



## The Future of UN Peacekeeping and Parallel Operations<sup>1</sup>

The UN has long recognized the value of partnerships to reinforce the effectiveness of peace operations.<sup>2</sup> UN missions operating alongside those by regional and subregional organizations, alliances, and coalitions have become more frequent since the end of the Cold War, the vast majority with a mandate from the Security Council. Some forty parallel deployments have been authorized or welcomed by the UNSC since 1992,<sup>3</sup> and fewer than ten additional parallel deployments with no UNSC's approval or endorsement.<sup>4</sup>

At their best, parallel operations are based on complementarity and comparative advantage, including rapid deployment, regional political influence and legitimacy, or greater willingness – if not capability – to engage in peace enforcement. At their worst, they can result in competition, conflicting strategic goals, partiality, and operational confusion.

As a result of changes in the nature of armed conflict, and shifting global and regional geopolitics, peacekeeping and peacemaking is likely to remain a crowded field; one in which new actors may also emerge, with consequences for how the UN conducts future operations.

### **Parallel Operations are *Sui Generis***

Every parallel operation is unique, and each have different characteristics and raise different issues and challenges for UN peace operations.<sup>5</sup> There are various ways of categorizing parallel operations deployed alongside the UN:<sup>6</sup> whether or not they have been approved or endorsed by the UNSC, either under Chapter 7 or Chapter 8 of the UN Charter; the type of entity leading the deployment (bilateral, multinational ad hoc coalition, regional or sub-regional organization, non-state actors); the composition of the operation (civilians or uniformed personnel or both); by its command and control structure vis-à-vis the UN (independent, coordinated or integrated); by the principles it abides by (i.e., whether aligned with the UN peacekeeping principles);<sup>7</sup> and by its mandate and intended aim (for example, capacity building, crisis

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<sup>1</sup> Ilhan Dahir, Agathe Sarfati, and Jake Sherman.

<sup>2</sup> From the Brahimi Report, in 1999, to the Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations, in 2018.

<sup>3</sup> See Alexandra Novoseloff and Lisa Sharland, *Partners and Competitors: Forces Operating in Parallel to UN Peace Operations*, International Peace Institute, November 2019, Annex, p.28,

<sup>4</sup> Those do not involve the use of force and include for instance the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO), the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIHP) and EU capacity-building missions.

<sup>5</sup> Bruce Jones, with Feyal Cherif, Center on International Cooperation, NYU. “Evolving Models of Peacekeeping Policy Implications and responses”. External Study, [http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/5880~v~Evolving\\_Models\\_of\\_Peacekeeping\\_Policy\\_Implications\\_and\\_Responses.pdf](http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/5880~v~Evolving_Models_of_Peacekeeping_Policy_Implications_and_Responses.pdf);

<sup>6</sup> See Alexandra Novoseloff and Lisa Sharland, *Partners and Competitors: Forces Operating in Parallel to UN Peace Operations*, International Peace Institute, November 2019

<sup>7</sup> Regional and subregional organizations leading peace operations under Chapter 8 of the UN Charter, generally share the same principles as the UN. These include for instance the European Union, the African Union, the Commonwealth of Independent State and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. This is not necessarily the case for organizations or coalitions that intervene under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter.

response, deterrence or combat operations).<sup>8</sup> In addition, the geographical scope of the parallel force's deployment, the size of the operation, the timing of its deployment and its duration have varied.

### **Recent Trends and Possible Futures**

Current and plausible trends in parallel deployments, and their implications for the UN, include the possibility that other security providers will become more multidimensional, particularly in response to diminishment of the UN role; greater demand on the UN for operational support functions; increased regional and subregional leadership for security, especially in Africa; diversification of the countries and entities deploying parallel operations; "disalignment" of strategic intent; the need for high-value, high-tech capabilities that, while authorized by the Security Council, remain outside of UN command.

