

The Future of Police in UN Peace Operations

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Introduction

United Nations police (UNPOL) are a critical component of peace operations. Since they were first deployed to the UN Operation in the Congo in 1960, they have consistently been present in UN missions and have become increasingly important to achieving mission objectives. The breakdown in the rule of law is often a major factor in the decision to deploy a UN peace operation. Police peacekeepers play important roles in temporarily filling a public security gap and then working to (re)build the criminal justice architecture—including police as well as judicial and penal institutions. Indeed, these efforts are increasingly understood as a prerequisite for mission transitions and a cornerstone of their exit strategies.² As a result there is growing support among member states for an increased focus on UNPOL capabilities in existing missions, countenancing more police-centric missions designs and even seeing peace operations more explicitly as a form of international policing.

In a departure from traditional peacekeeping and post-conflict assistance, recent years have seen UN peace operations directed to stabilise countries and protect civilians in the context of on-going violent conflict. The changing nature of conflict in these settings has precipitated significant adjustments and additions to the roles and responsibilities of UN police (UNPOL).³ UNPOL have been called upon to help stabilise and restore public order, protect civilians and tackle the threats posed by transnational crime and violent extremism in situations where there is little peace to keep. These trends have already had a significant impact on the current crop of missions and in turn on UNPOL priorities and activities. While many of these trends are set to continue other new ones are likely to emerge. In order to respond to diverse and dynamic conflict environments, and shifting geopolitical tectonics, the design, configuration and objectives of the UN's operational responses will need to adapt. As part of that, UNPOL capabilities and skillsets as well as conceptual and policy frameworks will need to be adjusted and augmented if the UN and its police peacekeepers are to meet the challenges of the future.

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² Stromseth, Jane., David Wippman and Rosa Brooks, eds., *Can Might Make Rights: Building the Rule of Law after Military Interventions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Bull, Carolyn. *No Entry without Strategy: Building the Rule of Law under UN Transitional Administration* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2008).

³ Hunt, Charles T. "Rhetoric Versus Reality in the Rise of Policing in UN Peace Operations: 'More Blue, Less Green'?" *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 73, no. 6 (2019): 609-27.

The aim of this analytical paper is to stimulate thinking about the challenges that UN police peacekeepers are likely to face in current and future operations in the coming five to ten years. The first section presents a number of trends that will be influential shaping the next decade, including urbanisation, transnational organised crime, the blurring of political and criminal violence, and the (responses to) militarisation of policing around the world. The paper proceeds to map those trends onto three possible scenarios for future UNPOL roles, highlighting in each case the specific challenges arising for UNPOL and the peace operations they are part of. The final section proposes a series of tangible recommendations aimed at the UN secretariat (but also current and potential police-contributing countries) to build up the necessary capabilities, generate appropriate human resources, as well as develop the doctrine and policy frameworks that can help adapt and prepare for what lies ahead.

1. An Evolution in police peacekeeping

Police officers have featured within UN peace operations since they first appeared in the ONUC mission in the Congo (1960-4). UN Police (UNPOL) became more deeply involved in missions since the 1990s, evolving from 'watchers' who observed and monitored to 'coaches' undertaking reform and capacity-building of national law enforcement agencies as part of a broader peacebuilding agenda.⁴ This shift towards reform, restructuring and rebuilding (RRR) of law enforcement agencies in the early 2000s became a core part of UNPOL's operational focus and has been included in most of their subsequent mandates.⁵ UNPOL have also taken on more operational roles over time. This included temporarily assuming executive policing authority in the UN's transitional administrations in East Timor and Kosovo, but more commonly limited to assisting national police in operations to maintain public security.⁶

The expansion of UNPOL roles and responsibilities has been matched by dramatic growth, quadrupling in numbers deployed in the past 20 years.⁷ Today around 9,000 officers contributed by more than 80 countries are deployed to 13 UN peace operations across the world. The central role of UNPOL – in supporting public order, protecting civilians and building fragile states' rule of law capacities – has been institutionalised within the UN system over the past decade through a series of dedicated UN Secretary-General reports⁸

⁴ See Kroeker 2007 in Bellamy, Alex J. , Paul Williams, and Stuart Griffin. *Understanding Peacekeeping*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Polity, 2010, p.383

⁵ Greener, B. K. "UNPOL: UN Police as Peacekeepers." *Policing and Society* 19, no. 2 (2008): 106–18; den Heyer, Garth. *The Role of Civilian Police in Peacekeeping: 1999–2007*. Washington, DC: Police Foundation, 2012.

⁶ An exception to this is the quasi-executive authority granted to MINUSCA police under 'Urgent Temporary Measures' in CAR.

⁷ From 2,539 in 1999 to over 10,500 in 2019. NB: The number of UNPOL deployed reached a high water-mark in 2010 when over 17,000 UNPOL were authorised by the Security Council.

