilians, where delays can lead not only to greater loss of life but also to more entrenched political divisions, cycles of revenge, and a breakdown of social cohesion, making the task of protecting civilians much more difficult to achieve when the mission does deploy. The later a mission's protection capacities are deployed, the more likely it is that the mission will be forced to respond to violence reactively rather than proactively.

If the Security Council wishes to ensure that a peace operation effectively prioritizes the protection of civilians, therefore, the UN must have the ability to deploy personnel on short notice. Although the HIPPO report focuses on the rapid deployment of uniformed personnel, its recommendation applies equally to the deployment of military, police, and civilian capacities within peace operations. Rapid deployment has consistently been a major challenge for UN peace operations, but recent initiatives may improve the UN's ability to intervene quickly during a narrow window of opportunity in a crisis to prevent violence from escalating.

The Leaders' Summit on Peacekeeping in September 2015 focused on mobilizing uniformed personnel, capabilities, and resources in order to fulfill existing gaps and future needs in UN peacekeeping operations. Many missions have struggled to meet the authorized ceiling of military and police personnel and have lacked critical enablers including helicopters and strategic lift. These gaps have had a detrimental impact on the ability of missions to protect civilians. More than 40,000 additional military and police personnel, including a range of enabling capabilities, were pledged during the recent Leaders' Summit on Peacekeeping. These have the potential to improve the capacities available for protection, but in order to be most effective, member states will need to follow through on their commitments and the UN will need mechanisms to plan for and absorb these capacities into existing missions.

The UN Secretariat has been developing new tools to support rapid deployment, led by a recently established Strategic Force Generation and Capability Planning Cell. The cell oversaw the replacement of the flawed UN Standby Arrangements System (UNSAS) with a new Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System (PCRS) in July 2015. UNSAS had become outdated and ineffective, with many member states making commitments that were not available when called upon to deploy to a UN peacekeeping mission. The PCRS is intended to provide greater readiness and predictability to generate military and police contributions, with clearly defined criteria and steps to identifying actual commitments.[33] This includes three levels of graduated engagement with troop-contributing countries. Those that reach Level 3 may pledge commitments within 30, 60, or 90 days at the rapid deployment level. Critical enablers that then deploy rapidly will be eligible to receive a financial premium. This system is not yet fully operationalized, and there are still risks that some countries may make commitments that may not be met. However, the PCRS has systems in place for more active engagement and dialogue with member states on their commitments, ensuring that the UN Secretariat has a better understanding of the willingness of countries to deploy military and police assets.

While the Leaders' Summit and the PCRS have the potential to improve rapid deployment of military and police personnel, significant work is still needed with respect to the deployment of civilian personnel in peace operations. The Brahimi report emphasized the importance of civilian personnel in performing peacebuilding functions in increasingly complex multidimensional missions, but, as the HIPPO report acknowledges, civilian personnel also play an indispensable role in the protection of civilians.[34] These protection functions include political engagement and dialogue, conflict analysis and early warning, engagement with security institutions and armed groups to discourage harm to civilians, engagement with local communities to identify security threats and perceptions, coordination with humanitarian agencies and organizations, and conflict prevention and mediation interventions. Civilian roles include specific positions dedicated to ensuring that protection mandates are prioritized and implemented effectively, including POC advisors, women's protection advisors, and child protection advisors. In the Central African Republic and South Sudan, for example, senior POC advisors located within the offices of senior mission leadership engage with all mission components to develop comprehensive POC strategies, oversee their implementation, and ensure that mission activities do not conflict with or undermine protection objectives. DPKO recently announced that all missions with a POC mandate would be required to have a senior POC advisor.[35]

However, these critical civilian capacities cannot be brought to bear on the protection of civilians if the right people for the roles cannot be efficiently recruited and deployed. The current system for recruiting civilian personnel for UN peace operations is deeply dysfunctional. Whereas states are responsible for the recruitment and deployment of police and military personnel, candidates for civilian positions must apply individually to the UN Secretariat.[36] Dysfunction within the UN recruitment and hiring system has led to months-long delays in the deployment of civilian personnel[37] and therefore to vacancies for important protection roles. Specific problems over the past decade have included:

- Slow processing of the large number of applications to the UN recruitment system (taking an average of 174 days to complete in 2006).[38]