### **Narrower UN mandates, expanding non-UN mandates, and support for CT operations**

Parallel forces have typically been deployed to provide security support to UN missions, either to provide reinforcement when peacekeepers are unable to adequately respond (e.g., Operations Sky Monitor and Joint Endeavor in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Operational Artemis in the DRC), to provide a deterrent capacity when UN capacities are under strain (e.g., EUFOR in DRC), or to conduct combat operations beyond the remit of UN peacekeeping (e.g., Operation Barkane and the G5-S force in Mali, AMISOM in Somalia). As a result, they have been primarily composed of armed troops (vs. unarmed observers, police or civilian personnel).<sup>9</sup> The extent to which this trend continues is likely to be influenced by the extent to which multidimensional UN peacekeeping continues to be viewed as an appropriate crisis management response. While stalled political agreements and continued (if not worsening violence) in Mali, Central African Republic and South Sudan are likely to see the continued need for these missions, there are opposing views on whether the Security Council would deploy a multidimensional mission in response to future risk of atrocities or political violence.<sup>10</sup>

Declining consensus within the Security Council for multidimensional missions, particularly for aspects like human rights or peacebuilding, could prompt **parallel operations to take on more civilian functions traditional conducted by the UN**. EU CSDP missions, for example, are already engaged in security and justice reform.<sup>11</sup> With many European member states strong advocates of human rights protection, an erosion of UN mandates could see EU missions develop their capacity to take on a greater role in monitoring.<sup>12</sup> The African Union has similarly argued that, as a political organization, missions like AMISOM should take on a wider set of roles than security provision, and has ambitions to develop such capacities, though it still lags far behind those of the UN.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See Alexandra Novoseloff and Lisa Sharland, *Partners and Competitors: Forces Operating in Parallel to UN Peace Operations*, International Peace Institute, November 2019,

<sup>9</sup> Corinne Bara and Lisa Hultman, March 2020, « Just Different Hats ? Comparing UN and NON-UN peacekeeping », *International Peacekeeping*, Volume 27- Issue 3 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13533312.2020.1737023>

<sup>10</sup> See Aday Day, "The Future of Multidimensional Peacekeeping," IPI Global Observatory, September 2020, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2020/09/future-multidimensional-peacekeeping/>. Conversely, geopolitical tensions among the P5 could result in a resurgence of lighter UN political or "Chapter 6" roles alongside an external security presence (e.g., the OAS IAPF and DOMREP in 1965; the CISPKEF and UNOMIG in Republic of Georgia between 1994-2008).

<sup>11</sup> Italy recently pushed for deployment of a "UNIFIL-like" UN-authorized, European-led peacekeeping force in Libya. <http://www.italianinsider.it/?q=node/8848>

<sup>12</sup> See for example, Wanda Troszczyńska-van Genderen, Human rights challenges in EU civilian crisis management: the cases of EUPOL and EUJUST LEX, EUISS Occasional Paper 84, 2010.

<sup>13</sup> Interviews with AU officials, April 2019.

The continued spread of violent extremism and terrorism as a security threat could also diminish demands for UN peacekeeping in favor of military operations undertaken by others – possibly with rising demand for other forms of UN support, including political or operational support missions (e.g., an UNSOS for the G5-Sahel). Whereas, historically, most parallel forces have been deployed to support UN operations,<sup>14</sup> there has been a recent trend towards **UN operations being requested to support non-UN operations**, including AMISOM in Somalia, and the G5-Sahel force. Indeed, “regional forces of the willing” like the G5 and Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) are likely to become more common, as countries grapple with the regional nature of armed groups.<sup>15</sup> These parallel operations are primarily security-focused,<sup>16</sup> which ultimately raises questions for UN operations’ impartiality (real or perceived) and suitability. This may ultimately undermine the legitimacy and relevance of the UN in contexts where counterterrorism or counterinsurgency is regarded as the priority by the majority of stakeholders.

Particularly in situations where non-UN operations are undertaking peace enforcement or counter-terrorism operations for which the UN is not suited, but where non-UN forces lack self-sustainment capabilities, or raise concerns about conduct, the UN may be increasingly pushed into a “support role”, including providing logistics support or monitoring human rights compliance. Several parallel operations have struggled with self-sustainment beyond their initial deployment. Regional and subregional organizations like the AU, for example, have faced challenges with adequate financing for troop reimbursement, maintenance and replacement of equipment, as well as ensuring adequate rations, water, and fuel. The availability of funding is likely to be aggravated by COVID-19,<sup>17</sup> which may impact both the UN budget<sup>18</sup> and that of other organizations. Conversely, a worsening of the financial crisis that has faced peacekeeping could result in inadequate financing to maintain or deploy large multidimensional UN operations, requiring other entities to step in – for example, in response to prevent a sudden risk of mass atrocity.