⁸ See for example: UN. *Report of the Secretary-General on United Nations Police*. A/66/615, New York: UN General Assembly; United Nations, 2011; UN. *Report of the Secretary-General on United Nations Policing*. S/2016/952, New York: UN Security Council, 2016.

and UN Security Council Resolutions on policing.⁹ Collectively, these have affirmed and entrenched the important role of police in peace operations throughout the conflict cycle.¹⁰

At the same time, UN peace operations have undergone significant changes in recent years. Since 2013, missions have been increasingly sent to places where there is little or no peace to keep, a proliferation of non-state armed groups, trans-national dynamics including organised crime and violent extremism, and where threats to civilians are manifold.¹¹ Around 90% of all UNPOL are currently deployed in these non-permissive environments¹² forcing UNPOL to move beyond conventional police development work and interim support for operations. While still expected to pursue these traditional tasks, police peacekeepers have also been directed to undertake a broader set of tasks while operating in more testing conditions. Police are being employed more often, in more ways and with heightened expectations.¹³

Six major trends can be seen to be shaping the operating environment or the activities of UNPOL: urbanisation and the growth in violent urban conflict; the rise of transnational organised crime; dependency on predatory host governments; the enmeshment of criminal and political violence; the militarisation of (international) policing; and the emergence of a preference for police-centric peace operations.

A) Urbanisation of (violent) conflict

Urbanisation is a major demographic trend that will impact on future peace operations. Today, over half the world's population resides in urban centres and by 2050 around 6.4 billion people will be city-dwellers. It is expected that 90% of that growth will take place in the cities of Asia and Africa.¹⁴ Continued urbanisation brings opportunities but it also promises disruption to established patterns of socio-political order, economic modalities and identities.¹⁵ With disruption comes heightened risks of instability and the potential for

⁹ UN. SC resolution 2185 (New York: United Nations, 2014); UN. SC resolution 2382 (New York: United Nations, 2017)

¹⁰ UN. "Policy on United Nations Police in Peacekeeping Operations and Special Political Missions", United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations Department of Field Support, Ref. 2014.01, (2014)

¹¹ Bellamy, Alex J. and Charles T. Hunt, "Twenty-First Century UN Peace Operations: Protection, Force and the Changing Security Environment," *International Affairs* 91, no. 6 (2015); Peter, Mateja. "UN Peace Operations: Adapting to a New Global Order?". In *United Nations Peace Operations in a Changing Global Order*, edited by Cedric de Coning and Mateja Peter, 1-22. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019.

¹² NB: while these missions have a footprint in these non-permissive environments, UNPOL are not always deployed to the most unstable locations such as North Kivu in DRC, Jebel Marra mountains in Darfur, Kidal and Timbuktu in Mali, etc.

¹³ Author interviews with UN police division officials – New York, USA, April 2017.

¹⁴ de Boer, John. "The sustainable development fight will be won or lost in our cities" *World Economic Forum*, 24 September 2015.

¹⁵ Herbst, Jeffrey. "Population Change, Urbanization, and Political Consolidation", in Robert E. Goodin and Charles Tilly (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis* (Oxford: OUP, 2006)

urban violence in general and violent urban conflict in particular.¹⁶ Contestation over political authority and resistance to state oppression as well as attempts to control lucrative markets such as protection rackets and/or trafficking routes, place violence more and more in cities.¹⁷ As new urban arrivals face a range of horizontal inequalities and other exclusionary practices, the risk that this conflict can escalate into large-scale violence is exacerbated.

This presents as a challenge for peace operations. The military – by far the largest component of current mission designs – are trained for and more accustomed to conventional battlefield armed confrontations and remote battalion-sized deployments. Consequently, they are not well-suited to operating in densely populated urban centres (at least not in a defensive, protective posture). On the contrary, due to their training, methods and equipment, police are much better placed to address the types of social unrest, criminality/criminal violence and threats to civilian well-being that occur in these spaces.¹⁸ UNPOL have been called upon to help stabilise and restore public order as well as take a leading role in protecting civilians in these settings. For example, MINUSCA in CAR has utilised a Joint Task Force for Bangui (JTFB) to maintain order and stabilise the capital – with a particular focus on key hotspots such as PK5 district.

B) Transnational Organised Crime

75% of today's missions are deployed to places where Transnational Organised Crime (TNO) is a key characteristic of the conflict system, including links between organised crime and global terrorist groups.¹⁹ In addition to special political missions in Guinea Bissau, Afghanistan, Libya, Somalia, and Colombia, the big multidimensional operations in DRC, CAR, Mali, South Sudan, are deployed in regions replete with trafficking in persons, arms, drugs and natural resources.²⁰ Illicit economic activity often involves and invariably fuels armed groups and constitutes a driver of instability in many UN peace operations contexts.²¹ TNO poses threats to civilians, including through linkages to armed groups (see below). It also degrades the authority of the state by acting as an alternative service provider (security but also health and education) and competing for legitimacy with central

¹⁶ For more detail on urban violent conflict as the intersection between urban violence and conflict, see: Cockayne, James, Louise Bosetti, and Nazia Hussain. "Preventing Violent Urban Conflict: A Thematic Paper for the United Nations - World Bank Study on Conflict Prevention." In *Conflict Prevention Series: No. 2*. New York and Tokyo: United Nations University, 2017.

¹⁷ Cockayne, James. *Hidden Power: The Strategic Logic of Organized Crime* (Hurst/OUP: London/New York, 2016).

¹⁸ Hills, A. *Policing Post-Conflict Cities*. Zed Books, 2013.