- A mismatch between the content offered by training centers and the types of capacities needed by peacekeeping missions (for example, a possibly disproportionate number of candidates trained in human rights and rule of law), leading to a shortage of qualified candidates for some positions.[39]

- Inadequate links and coordination between DPKO recruitment mechanisms and mechanisms developed by external actors (such as state or nongovernmental rosters) or by other UN departments and agencies.[40]

- Perceived cronyism and reliance on informal channels that undermine a merit-based selection process.[41]

- A shortage of candidates for senior management positions within DPKO because of comparatively better benefits offered by other UN agencies.[42]

- Limited career prospects for civilian personnel serving in short-term contracts,[43] combined with a disinclination by member states to support permanent contracts for civilian peace operation personnel because of the financial burden this would create.[44]

From 2010 to 2012, the UN developed an internal roster of prequalified candidates in an attempt to reduce the time lag with civilian personnel recruitment and deployment.[45] However, the new roster system failed to solve the problem and has created some new ones. The process for determining which

candidates are placed on the roster is perceived by some as arbitrary. The system for selecting candidates to serve in field missions is overall poorly resourced and designed. Candidate assessments are largely done through written tests; this method privileges candidates that are good at writing quickly but does not effectively identify many of the skills and competencies needed in-mission. The assessments are designed by overstretched staff at UN headquarters who do not receive relevant training. Missions often lack the resources to release their staff to participate in assessments at headquarters. The roster is not well-maintained, so that many of the candidates on it are no longer available or do not meet the requirements for given positions. At the same time, the UN must first exhaust rostered candidates for peacekeeping missions before recruiting outside the roster (excluding candidates recruited directly by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General), creating additional delays and obstacles to hiring the right candidate for the job. In addition, new staff selection initiatives are currently being considered to further centralize the hiring of field personnel in an effort to prevent cronyism and ensure national diversity. If these initiatives are implemented, they could exacerbate the problem of hiring personnel without the right skill set to perform effectively.

Even with locally recruited national staff, hiring rules can interfere with the mission's ability to fill critically needed posts. For example, MINUSCA has struggled to recruit community liaison assistants because of rules related to educational qualifications and connections to the local area. Candidates with the necessary skills and education were very few in number, and most were based in the capital city of Bangui rather than in rural areas. Moreover, some mission personnel were concerned that candidates who were local to a particular area would be perceived as biased in some situations. Yet hiring rules required that candidates had to be based in the local area in which they would operate, at times making it very difficult for the mission to identify any appropriate candidates for some areas. Obtaining approval to recruit candidates that didn't meet some criteria but who were nonetheless best qualified took time and delayed the deployment of community liaison assistants, which undermined the mission's ability to protect civilians in those areas. Greater flexibility is needed to seek out locally recruited staff to ensure that they are able to fill key capacities that support the protection of civilians in a timely manner.

One recent and promising initiative is the development of a concept for a rapidly deployable headquarters for UN peace operations, led by the Department of Field Support. Although the idea is being primarily thought of for a peacekeeping context, the headquarters could also serve special political missions that are managed by the UN Department of Political Affairs. These personnel could potentially serve as an advance presence on the ground in a new mission to implement the first part of a two-stage mandate.

However, this initiative can make only a small dent in the overall problem, since rapidly deployable headquarters will include only a select core civilian capacity. Several analysts have suggested that the civilian recruitment system is in need of major reform to properly address its dysfunction.[46] A comprehensive evaluation of the civilian recruitment system by an independent team with professional human resources expertise could help to identify a more efficient and effective recruitment system.[47] This would facilitate the rapid deployment of critical civilian capacities that are needed to develop and implement protection strategies, and would ensure that POC is treated as a mission priority.

CONCLUSION

For almost two decades, the Security Council has recognized that the protection of civilians is a core responsibility of UN peacekeepers. Despite the inclusion, and sometimes the explicit prioritization, of POC in many peacekeeping mandates, missions have struggled to implement protection as a priority. Many of these challenges stem from mandates that are overly broad and ambitious, conforming to a similar template despite very different threats and contexts.