### **Scenario 1 : UN Operational Support to Counter-Terrorism Operations**

The global recession following the COVID-19 pandemic forced member states to re-prioritize their spending, reducing their voluntary contributions to the UN and in some cases, defer their assessed contributions to peacekeeping. Major donors stepped up pressure to close several longstanding missions; a compromise was reached resulting in the premature closure of MONUSCO and MINUSCA, and the downsizing of UNMISS. Following an “accidental” attack by Russian forces on U.S. troops in Syria, and China’s move to end sanctions against DPRK, the Security Council was largely paralyzed. A series of deadly terrorist attacks by ISIL (Da’esh) and Al-Qaeda across the Sahel, which resulted in the death of the French ambassador in Chad, affirmed that counterterrorism is one of the few remaining areas of consensus. With the backing of the P5, the Council authorized the UN Support Office for the Sahel

<sup>14</sup> Examples include Operation Sky Monitor by NATO in support of UNPROFOR in 1992; Operation Deny Flight by NATO in support of UNPROFOR/UNPF in 1995; Operation Turquoise in support of the deployment of UNAMIR in Rwanda, in 1994; Operation Licorne in support of MINUCI/UNOCI in Cote d’Ivoire; ISAF in Afghanistan in support of UNAMA; etc.

<sup>15</sup> John Karlsrud, “Are UN Peacekeeping Missions Moving Toward ‘Chapter Seven and a Half Operations’?”, IPI Global Observatory, 12 February 2018, available at: <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2018/02/peacekeeping-chapter-seven-half/>

<sup>17</sup> This may lead, for example, to delays on the operationalization of the AU Peace Fund beyond its 2021 deadline; and impact coalitions, such as Joint Forces-G5 Sahel, which do not have sufficient resources to self-sustain their operations.

<sup>18</sup> Cedric de Coning, “Examining the Longer-Term Effects of COVID-19 on UN Peacekeeping Operations”, *Global Observatory*, 13 May 2020.

(UNSOAH), with a mandate to provide logistical, procurement, and “other relevant operational support, including the exchange of information” to the FC-G5-Sahel. (A renewed push by France and the A3 to consider use of UN assessed funding for the African Union failed after the U.S. threatened a veto, however.)

The logistical support package includes rations and water, fuel and oil, medical evacuation, camp security, mine-resistant APCs, and equipment maintenance. Equipment and supplies are channeled through the UN Regional Service Centre Entebbe and a newly established Regional Service Centre in Accra. Supply chains are increasingly targeted by non-state armed groups, and the number of casualties, particularly of UN civilian staff is rising.

With little attention to a political solution and an emphasis on shoring up fragile governments in the region – many of which cracked down on popular protests following the post-Covid-19 economic collapse – human rights violations committed by state security forces spike. Civil society organizations throughout the region and beyond criticize the UN’s complicity in human rights violations. France and several elected members of the UNSC propose the creation of a permanent UN human rights compliance framework, to be overseen by OHCHR, with commensurate staffing and resources. Under the framework, the G5-S forces would have to abide by or risk withdrawal of UN support. Facing the threat of a veto, France instead offers that the monitoring be outsourced to an expanded regional EU Training Mission, which is narrowly approved. The UN Secretary General tasks DPO to develop a strategy for public education, intended to reassure communities that their reports will be treated confidentially and help ensure accountability of national security forces.

### **New and Non-traditional Peacekeeping Providers**

Some regional organizations such as the EU and NATO, have deployed forces outside the territory of their member states, alongside UN operations, but **there has recently been an increase in regional and subregional entities deploying within the territory of their own member states.** (For example, the G5-Sahel, MNJTF, and AMISOM, AFISMA, MISCA, and, earlier, ECOMOG). On the one hand, these (sub)regional entities are often perceived as more legitimate actors to intervene by host and neighboring countries, have political relationships and local cultural knowledge they can leverage, and may be able to rapidly deploy; on the other, they can lack impartiality, with associated risks for the UN. The growing focus on regionalized approaches to crisis management will likely require the UN to assess its role in supporting these regional deployments.