¹⁹ Boutellis, Arthur, and Stephanie Tiélès. "Peace Operations and Organised Crime: Still Foggy?". In *United Nations Peace Operations in a Changing Global Order*, edited by Cedric de Coning and Mateja Peter, 169-90. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019, p.171

²⁰ de Boer, John. and Bosetti, Louise. "Examining the Interactions between Conflict and Organized Crime", *OurWorld*, United Nations University, 2015: <https://ourworld.unu.edu/en/examining-the-interactions-between-conflict-and-organized-crime>

²¹ von Einsiedel, Sebastian. "Civil War Trends and the Changing Nature of Armed Conflict." *Occasional Paper 10*. Tokyo: United Nations University Centre for Policy Research 2017, p.4-5

government.²² The dangers of TNOC are increasingly recognised by the UN Security Council²³ but to date peace operations have been provided with neither the mandate nor the resources to disrupt criminal political economies that perpetuate conflict.²⁴

In the absence of clear strategic direction, dealing with TNOC in mission settings has often fallen to UNPOL.²⁵ In addition to regional initiatives in areas where peace operations are deployed (e.g. West African Coast Initiative (WACI) tackling drug trafficking), specific UNPOL components have undertaken a range of operational activities to tackle TNOC.²⁶ For instance, the MINUSMA police component created a Serious Organised Crime (SOC) support unit containing 20 individual police officers dedicated to supporting the Malian authorities with training and equipment to respond to TNOC issues.²⁷ Similar units have been created in MINUSCA and MONUSCO.²⁸ In the latter case, there has also been innovative efforts including employing an expert analyst on TNOC and the involvement of the armed groups in eastern DRC.²⁹

It is the view of experienced peacekeepers on the ground that the violent conflicts peace operations are increasingly sent to address cannot be resolved without addressing TNOC. Police can play an important role in this but they must be part of a coordinated systemic response that addresses the social and economic aspects of the problem as well as the criminal justice one.³⁰

C) Partnering with predators

More often than not, police peacekeepers are expected to work with and change – through reform, restructuring and rebuilding – police who have been a major part of the problems that led to deployment in the first place. In all the ‘big 5’ as well as most major peace operations in the past two decades, host state police have been to various degrees

²² Day, Adam C, and Charles T Hunt. "UN Stabilisation Operations and the Problem of Non-Linear Change: A Relational Approach to Intervening in Governance Ecosystems." *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 9, no. 1 (2020).

²³ Cockayne 2016; Vorrath, Judith. 'Organized Crime on the UN Security Council Agenda Action against Human Trafficking Reveals Opportunities and Challenges' *SWP Comment*, No.38, October 2018, https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/2018C38_vrr.pdf

²⁴ Less than 50% of resolutions mandating these operations reference organised crime and even less mandate UN operations to tackle criminal groups spoilers directly.

²⁵ Author interviews with UNPOL officials – New York (2017), Mali (2017 & 2019) DRC (2018), South Sudan (2018), CAR (2019). See also: Kari M. Osland, "UN Policing: The Security-Trust Challenge," in *United Nations Peace Operations in a Changing Global Order*, Cedric de Coning and Mateja Peter, eds. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p. 191.

²⁶ UN. <https://police.un.org/en/serious-and-organized-crime>

²⁷ Author interview with MINUSMA UNPOL SOC official – Bamako, Mali, April 2017.

²⁸ Author interview with MINUSCA and MONUSCO UNPOL officials – Bangui, CAR (August 2019) and Goma, DRC (May 2018).

²⁹ Author interview with MONUSCO official – Goma, DRC, May 2018.

³⁰ Author interviews with UN senior leadership – Bamako, Mali (April 2017), Kinshasa, DRC (June 2018) and Bangui, CAR (August 2019).

politicised, militarised, corrupt and abusive towards their own populations – as much engaged in criminal behaviour as preventing and tackling it. This is a problem at multiple levels. On the beat, individual officers and units lack the training, equipment and professional ethics to serve rather than extract, and protect rather than predate. UNPOL have found themselves in situations where state actors are causing harm to civilians but with limited authority and tools to respond – exceptions include FPU interventions in political protests in Kinshasa and/or policing of IDP camps in CAR and POC sites in South Sudan.

Moreover, at the highest levels of government, key power-brokers have been unwilling to engage in security and justice sector reform to transform abusive institutions and build trust between the state and society. This has produced a trend where irrespective of the mandate to support/coordinate wide-ranging SSR, police and their rule of law colleagues in missions engage in train and equip type capacity building activities while the structures that perpetuate distrust and shield abusers remain unaltered. For example, in South Sudan UNPOL worked for a number of years (UNMIS then UNMISS) to train and strengthen the South Sudanese National Police (SSNPS) who committed grave human rights violations when internal conflict broke out in 2013. All capacity-building programming was immediately cut-off, but the UN had essentially been working closely with government and UNPOL had bolstered the security agencies that turned on their own people to devastating effect. Notwithstanding the harm mitigation potential of the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP), the reliance on host state consent for peace operations has made decisions about how and when to work with the abusive security sectors of recalcitrant governments (pertinent also in DRC and Mali) a significant and recurrent challenge.