The HIPPO report's recommendation on phased and sequenced mandates offers an important opportunity for UN peace operations to treat POC as a priority in practice and not just in rhetoric. But this opportunity comes with two important caveats. First, if implemented incorrectly, phased and sequenced mandates risk causing more harm than good. In particular, phased and sequenced mandates could inappropriately restrict mission flexibility, taking decisions about what activities to undertake and when to undertake them out of the hands of mission leadership. To mitigate this risk, the Security Council mandates should define strategic objectives for the mission rather than list specific tasks.

Second, phased and sequenced mandates cannot help peace operations to prioritize the protection of civilians unless they are accompanied by three other key reforms highlighted by the HIPPO report. Phased and sequenced mandates should be guided by a political strategy, or a vision for how the peace operation will facilitate a political outcome that can lead to lasting peace. It may not always be possible to develop a detailed political strategy in urgent protection crises (and particularly in atrocity situations). However, wherever possible, the Security Council should strive to identify how POC fits into a political strategy, whether it is an end in itself or a means to another end, and how POC should be balanced against other activities in support of a political resolution. Phased and sequenced mandates must also be based on improved planning and analysis, including a conflict analysis framework that addresses atrocity risk indicators, broader conflict indicators, and an assessment of how the mission's capacities may be able to influence threats. Finally, phased and sequenced mandates must go hand in hand with rapid deployment of military, police, and civilian mission personnel. Delays in responding to protection crises with the right capacities make it much harder for the mission to protect civilians once it does deploy.

These changes will require considerable effort from UN member states, the UN Secretariat, and external stakeholders, and will likely encounter significant political and bureaucratic hurdles. However, the progress that has already begun toward these goals – including the development of the Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System and the creation of the planning and analysis capacity within the Executive Office of the Secretary-General – is encouraging. With sustained action to produce successful phased and sequenced mandates, UN peace operations could be much better positioned to protect civilians from violence in war-torn societies.

Methodology and Acknowledgements

This report draws on interviews conducted in New York with a range of personnel within the UN Secretariat. It also draws on interviews conducted with UN peacekeeping mission personnel and other stakeholders in South Sudan in June and August 2015 and in the Central African Republic in September 2015. The authors are grateful to their interviewees and to the reviewers who offered feedback on the report.

About the Stimson Center

The Stimson Center is a nonprofit and nonpartisan think tank that finds pragmatic solutions to global security challenges. Stimson produces research and policy analysis to:

- Reduce nuclear, environmental, and other transnational threats to global, regional, and national security.

- Enhance policymakers' and the public's understanding of the changing global security agenda.

- Engage civil society and industry in problem-solving to help fill gaps in existing governance structures.

- Strengthen institutions and processes for a more peaceful world.

Stimson is effective and innovative. It develops path-breaking approaches to nonconventional challenges such as water management, wildlife poaching, and responses to humanitarian crises. At the same time, Stimson plays a key role in debates on nuclear proliferation, arms trafficking, and defense policy. The MacArthur Foundation recognized Stimson in 2013 with its "institutional genius" Award for Creative and Effective Institutions. Stimson is funded by research contracts, grants from foundations, and other donations. For more information, visit **www.stimson.org**.

About the Authors

Aditi Gorur is the director of the Protecting Civilians in Conflict program at the Stimson Center. Before joining Stimson, she worked with the Indian Institute for Human Settlements in India, the Asia Foundation and the Center for Liberty in the Middle East in Washington, DC, and the Melbourne University Law School in Australia. She holds a Master of Arts in international security from Georgetown University, as well as a Bachelor of Arts in development studies and a Bachelor of Laws with honors from the University of Melbourne.

Lisa Sharland is a senior analyst with the Australian Strategic Policy Institute and a nonresident fellow at the Stimson Center. Prior to joining ASPI in March 2014, she worked as the Defense Policy Adviser at the Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations in New York. She holds a Master of International Studies from the University of Sydney, as well as a Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor of Arts with honors from Macquarie University, Australia.

Endnotes

1. High-Level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations (HIPPO), *Uniting Our Strengths for Peace: Politics, Partnership and People,* UN Doc. A/70/95-S/2015/446, June 17, 2015, 11.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., paras. 102-105.

5. The UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) was the first peacekeeping mission mandate to include POC as a clearly articulated first priority in resolution 1906 (2009). See UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support, "Lessons Learned Note on the Protection of Civilians in UN Peacekeeping Operations: Dilemmas, Emerging Practices and Lessons," April 2010.

6. Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, UN Doc. A/55/305-S/2000/809, August 21, 2000.

7. Ibid., 11.

8. HIPPO, *Uniting Our Strengths for Peace*, para. 184.

9. This was acknowledged by the Security Council recently: "The Security Council will pursue more prioritization when evaluating, mandating and reviewing United Nations peace operations in order to enhance effectiveness of such operations, including through consultation with Troop- and Police-Contributing Countries, regional and sub-regional organizations and other relevant stakeholders. The Security Council encourages the Secretary-General to strengthen his engagement and reporting to the Council by emphasizing enhanced analysis and planning, including on safety and security, so as to facilitate the Council's prioritization. The Security Council will consider sequenced and phased mandates, where appropriate, when evaluating existing United Nations peace operations or establishing new United Nations peace operations." (Statement by the President of the Security Council, UN Doc. PRST/2015/22, November 25, 2015.)

10. The HIPPO report also acknowledges that "[t]he Security Council has a major responsibility to ensure expectations are realistic." See HIPPO, *Uniting Our Strengths for Peace*, 41.

11. See, for example, the mandate to significantly reconfigure the mission mandate in South Sudan in October 2015, which extended the mandate for only two months until December 15, 2015 (Security Council Resolution 2241, UN Doc. S/RES/2241, October 9, 2015).

12. Security Council Resolution 2155, UN Doc. S/RES/2155, May 27, 2014.

13. Security Council Resolution 2149, UN Doc. S/RES/2149, April 10, 2014, para. 31(a).

14. For example, see the Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in the Central African Republic, UN Doc. S/2015/576, July 29, 2015, 14, which states that the "prioritization of mandated tasks is reflected in the prioritization of the resources of the Mission in each phase"; and the revised mandate for MINUSCA in Security Council Resolution 2217, UN Doc. S/RES/2217, April 28, 2015, para. 35, which requests the Secretary-General "to deploy and allocate personnel and expertise within MINUSCA to reflect the priorities identified by paragraph 32 to paragraph 34 of this resolution, and to continuously adjust this deployment according to the progress made in the implementation of this mandate."

15. Security Council Resolution 2227, UN Doc. S/RES/2227, June 29, 2015.

16. Security Council Resolution 2155, UN Doc. S/RES/2155, May 27, 2014.

17. Security Council Resolution 2241, UN Doc. S/RES/2241, October 9, 2015.

18. See International Peace Institute, "UN Peacekeeping Transitions: Perspectives from Member States," August 2012.

19. See, for example, United Nations, "Policy on UN Transitions in the Context of Mission Drawdown or Withdrawal," endorsed by the UN Secretary General on February 4, 2013.

20. HIPPO, *Uniting Our Strengths for Peace*, para. 176.

21. Ibid., para. 186(a).

22. Ibid., para. 102.

23. See, for example, Richard Gowan, "No Peace to Keep: UN Peacekeeping's Year of Living Dangerously," *World Politics Review*, December 17, 2013, http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/13449/no-peace-to-keep-u-n-peacekeepings-year-of-living-dangerously. The UN Secretary-General cited this concern as the first of four rationales in explaining why he commissioned the HIPPO review. (See "Secretary-General's Remarks at Security Council Open Debate on Trends in United Nations Peacekeeping,"

June 11, 2014, http://www.un.org/sg/statements/index.asp?nid=7769.)

24. Michelle Nichols,"UN Warns Peacekeepers Ill-Equipped if Burundi Violence Spirals," *Reuters*, January 13, 2016, available at http://www.reuters.com/article/us-burundi-unrest-un-idUSKCN0UR2R020160113; "UN Ill-Prepared for Burundi Trouble," *Agence France-Presse*, January 13, 2016, available at http://www.news24.com/Africa/News/un-ill-prepared-for-burundi-trouble-20160113.

25. The HIPPO report recommended that the UN think past traditional distinctions between peacekeeping missions on one hand and special political missions on the other, and overlook "[d]isputes about bureaucratic boundaries, the limits of budgets and definitional debates" (HIPPO, *Uniting Our Strengths for Peace*, para. 49.) It may be that the most appropriate mission to address immediate protection concerns in order to promote an eventual political solution would not resemble typical peacekeeping or special political missions.