As regional, subregional and bilateral partners continue to take the lead in political processes, the UN could also be called on to **provide a security guarantee to non-UN civilian missions.** The AU Technical Support Mission to The Gambia (AUTSTG), for example, has provided advice to the government on rule of law, democracy, transitional justice and security sector reform, and is seen as a possible turning point in the operationalization of the AU’s PCRD capacity.<sup>19</sup> While the situation in The Gambia was stable, in more volatile environments, the UN could be requested to provide security to non-UN missions. During the drawdown of UNMIL, the UN planned for the possible deployment of a Quick Reaction Force from MINUSMA in the event of reversal in security around the 2017 elections. By extension, a

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<sup>19</sup> Chido Mutangadura, “Will The Gambia be a turning point for AU peace efforts?”, May 2019, <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/will-the-gambia-be-a-turning-point-for-au-peace-efforts>.

residual UN presence or QRF could be similarly deployed to provide security to a non-UN civilian mission *in extremis*.

The **private military security companies** are not new to peacekeeping, having provided personnel, guard services, logistics, intelligence and risk assessment, and other tasks.<sup>20</sup> There has been repeated attention to the possible role of PMSCs as an augment or alternative to member state-provided peacekeeping troops.<sup>21</sup> While PMSCs carry several operational and reputational risks for peacekeeping, including with respect to compliance with IHL and international human rights law, they also have potential advantages, including rapid deployment, well-trained, well-equipped and coherent forces, with clear command and control. These characteristics could make them well-suited to respond to a crisis.<sup>22</sup> (While pushing the boundaries of a “parallel operation,” the UN is also increasingly likely to have to content with quasi-state/quasi-private military entities like the Wagner Group, which is actively believed to engage in combat roles in Libya, while providing training and advice in Sudan, CAR, and Syria, and elsewhere.<sup>23</sup> Such entities could be deployed in support of government or non-state allies, including to provide advice during peace agreements, as in CAR, but without acknowledgement by countries responsible for their deployment.)

## **Scenario 2: Multiple stakeholders support the transition in South Sudan**

One year after the formation of a government of national unity, the Security Council initiated the drawdown of UNMISS. Despite widespread voluntary return of IDPs, thousands remain at PoC sites due to loss of livelihoods from a prolonged drought, and lingering pockets of violence remain due to criminal gangs. As a result, several members of the council backed the deployment of a UN special political mission to train national security forces, support camp security, and monitor the human rights situation. The South Sudanese government, however, supported a rival proposal by Uganda, an elected member of the council, for a small, geographically-limited peace support operation by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). With the backing of the A3, the council approved the Intergovernmental Authority Mission in South Sudan (IGAMISS), and requested that UNMISS provide embedded technical experts, and *in extremis* protection for the mission for six months to help standup the new mission.

Three months before the closure of UNMISS, the president of South Sudan is ambushed and assassinated during a visit to Jonglei. In reprisal, ethnic militia, backed by the army, carryout a series of massacres, leading to a rapid reversal in the security situation. IGAMISS is unable to contain the violence; UNMISS is able to prevent IGAD forces from being overwhelmed, but doesn't have the military strength or mobility to contain the deteriorating situation. During an emergency session, the Security Council requests the Secretary-General to explore the use of

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<sup>20</sup> DeWinter-Schmitt, R. (Editor), *Montreux Five Years On: An Analysis of State Efforts to Implement Montreux Document Legal Obligations and Good Practices*, 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Lauren Grace Fitzsimons, *Should Private Military Companies be used in UN Peace Operations?*, 2015; <https://www.e-ir.info/pdf/59637>.

<sup>22</sup> Following the Rwandan Genocide, Executive Outcomes claimed it would have been able to get forces on the ground within 14 days. Fitzsimmons (2015).