D) Blurring of lines between criminal and political violence

Related to the trends on urban instability and TNOG is the blurring of the lines between political and criminal violence. Today's parties to conflict around the world rarely fall neatly into discrete categories of state or non-state, criminal or terrorist. Often, parties are simultaneously locally-driven, nationally linked, and supported by a range of actors well beyond the countries' national boundaries. For example, a jihadi in northern Mali may be a terrorist to Western donors, but a lynchpin in global trafficking routes for international crime syndicates and de facto policeman to the local villagers. They are also not fixed or static. Non-state (armed) groups splinter and fragment while making and unmaking strategic alliances over time. As a result the identities are fluid; political leaders can be criminals, criminals can be militia leaders, individuals and the groups they represent can contain multitudes. They are liminal or more accurately have composite identities.³¹

This presents significant challenges for peace operations – particularly when missions are requested to operate in contexts where insecurity escalates quickly from threats of a more criminal to a more military nature. Because police are deemed best-suited to address criminal violence they are often the first responders to disorder attributed to criminal gangs.

³¹ NB: To some extent this resonates with what Paul Williams' paper referred to as: "War in weak states persists but often blurs with organized crime, atrocities, and state repression." See: Paul D. Williams. *The Future of Peace Operations: A Scenario Analysis, 2020-2030* (UN DPO, 2020)

However, access to heavy weaponry and the use of asymmetric warfare tactics render UNPOL highly vulnerable if and when situations escalate into violence. One consequence of this trend is the convergence and at times overlap in the military and police functions of UN peace operations. UNPOL have been increasingly asked to work jointly with the military component in high risk, often urban areas. For instance, with the JTFB in CAR, despite policies that lay out the division of labour and criteria for handover of responsibilities, in practice there have been occasions where UNPOL operating under military command have been encouraged to operate outside their own Directives on the Use of Force (DUF) calling into question the legal framework for their efforts.³²

E) Militarization of (international) policing

As police have been expected to respond robustly to instability – including working more closely with the military – they have also become more militarised. Insecure mission settings lead to increased use of formed police units (FPUs) due to them being armed and more capable of operating safely protecting themselves and others.³³ Approximately two thirds of all UNPOL are deployed in FPUs.³⁴ Individual police officers (IPOs) are traditionally lightly armed and configured to conduct foot patrols around villages, talking to people, often side-by-side with national police. By contrast, FPUs invariably drive armoured vehicles, carry arms, often wearing military-like fatigues, and tend to pass through town without much interaction.³⁵ This has created barriers between peacekeepers and local communities and diminished the impact of community-oriented policing approaches and the supposed comparative advantage of UNPOL in helping missions be more people-centred.³⁶

Furthermore, this militarization of international policing represents an internal contradiction for the UN sending mixed messages to societies recovering from violent conflict often characterized by abusive and highly militarized police and other law enforcement agencies. For a long time, commentators have questioned how fit for purpose police peacekeepers are to be the purveyors of democratic policing as espoused in UNPOL's Strategic Guidance Framework, which the Secretary-General designated as the system-wide police doctrine.³⁷ The policing methodologies and human rights records of some major PCCs has led to criticism of a disconnect between the message and the messenger. It is also worth noting that militarization of policing is a trend in a number of domestic settings, including the US.³⁸

³² Author interviews with MINUSCA JTFB officials – Bangui, CAR, August 2019.

³³ Author interviews with UNPOL officials in MINUSMA, MONUSCO, UNMISS and MINUSCA– Bamako, Mali (April 2017), Goma, DRC (May 2018), Juba, South Sudan (December 2018) and Bangui, CAR (August 2019).

³⁴ UN Police Website, 31 August 2020.

³⁵ Author interviews with local community groups – South Sudan, Mali and CAR, 2018-2019.

³⁶ Hunt, Charles T. "Rhetoric Versus Reality in the Rise of Policing in UN Peace Operations: 'More Blue, Less Green'?" *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 73, no. 6 (2019): 609-27. See also: UN. "Community-Oriented Policing in United Nations Peace Operations", REF 2018/04, New York: United Nations, 2018b, <https://police.un.org/sites/default/files/manual-community-oriented-poliicing.pdf>

³⁷ UN. Strategic Guidance Framework for International Police Peacekeeping. New York: United Nations, 2016, <https://police.un.org/en/sgf>.

³⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/01/us/politics/police-military-gear.html>

The recent, large-scale protests across the world against systemic racism in police systems put in stark relief the assumptions about the comparative advantages of western/liberal-democratic models of policing that undergird UN police reform and capacity-building approaches.

F) Police as panacea

The dual role of UNPOL – providing interim operational support and working towards long-term sustainable rule of law – has generated a groundswell of support among some member states for including more police-centric concepts and countenancing more police-centric missions designs.³⁹ First, major developments / innovations – such as UTM in CAR, FPU policing of IDP/POC sites, joint operations with the military – contribute to the growing belief that UNPOL may be better placed to respond to the locations, sources, and means of threats to the peace posed by current conflict dynamics. Furthermore, UNPOL's community-oriented policing approach has become a pillar of mission local engagement strategies, facilitating more people-centred operations. They are seen as playing important roles in early warning, providing visible presence in risky areas, and a sense that the local police cannot predate in that area, enhancing missions' credibility with the populations they serve (UN 2018b).