26. UN Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support, *The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping*, April 1, 2015.

27. For further information, see Arthur Boutellis, "Driving the System Apart? A Study of United Nations Integration and Integrated Strategic Planning," International Peace Institute, August 2013.

28. HIPPO, *Uniting Our Strengths for Peace*, para. 173.

29. Statement by the President of the Security Council, UN Doc. S/PRST/2015/22, November 25, 2015, 3.

30. See the list of Methodologies and Tools for Conflict Analysis and Priority Objectives in the United Nations Integrated Assessment and Planning Handbook, December 2013, 42-43.

31. This could draw on the UN's *Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes – A Tool for Prevention* (July 2014), which identifies a range of risk factors for the commission of atrocity crimes.

32. HIPPO, *Uniting Our Strengths for Peace*, para. 195.

33. United Nations, *United Nations Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System: Overview*, August 2015, https://cc.unlb.org/UNSAS%20Documents/PCRS%20Overview%20Aug%202015.pdf.

34. HIPPO, *Uniting Our Strengths for Peace*, paras. 86-89.

35. Hervé Ladsous, remarks at "Political Solutions and Protection of Civilians," a workshop hosted by the Permanent Missions of Australia and Uruguay and the Stimson Center, New York, November 6, 2015.

36. Audun Solli, Benjamin de Carvalho, Cedric de Coning, and Mikkel F. Pedersen, "Training in Vain? Bottlenecks in Deploying Civilians for UN Peacekeeping," *International Peacekeeping* 18, no. 4 (2011): 428.

37. Rahul Chandran, Jake Sherman, Bruce Jones, Shepard Forman, Anne le More, Yoshino Funaki, and Andrew Hart, *Rapid Deployment of Civilians for Peace Operations: Status, Gaps, and Options*, Center on International Cooperation, 2009, 2.

38. Louise Fréchette, *UN Peacekeeping: 20 Years of Reform*, Center for International Governance Innovation, 2012, 11.

39. Audun Solli et al., "Training in Vain?," 433.

40. Catriona Gourlay, *Lessons Learned Study: Rosters for the Deployment of Civilian Experts in Peace Operations*, UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 2006.

41. Audun Solli et al., "Training in Vain?," 433.

42. Cedric de Coning, "Civilian Peacekeeping Capacity: Mobilizing Partners to Match Supply and Demand," *International Peacekeeping* 18, no. 5 (2011): 583.

43. Louise Fréchette, *UN Peacekeeping*, 11.

44. Cedric de Coning, "Civilian Peacekeeping Capacity," 583.

45. Louise Fréchette, *UN Peacekeeping*, 11.

46. See, for example, Cedric de Coning, "Civilian Peacekeeping Capacity"; Rahul Chandran et al., *Rapid Deployment of Civilians for Peace Operations*, 2009.

47. Recommendation proposed by Renata Dwan at "What's Next for UN Peace Operations: Turning Words into Action," a workshop hosted by the Stimson Center, the Better World Campaign, the US Institute for Peace, the US State Department, the British Embassy, and the Embassy of Japan, Washington, DC, November 5, 2015.

Prioritizing the Protection of Civilians in UN Peace Operations

ANALYZING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE HIPPO REPORT

Despite rhetoric and mandates that identify the protection of civilians as one of the highest priorities for UN peace operations, protection is often not treated as a priority on the ground. The report of the High-Level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations (HIPPO), released in June 2015, observed a growing gap between what is expected of peace operations and what they have delivered – particularly in the area of protection.

This Stimson Center report identifies and analyzes strategic-level recommendations in the HIPPO report that are critical to create conducive conditions for missions to prioritize the protection of civilians. These recommendations include the adoption of phased and sequenced mandates, the development of political strategies, the enhancement of mission planning and analysis, and the timely deployment of military, police, and civilian capacities.

By intensifying the focus on POC at the strategic level, these recommendations outlined in the HIPPO report could help to bridge the gap between expectations and outcomes for the protection of civilians, and could make a real difference to people whose lives are torn apart by violence. With the support of a range of stakeholders in UN peace operations, these strategic reforms can lay a foundation that allows missions to truly prioritize the protection of civilians.

STIMSON
www.stimson.org