<sup>23</sup> Russia is “neither a signatory to the [Montreux Document](#), nor a member of the [International Code for Conduct of Private Security Providers' Association](#). The former outlines how international law applies to PMCs and is supported by fifty-five countries, including the United States. The latter sets standards for PMCs to adhere to international law and human rights, as well as best practices in management.” Nathaniel Reynolds, “Patronage, Geopolitics, and the Wagner Group,” <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/07/08/putin-s-not-so-secret-mercenaries-patronage-geopolitics-and-wagner-group-pub-79442>

a private military security company. The UN contracts a company based in the U.A.E.<sup>24</sup> that, two weeks later, deploys two mobile battalions as reinforcement.

Following the stabilization of the situation, the South Sudanese government expelled the PMSC citing an alleged lack of transparency in its conduct of operation, and accusations that personnel were involved in an incident involving the killing of civilians during an operation. Neither the company nor its host state take action, and no one is ever held to account.

### **Regional Diversification, Unilateral Action, and Strategic “Disalignment”**

While a majority of peace support operations have been led by regional and sub-regional organizations in the past, **the organizations leading these deployments have been diversifying**. While NATO initially led a majority of the operations in the 1990s, the establishment of the African Union (AU) and of the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) in the early 2000s led to their increasingly involvement. This evolving landscape as well as the prerogatives, resources and needs of each organization have shaped its relationship with UN stakeholders. As the geopolitical landscape continues to shift, and conflicts become increasingly internationalized or regionalized, the UN could face increasing demand to operate alongside other security providers with which it has less institutionalized partnerships, particularly those led by Russia and China. Just as past UN peacekeeping missions in Georgia and Tajikistan operated alongside those by the Commonwealth of Independent States, future instability in Eurasia could see efforts by the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) or Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to play an increased role.

Both organizations have been viewed with skepticism by other permanent members of the Security Council, raising possibility that, in the absence of consensus on the deployment of these organizations, Russia or (less likely) China might **deploy without a mandate** into areas where the UN is already operating, or request a UN presence to add legitimacy to their operation (e.g., UNAMI following the U.S. invasion of Iraq).<sup>25</sup> This would be most likely to occur in their perceived spheres of influence. Conversely, the threat of a veto due to increasing geopolitical competition and resulting declining consensus could lead the P3 to undertake unilateral action through NATO (as in Kosovo) or another configuration. Both situations raise questions of how the UN should cooperate – or at a minimum, deconflict – with parallel operations that have not been approved by the UNSC. The challenge is one of **legitimacy** (political and in principle) and **legality** (particularly pertaining to the use of force).

Many of these situations envisioned above could contribute to **“disalignment” of strategic intent** – missions with different objectives working to cross purposes, whether unintentional or not. This lack of alignment may be reflected in mandates and in political objectives of parallel forces which might be working towards competing goals<sup>26</sup> or have conflicting interests<sup>27</sup>. This can present challenges and risks for the UN. Operations by parallel actors could impose political constraints on the UN, for example in its ability to engage with certain (especially listed) armed groups being targeted by those parallel forces, as was the case in Afghanistan. In other instances, parallel operations could seek political bargains that undermine

<sup>24</sup> U.A.E. is not a signatory of the Montreux Document, <https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/fdfa/foreign-policy/international-law/international-humanitarian-law/private-military-security-companies/participating-states.html>.

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2019-09/cooperation-between-the-un-and-regional-organisations.php>

<sup>26</sup> See Alexandra Novoseloff and Lisa Sharland, *Partners and Competitors: Forces Operating in Parallel to UN Peace Operations*, International Peace Institute, November 2019

<sup>27</sup> See Paul Williams, *Global and Regional Peacekeepers*, Council on Foreign Relations, 2016

UN principles, including for accountability for crimes against humanity, or seek to strengthen certain parties at the expense of others. In situations where parallel forces are authorized by the UNSC to use force or to take enforcement action<sup>28</sup>, the issue of strategic alignment becomes flagrant.

### **Scenario 3: Breakdown in UNSC consensus and increase of un-sanctioned parallel operations**

Following the fall of the last opposition stronghold in Idlib in late 2020, the government of Bashar El-Assad requested a Russian-led peace operation to stabilize military gains, invest in state building and help pull Syria out of a financial crisis. Facing severe economic recession from Covid-19 and U.S. and European sanctions, Russia approaches China to propose a jointly-led coalition force in exchange for Chinese access to the Doubayat gas fields.