Second, as discussed above, police reform as part of broader rule of law reform has been seen as an important aspect of peace operations transitions and exit strategies for some time. However, as a number of missions have become quagmired with exit strategies proving elusive, this change theory – i.e. re-establishing the rule of law after violent conflict as a cornerstone for building sustainable peace and enabling mission closure – has become increasingly popular in recent years adding further support to the role of UNPOL as increasingly mission-critical.⁴⁰ The completion of major missions in Haiti, Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia (as well as earlier in Sierra Leone) are often used as evidence of successful implementation of mandates and transition predicted on reformed and strengthened national security and justice institutions.⁴¹ This is particularly seductive at a time when expensive missions such as MONUSCO and UNMISS are floundering in \$1billion per year 'holding patterns' without a clear exit strategy in sight.

Although still significantly outnumbered by the military component,⁴² these aspects contribute to a *zeitgeist* among a growing number of UN member states, officials and expert analysts pitching peace operations with a bigger police presence as a possible panacea for a range of different roles and phases of missions, including laying the foundations for sustainable peace and enabling mission exit strategies. It is quite possible then that the role

³⁹ NB: this has not necessarily manifest within the Secretariat which remains skewed towards military approaches or translated into commensurate increases in resources needed for the effective implementation of the tasks for the Police Division or for police components.

⁴⁰ Osland, 2019, p. 191.

⁴¹ Author interviews with Ambassadors of Permanent members of the Security Council – New York, USA, August 2019.

⁴² UNPOL constitute on average 12% of total uniformed personnel deployed across the UN's peace operations.

of police within UN peace operations will become increasingly important while achieving their objectives is likely to become more difficult in more risky operating environments.

2. Scenarios for UNPOL in 2030

In the next five to ten years it is likely that many of the trends discussed in the previous section will continue. Some may develop comparatively more quickly or with bigger impacts, but it is unlikely that any of them will disappear. Ultimately, the strategic-political environment within which peace operations are authorised will shape the way that police are utilised in future UN peace operations and their overall impact on mandated objectives. Combined with insights from the overview paper by Paul Williams,⁴³ this section of the paper presents three scenarios confected to incorporate the range of possible uses of UNPOL in peace operations over the next decade. While presented as discrete scenarios in reality these will overlap.

Scenario 1: Continuity with more blue, less green

The analysis above highlights perceived comparative advantages of police for responding to the conflict dynamics experienced in current mission settings. It also points to growing support for more police-focused peace operations. This scenario envisages the endurance of current trends and imagines a future where demand for UN peace operations is up and their authorisation and configuration are oriented more around policing concepts and action.⁴⁴ It is therefore marked by a large degree of continuity in the ways that UNPOL are utilised, albeit in greater magnitude.

In 2030, following a severe economic downturn after the COVID-19 pandemic, climate-change related migration and impacts on livelihoods, economic and political marginalisation deepens generating conflicts marked by significant levels of social unrest. It is commonplace that these episodes escalate into widespread violence and feature high levels of violent urban conflict and transnational organised crime where state governance, including rule of law institutions, are badly degraded and mistrusted. Member states increasingly call on the UN to assist in stabilising situations. The contraction of the global economy has also impacted on the willingness of major financial contributors to UN peacekeeping to fund large-scale field missions with member states preferring instead lighter footprint, more agile missions (read: smaller and cheaper).

UNPOL have become ever more central to mission logics and designs due to their comparative advantages. Relying on smaller numbers of police, deploying for longer tours of duty, for a mission's public security presence, offers a cheaper operating model than sustaining previous force configurations. The underlying logic of UNPOL engagement remains intact. UNPOL are seen as a middle ground between large force components and civilian components. The ability of formed units to appear and behave like paramilitary actors allows them to substitute for military in some

⁴³ Williams, *The Future of Peace Operations*, op cit.

⁴⁴ Williams, "The Future of Peace Operations", op cit., p.12.

situations (e.g. urban violence) meaning the need for large military contingents is reduced. The ability for armed police to deescalate and handover over to police in a more civilian mode allows them to be more community-oriented and engage with local populations more easily and to greater effect. In addition to limited forms of operational support, UNPOL still seek to build the capacity of local counterparts - in line with a liberal-democratic rights-based model of policing - as part of re-establishing the rule of law as a cornerstone for building sustainable peace and enabling mission closure.

The major challenge presented by this scenario for the UN is one that pertains in the current crop of missions. While UNPOL is given some responsibility for police reform and more focus is placed on policing/justice reform, missions will still be unable to leverage their presence to demand 'root and branch' security and justice sector reform. While the UNSC continues to make rhetorical demands on host governments for transformational SSR, these are not backed with commensurate political will or resources required to incentivise and achieve it. Political elites, albeit with significant influence of military elites, will continue to see an opportunity to resist in the knowledge they have power over mission presence and it is in their interests to retain a degree of control and politicisation of the security forces.

Scenario 2 – State support operations in the realm of fragile sovereigns

While not addressed explicitly in the trends analysis above, Williams' Scenario 1 'Islands' provides the context for a future where a decline in the influence of the P3, coupled with the rise of non-western powers, leads to a situation where UN peace operations are no longer shaped by the ideologies and modalities of western liberal powers. In this scenario leaders of fragile states request UN stabilisation- (or 'state support') operations, leading to a more conservative and stability-oriented modality for UNPOL over the next decade.

In 2030, continued disengagement of the US from multilateral institutions mean that an ascendant China and resurgent Russia have a much greater say over the politics/ideas underpinning efforts by the UN Security Council to address threats to international peace and security. The peace operations still deployed by the UN (a field now dominated by non-UN actors) are governed by a pragmatism that sees them focus exclusively on conservative aims such as stabilisation and extending the authority of central governments with little or no mandate to protect civilians or engage in deeper initiatives to reform state institutions to be more inclusive and responsive. As a result, policing models employed by UNPOL are aimed at maintaining public order, not promoting human rights. Host governments under threat from insurgencies – invariably labelled as terrorists or violent extremists, irrespective of their political grievances – are eager to consolidate authority. The reinforcing of state sovereignty/non-interference norms has made police-centric missions that aim to support national actors to stabilise a situation and extend state authority more palatable for host governments who are embattled at home and sensitive to large numbers of foreign troops on their sovereign soil.⁴⁵ The majority of

⁴⁵ This concern became particularly acute following the continued trends through the 2020s that saw peacekeepers increasingly provided by neighbouring countries who often were shown to have vested interests and even hostile intent.

member states (particularly major troop and police-contributing countries fearful of growing risks) prefer these more unarmed and civilian strategies.

UNPOL undertake a range of activities designed to support failing states including logistical and operational support for robust counter-terrorist policing operations, anti-gang operations (as seen in Haiti or in PK5 in CAR) as well as quasi-executive policing mandates (a la CAR) where UNPOL are furnished with 'Limited Extraordinary Powers of Arrest and Detention' (LEPAD). They draw increasingly on new non-lethal weapons technologies such as acoustic devices, electronic vehicle-stoppers and advanced taser stun systems. UNPOL also support states in building capacity and providing training to defend/secure the state against both internal and external criminal threats. These include large-scale exploitation (e.g. border protection and customs against becoming a haven for criminal networks) and attacks on critical infrastructure (e.g. cyber hacking by terrorist, org crime or malicious state-actors).

This scenario would generate significant demand for more stability policing units creating a major 'force generation' challenge for the UN. Close relationships with host states may alleviate challenges with strategic and operational consent for deployments and may even overcome, to some extent, resistance to security sector reform - depending on the objectives of such programming. However, this approach would necessarily be exclusively state-centric – about consolidation of power rather than decentralisation or distribution of authority. If institutions of state are strengthened rather than transformed, disenfranchised local populations will still see them as illegitimate instruments of power controlled by predatory elites. In this case, root causes will remain unaddressed, grievances will endure, sustainable peace will remain elusive and recidivism will continue to be a feature of conflict landscape for the UN.

In this scenario, the ability of UNPOL to hold government authorities to account for malfeasance and abusive conduct would be severely limited. While scenario 1 is unlikely to lead to robust action by UNPOL against host state security agencies (due to limits of personnel and sovereignty considerations), the relationship between the government and UN peace operations envisaged here would mean that an even more robust UNPOL component would be even less likely to confront state security forces if they were the ones threatening civilians. The UN's ability to implement mandates impartially, including obligations under IHL/IHRL to provide protection to civilian non-combatants irrespective of the source of the threat, would be at risk of being neutered.⁴⁶ Finally, the close relationship with governments (at the expense of more inclusive approach) would place the UN in the cross-hairs of those who oppose the government exposing police peacekeepers to greater risk. As with examples such Mali, even CAR, the partisan nature of the mission's position would create significant safety and security/force protection concerns, challenge the resoluteness of even the most committed PCCs and potentially create a problem for meeting future demand for UNPOL.

Scenario 3 - Hybrid policing in a post-sovereign state order

⁴⁶ Hunt, Charles T., and Shannon Zimmerman. "Twenty Years of the Protection of Civilians in UN Peace Operations: Progress, Problems and Prospects." *Journal of International Peacekeeping* 23, no. 1-2 (2020): 50-81.

The trends analysis above suggests that changing conflict dynamics may be generative of quite different socio-political orders that transcend the territorial state in the near future. Building on Williams' 'communities' scenario, this scenario projects to a time where national governments are no longer the dominant form of political authority and where public goods like security and justice are provided by a wide range of state and non-state actors in hybrid political communities characterised by complex heterogeneity.

In 2030, power has diffused in the international system and sovereign states have become less important. The UN still authorises and deploys peace support operations but are sent/requested to respond to threats to highly localised or regional order that do not map to sovereign territorialities. UN peace operations have also been overhauled to adapt to the new normal. They still have 'police' components but these are comprised of a new but rapidly growing array of security and justice NGOs⁴⁷ (and/or Williams' idea of UN Peace Service volunteer corps). They do not perform policing functions, nor do they work exclusively with national governments to build up a monopoly of legitimate violence to maintain order. Instead they are engaged primarily in building and facilitating relationships between community-based sources of policing and justice that are deemed legitimate locally, held to account through means other than a state-society social contract. Policing and justice type services are deeply intertwined with other governance arrangements that are typified by symbiotic relations. These connections reach both below and above the national level with UN efforts increasingly focused on regional initiatives that transcend national boundaries. In addition to philanthropic funding this support is funded by religious bodies keen to enhance the influence of religious leaders who also draw on customary forms of authority and legitimacy.