The Russian-Chinese coalition requests UNSC authorization to deploy the peace operation in Syria. In a bid accompanied by a letter of the Government of Syria, Russia and China emphasize the value of the UN Charter, respect of international law and UN principles including consent of the host state. Despite a compelling approach, the P3 veto the deployment of the parallel operation in Syria, arguing that such an engagement was likely to further raise tension in the region.

Russia accused the P3 of double standards, citing its approval of multiple NATO operations in Eastern Europe and Afghanistan. Facing a lack of consensus, Russia and China finally decide to move forward without authorization from the UNSC, citing the precedents like the deployment of the Multinational Force Observers (MFO). Once deployed, the joint force hinders the movement of other international forces operating in Syria. In retaliation for the P3 veto, they block renewal of MINSUMA, point to its support to Barkhane and EUTM. As violence in Mali escalates, France and the EU members of the council seek authorization for an EU-led reaction force, which is similarly vetoed. They elect to deploy anyway, citing the consent of the Malian government. Fearing a proliferation of unilateral interventions was undermining the Charter, the Secretary-General, acting under Article 99, proposes the establishment of a small civilian UN mission in Syria, to “facilitate coordination and exchange of information between any international forces in Syria” – an effort to secure minimal Security Council acknowledgement of the Russian-Chinese force, while satisfying P3 demands for some measure of international visibility.

### **New Threats and high value, high-tech, and niche-capability operations**

There have been several instances where UN operations have benefited from the deployment of specialized enhancements to peacekeeping that represented a step-change in their capabilities, including the All Source Information Fusion Unit (ASIFU) to provide military intelligence for MINUSMA, and, earlier, the Strategic Military Cell to augment command and control in UNIFIL. Electronic countermeasures/jamming against IEDs are already used, for example in Mali and Lebanon, and some TCCs have deployed capabilities to gather hostile communications. Similarly, UNIFIL’s Maritime Task Force (MTF), the first for a peacekeeping mission, provides interdiction of unauthorized material by sea, and naval capacity building. While these capabilities were part of UN missions, in the future, **small, high-**

<sup>28</sup> Authorization by the UNSC allows for enforcement action to be taken by the regional arrangement (art. 53, Chapter VIII)

**tech or niche-capability operations** may provide operational support to UN missions, while operating outside of their command. In 2008/2009, the MTF was commanded by EUROMARFOR, putting the joint European maritime force under UN mandate. Peacekeeping is increasingly likely to require highly specialized capabilities, like cyber, that only a few member states are able to provide; where there are sensitivities about non-transfer of these technologies, certain troops contributing countries may elect to deploy outside of the UN in order to control when and how these capabilities are shared with UN missions. (Such deployments would require the consent of the host state, but could nonetheless raise concerns from the government or other TCCs about the nature of the units activities.)

In addition to traditional treats to international peace and security, the **future threat landscape** is likely to be characterized by climate change, forced migration, hybrid war and disinformation, public health crises, and cyberattacks. These situations have already resulted in new models of UN missions, for example, the UNMEER in response to the Ebola crisis in 2014, and the OPCW – UN Joint Investigative Mechanism in 2015, as well as operations like EU’s Operation Sophia to rescue migrants at sea, and Operation Atalanta to combat piracy off the Horn of Africa.

#### **Scenario 4: Geopolitical tensions rising in the Arctic and UN maritime peace operation to mitigate interstate conflict**

Following several years of record high temperatures, the Arctic thawing has opened new sea routes, and the discovery of oil and gas fields. Countries have scrambled to compete for economic and security gain, and rapidly built up their military presence in the region. Without a comprehensive coordination mechanism in place<sup>29</sup>, states have pursued their own interests independently. China has been vocal about its policy on the “Polar Silk Road” and asserts its legitimacy as a Near Arctic State by deploying nuclear-powered ballistic submarines. In response, Russia, until that point cooperative with the Arctic countries, responds by increasing its military activities into the Central Arctic Area. Russia, the US, China deploy nuclear-powered icebreakers.