The main challenge for the UN in this scenario lays in identifying legitimate partners and setting/maintaining standards. Many local policing actors – including those embedded in communities such as self-defence militias – use brutal and inequitable methods. Even locally legitimate service providers will not always meet UN baselines for human rights protections and will clash with commitments enshrined in the Charter. The UN's attempts to support law and order will also be made more difficult by the multitude of overlapping/competing political authorities each likely to draw on different legal and judicial codes based on a range of different cultural and traditional practices. It is almost impossible in this context for the UN to apply erstwhile policies for avoiding working with abusive elements or mitigating harm such as HRDDP. Private actors who are part of the outside intervention – including corporate, faith-based civil society organisations, interest-area NGOs – operate alongside local authorities in a political marketplace where 'forum shopping' will be common and bargains are struck on both sides. This further undermines the agency of the UN who are further weakened in this scenario due to the lack of convening power/authority of the old integrated missions.

3. Recommendations

⁴⁷ This can be seen as an alternative to the public-private partnership model suggested by Paul Williams, *The Future of Peace Operations*, *op cit*.

Based on the trends and scenarios identified in the previous two sections, this part of the paper identifies a range of UNPOL profiles, skills and capabilities that the UN (DPO and UNPD) should seek to build up to prepare for what lies ahead. Recognising several significant reform initiatives in recent years and others underway, the following set of recommendations includes suggestions for strengthening and augmenting existing capabilities but also proposes reconceptualising key aspects of UNPOL's work and a number of new UN police functions in response to emerging threats. NB: A number of capabilities discussed would be useful for both direct implementation by UNPOL themselves as well as a skillset that can be transferred/imparted to local counterparts in order to develop long-term sustainability issue.

i. Reforming UNPOL generation and recruitment processes

Whatever the specific roles of UNPOL in future missions the way in which they are provided, recruited and retained needs overhauling. PCCs often have vastly different experiences with implementing mandates in different missions and provide officers with varying levels of preparedness for doing so. Business as usual will not generate sufficient quantity and suitable quality of human resources and equipment to do the job and close the gap between heightened expectancies and implementation realities. Going forward the UN and PCCs should renegotiate to provide a more relevant baseline for recruitment by the UN Police Division. The top 10 PCCs currently provide approximately 65% of all deployed UNPOL (UNPD 2019). Parallel efforts to broaden the base of police providers – reaching out to new and re-engaging dormant PCCs – should also be undertaken. Meeting future demands will also mean making different requests of PCCs. In all scenarios, UNPOL of better quality – with more relevant skills-sets (e.g. French- and potentially Arabic-speaking, culturally sensitive, police who can bridge between missions and locals as well as work directly with communities) – will be required (see additional skill-sets below). Future demands for new technologies and specialist equipment may also warrant exploring the possibility of 'equipment contributing countries' or 'enabling states' to provide high-end capabilities (see below on weaponry, etc).⁴⁸

ii. More flexible profile of UNPOL units/officers

If UNPOL are deliver on their perceived comparative advantages and respond to the fluid conflict dynamics in current and future missions, then they will need to be more flexible in terms of composition and deployment modalities. DPO should rethink the formations and capabilities that would suit the demands of mission environments. In particular, it should move beyond a "one-size-fits-all" model for policing units driven by supply-side considerations and the pre-determined FPU. Even within the current envelope, DPO should get more creative and think outside the box in terms of numbers, enablers, equipment, taskings of current configurations. For example, policing units capable of splitting into rapidly deployable, self-sustaining platoons is one development that would empower

⁴⁸ This, for example, could be pursued under the Specialised Police Team concept where one member state can supply equipment while another/others supply personnel.

missions use scarce resources more effectively. It is also worthwhile thinking through how this could be intertwined with the Specialised Police Teams concept that is gaining traction.

iii. Tackling Transnational organised crime

UNPOL should put in place plans, develop guidance and recruit against competencies for tackling serious and organised crime.⁴⁹ While this is often sought in specialised policing teams or by recruiting individuals with expertise in this area, this should be mainstreamed through the endeavour. As a minimum, the lessons identified from innovative efforts underway in current missions should be captured and used to inform future efforts. Being more capable of addressing TNOC will require an emphasis on political economy analysis which needs to be embedded into the planning process as a way of better understanding the drivers of illicit activity as well as motivations for popular support for the groups involved. However, there is a limit to what police can achieve alone in this domain. It is clear that UNPOL driven crime-fighting efforts to prevent and disrupt TNOC need to be part of comprehensive, ideally integrated, efforts that incorporate political and development aspects, encompassing the range of non-state stakeholders, as well as efforts to build the capacity of domestic law enforcement agencies. Such an approach should countenance a transnational collaborative approach that includes regional neighbours and bodies. At the more strategic level, it will also be necessary to explicitly address criminality in mission exit strategies that include but reach beyond UNPOL.