The rise in tension pushes the Arctic Security Forces Roundtable (ASFR) composed of European and North American nations<sup>30</sup> to deploy an observer force to monitor what it considers illegal activities in the Arctic. Perceived as provocation by Russia and China, the two states call for a closed UNSC-meeting on the issue. To break a diplomatic impasse, Canada, an elected member of the Council, suggests deployment of a UN maritime presence.

After a heated negotiation about whether it should include a mandate to monitor and assess the impacts of climate change on international peace and security in the Arctic region, UNSC members finally agree to deploy the UN Maritime Arctic Task Force (UNMATF), for an initial period of six months. The UN Secretariat has to rapidly boost its expertise on the laws of the sea and call on troop contributing countries with previous UN maritime experience to deploy. The UN operation de facto operates in parallel to the ASFR observer mission, until the ASFR countries agree to end the mission and merge with UNMATF.

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<sup>29</sup> The Arctic Council does not have a mandate to deal with military and security aspects.

<sup>30</sup> From which Russia has been excluded since 2014 and in which China is not a member



## **Implications and Conclusion**

Over the coming decade, parallel operations are likely to continue to shape UN peace operations. In anticipation of likely and plausible changes, the UN should continue to adapt in order to maintain its comparative advantages, including its versatility – the range of functions and mandates that it is able to undertake, the universality of its membership and their widespread participation in peacekeeping; and a foundation of policy and practice resulting from its long history of working alongside different types of missions deployed by diverse entities. Below are several recommendations for further policy development and operational capacity. The recommendations are both inward-facing (for the UN Secretariat’s own internal consideration) and outward-facing (towards the UNSC members and actors involved in parallel operations).

### **Inward facing recommendations:**

- **Undertake an independently-led lessons learned exercise to assess the impact of UN support operations on the perception of different stakeholders**, including host communities, the extent to which different aspects of such support may affect the UN’s perceived impartiality and its role as an impartial mediator. The review should develop a risk matrix for different types of support activities, make recommendations on steps that the UN could take to mitigate associated risks (e.g., strategic communication, community engagement), as well as possible activities that the UN should not engage in.
- **Assess the impact of the G5 Sahel’s Human Rights Compliance Framework** and develop a standardized model to be replicated across parallel deployments to ensure respect for Human Rights Due Diligence Policy; request appropriate additional resources for OHCHR (these capabilities could also be used to enhance vetting of PMSCs used by the UN);
- **Assess what implications regular classification of UN peacekeeping missions as parties to conflict under International Humanitarian Law would have** if UN support operations to parallel forces or closer coordination, including information sharing, become more common.
- **Ensure that After Action Reviews, including lessons learned, have been undertaken from recent joint and specialized missions** (e.g., UN-OPCW), and that a clear focal point within the UN Secretariat is the repository and institutional knowledge on these experiences.
- **Review and update the 2012 UN Guidelines on the Use of Armed Security Services from Private Security Companies** (PMSCs) to ensure that the guidelines 1) cover not only security, but all potential uses by the UN; 2) specify which services cannot be outsourced to PMSCs; and 3) identify clear mechanisms to hold companies accountable for potential misconduct and abuses.
- Nearly two years after the Secretary-General’s creation of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Department of Peace Operations, **commission an independently-led evaluation of progress towards a “spectrum” approach to UN peace operations**. The ability of the UN to tailor the design and deployment of its peace operations would enable the UN to provide modular services and technical expertise that partner organizations deploying parallel missions may lack.

### **Outward Facing (with partners and parallel forces):**

- Continue to develop partnerships, including through **regular high-level and expert level engagements with emerging regional organizations** (e.g., to exchange views on situational analysis, develop channels for information-sharing, and share practices on mission planning, gender-sensitive conflict analysis, human rights compliance, etc.);
- **Harmonize regulatory frameworks with key partners**, particularly the African Union, for example, to facilitate the mutual use of procurement arrangements for goods and services.
- **Review or, where absent, develop memoranda of understanding with likely partner organizations to facilitate exchange of technical support**, including short-term secondment of UN staff in areas like human rights, security and justice sector reform, and mediation support.
- Consider **developing and running table-top scenario exercises with regular partner organizations**, including for crisis management and contingency planning;
- Consider **replicating the UN-AU staff exchange with other regional and sub-regional organizations** to facilitate knowledge transfer and interoperability on operational support matters.