iv. New technology and cyber capabilities

UNPOL will need to be conversant and operational in a range of new technology to effectively operate in the conflict theatres of tomorrow. Ability to use and/or confront new non-lethal weapons technologies will likely become important for police. However, so too will being able to use machine assistance to overcome logistics challenges (shipping/access/resupply convoys) and produce more on site such as equipment for local police using 3D printing. Another key area for up-skilling on new technology and techniques relates to cybercrime and security techniques. As a minimum, skill-sets around modern cyberspace intelligence gathering techniques and software familiarity (e.g. social media and successor platforms) will be necessary. Being able to navigate information landscapes typified by misinformation will also be essential for: (i) accurate and timely conflict and crime analysis to guide responses; and (ii) informing force protection in situations where peacekeepers are targeted. Forensic cyber security capabilities will likely be required by missions and UNPOL will be part of those expected to use and maintain them. Protecting encrypted mission databases that include sensitive information (e.g. details of classified intelligence sources, evidence of human rights investigations, etc) against attacks by malicious state and non-state actors will be critical to the effectiveness and credibility of future missions. Related, where UNPOL are engaged in capacity-building with national police, it is likely they will need to transfer the know-how to tackle cyber crime that may target critical infrastructure and systems that underwrite stability in society (e.g. food, financial systems, etc). DPO should look to build collaborative relationships between UNPD

⁴⁹ Noting that operational guidelines do exist and crime intelligence and intelligence-led policing manuals as well as training curricula are currently under development.

and existing UN capacities such as the “Digital Blue Helmets” unit in the Office of Information and Communications Technology to enhance cybersecurity preparedness, resilience and response.

v. *Realise a more comprehensive approach to rule of law and security sector reform.*

Whichever scenarios prove more accurate, locating police peacekeeping work within the broader effort to address the rule of law or criminal justice chain will be essential to their continued relevance. Whether a state-centric institutional focus or decentralized diffuse models of governance, strengthening the connections between police, justice and corrections as an interdependent order-generating system will be essential. DPO can build on the Global Focal Point on Police, Justice and Corrections to improve cross-system coordination, including with the UN Peacebuilding Support Office, the Peacebuilding Fund, and a range of other agencies, funds, and programs (e.g., the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN Women). They could also be tasked with building working relationships and promoting coherence with external partners working alongside missions to support security and justice sector reform, including regional organizations, bilateral donors, and international financial institutions.

vi. *Explore authorisation models and consent models with host governments.*

While there is likely to be continued demand for the types of activities undertaken and activities implemented in current operations, these could – and might well need to be – conducted under different operational configurations. Drawing on the experiences from UTM in MINUSCA and policing the POC sites in UNMISS, DPET/UNPD should undertake a study to identify the strengths and weaknesses of different authorisation models for UNPOL. This must countenance the tensions that arise when mandates authorise UNPOL under Chapter VII to use lethal force as a last resort (e.g. for protection of civilians purposes) but do not provide UNPOL with an executive mandate to arrest, detain and ultimately prosecute would-be perpetrators of serious violent crime.⁵⁰ DPO should seek to clarify expectations under varying levels of host state consent envisaged in the three scenarios presented above. Given blurring of types of violence (political vs. criminal) it is also important to consider the ramifications for police roles in the protection of civilians.⁵¹ The question of who should protect which civilians from what becomes a very difficult one to answer risking protection gaps and credibility of the UN. Any clarifications and advances in thinking should be captured in policy and derivative doctrine, guidance and eventually training.

vii. *Reconceptualise violent (urban) conflict*

If current trends continue, then UNPOL will need to grapple with the complex formations of (dis)order that pertain in today’s conflict zones. As with TNOG above, police components

⁵⁰ Hunt, Charles T. "All Necessary Means to What Ends? The Unintended Consequences of the ‘Robust Turn’ in UN Peace Operations." *International Peacekeeping* 24, no. 1 (2017): 108-31.

⁵¹ Hunt, *Protection through Policing, op cit.*

will require analytical tools (and skillsets to utilise them) that can produce more accurate accounts of how myriad providers of policing-type services exist in symbiotic relationships with each other producing emergent order. Importantly this must be understood as a potential source of resilience for conflict-affected societies as well as a challenge to more recognised institutionalized order. Particularly in cities, building analytical capabilities and enhancing context sensitivity for how violent urban conflict manifests and the threats it poses to civilians (and peacekeepers) will be a vital step towards breaking out of conventional 'civil war' and IHL mindsets more relevant to yesterday's conflicts. Such analysis will be the basis for UNPOL to respond to the needs of those threatened by violence and instability in mission settings, regardless of whether it is perpetrated by conventional armies and non-state armed groups or not.

viii. Recast police reform

The reconceptualization of violent conflict above demands that security and justice sector reform also be reoriented. The focus on reform, restructuring and rebuilding of police services will likely remain an important part of the equation (CF scenarios 1 and 2) but, if it is to remain relevant, the UN will need to embrace of the messy reality of hybrid security governance. In order to grasp the nettle of non-state policing (and justice), DPO and UNPOL should therefore extend the current notion of 'stakeholder engagement' and retool to develop modalities for working with unorthodox partners (e.g. community watch/vigilante groups, self-defence militia, moto riders associations, traditional authorities, private sector actors, etc) to establish the order from which more sustainable forms of locally constructed peace can emerge. Even in scenarios where the UN is required politically to double-down on state-centric approaches to securing law and order (CF scenario 2), a better understanding of the way that empirical everyday order is continually produced through the interactions of multiple and diverse providers of security and justice will help UNPOL develop a clearer sense of what they are competing with and seeking to displace.⁵²

⁵² Day & Hunt "UN Stabilisation Operations and the Problem of Non-Linear Change", *op cit.*