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Global catastrophic risks mitigated	Risk multipliers managed	Implementation timeframe
Unknown risks	Conflict or political violence	Short

How to Align Peacekeeping Mandates and Resources

The proposal is to create institutionalize a reporting requirement by which the Security Council is informed of the operational implications on a peacekeeping mission mandate of all peacekeeping budgets approved by the General Assembly's Fifth Committee.

DETAILS

<https://theglobalobservatory.org/2019/12/align-peacekeeping-mandates-resources-improve-link-security-council-fifth-committee/>

<https://www.gao.gov/assets/690/689900.pdf>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/06/28/u-n-peacekeeping-really-can-be-effective-heres-how-we-tabulated-this/>

https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/research_report_council_mandating_february_2019.pdf

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/24/world/united-nations-peacekeeping-trump-administration.html>

https://civiliansinconflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/BaseClosurePrint_Web.pdf

https://civiliansinconflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/CIVIC_PKReport_Final2_Web-2.pdf

[https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2448\(2018\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2448(2018))

[https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2480\(2019\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2480(2019))

<https://undocs.org/S/PRST/2009/24>

WIDER IMPLICATIONS

Reducing inclusivity and accountability in national and global governance

Given that the proposal is ultimately bureaucratic, it should not have converse effects on inclusivity and accountability.

Conversing effect in increasing poverty and inequality

Given that the proposal is ultimately bureaucratic, it should not have converse effects on increasing poverty and inequality.

Reducing conflict and political violence

This proposal would enable UN member states to draft more realistic mandates, encourage greater prioritization and allocation of resources commensurate with those priorities. In other words, it would help ensure that scarce resources are directed towards those areas where UN peacekeeping can make the biggest difference.

THEORY OF CHANGE

Implementation strategy

The disconnect between, on the one hand, Security Council decisions on UN peacekeeping mandates and, on the other, budgetary agreements by the Fifth Committee on financial resources and staffing for those missions, is often cited as one of the main obstacles to effective mandate implementation. While this belies the volatility and unpredictability of environments in which UN peacekeeping operates, it does underscore a truism that peacekeeping missions need adequate funding to carry out the tasks outlined in their mandates.

The challenge for diplomats, if not the Secretariat, is determining what resources are required to fulfill the Security Council's expectations—and, where necessary, tempering those expectations if member states are unwilling to bear the costs, whether in terms of troops and resources.

There is, however, no requirement or mechanism by which the Security Council is informed of the operational implications of the approved budget for an individual mission on its mandate.

One option to remedy these challenges in the interim is to institutionalize a dialogue between the Security Council and the Fifth Committee regarding the results of the annual peacekeeping budget. The Security Council and the Fifth Committee closely guard their respective decision-making prerogatives. The chair of the Fifth Committee could transmit a short note from the Secretariat, via a formal letter to the president of the Security Council following the peacekeeping budget session. The note could present the approved mission budgets, identify reductions against the secretary-general's request, and provide information on how the missions would readjust plans to offset any potential operational impact. This would maintain the respective prerogative of the two bodies, while recognizing that it is the interest of the Council to be apprised of the consequences of budgets on its mandates.

Political will exists to realise this proposal

As part of the Declaration of Shared Commitments on Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative, member states committed "to seek measures to enable greater coherence between mandates and resources." The question of how to do this is a longstanding challenge—yet finding a solution is a critical priority.

Security Council decision-making is not entirely insulated from financial advice. When considering a new mission or a major reconfiguration, there is a formal process for the Secretariat to provide a cost estimate. The Security Council President's statement on April 6, 2009 requires that the Secretariat provide the Council with the financial implications of major proposals—essentially the level of commitment authority the secretary-general intends to seek for new peace operations or major reconfigurations, though it is not clear how consistently the latter is applied or what the threshold of "major" is.

Some tentative ad hoc efforts in this direction have recently been tried, which could serve as a model for further institutionalization. The Secretariat presented the approved 2018–2019 peacekeeping budget to Security Council members' military advisers. While articulating the impact of reductions on missions' mandate delivery is sensitive, the Secretariat is getting bolder. In June, during the 2019–2020 budget negotiations, the Fifth Committee was provided with an analysis of the potential impact of member states' proposed budget reductions on the delivery of each mission. According to one UN official, the paper helped keep the peacekeeping budget envelope relatively intact.

What if political will does not exist yet

This proposal is a relatively small bureaucratic tweak to the relationship between the Security Council and the Fifth Committee, which could be achieved in a relatively short period of time if the necessary political will could be generated among key stakeholders in the two bodies.

The first step would be ensuring the buy-in of the major financial contributors – including the US and China, the European Union, as well as Russia – and the main negotiating blocs within the Fifth Committee. I propose to meet with the permanent missions/delegations of each of these to explain the rationale of the proposal. (Indeed, initial discussions in the drafting stage suggest some openness by at least a few key member states.) The main aim is to mitigate concerns that such a proposal would in any way infringe on their prerogatives.

The next step would be to meet with the Chair of the Fifth Committee, which rotates with each GA session, to advocate for why they should take on this additional responsibility.

I would reconfirm with the Secretariat, including the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance (which is responsible for preparing peacekeeping budget and would have to prepare the operational impact assessment), and the Security Council Affairs Division of DPPA to ensure Secretariat buy-in and that proper procedures and protocols are followed.

MITIGATING RISKS

Mitigating unknown risks

United Nations peacekeeping has long been regarded as a cost-effective response to international security challenges, and a relatively successful means to reestablish stability and enable lasting peace agreements. However, there are growing concerns that downward pressure on peacekeeping budgets—particularly, though not exclusively from permanent members of the Security Council—is negatively impacting the ability of missions to implement ambitious mandates.

Creating a better link between the Security Council and the Fifth Committee will not in and of itself change mandating practices in the former or budget negotiations in the latter. But it would enable a layer of accountability and transparency that does not currently exist, and could help inform expectations within the Security Council and Fifth Committee for what a mission should or should not achieve.

This could help avoid situations like that of MONUSCO, where, according to the NGO CIVIC, the mission preemptively reduced its 2019–2020 budget request to “proactively decide where to cut costs rather than leaving decision-making on reductions to the...Fifth Committee.” It could mitigate future situations like that of MINUSCA in 2018, when the Security Council added a task in the mission’s mandate to “provide limited logistical support for the progressive redeployment” of the country’s armed forces “within existing resources,” or MINUSMA in 2019, where an additional protection priority followed a similar pattern.

Within permanent missions, this could encourage greater coordination between Council and Fifth Committee experts, and improve alignment between the intended results of mandates and the resources needed to implement them. Within the Council, it could encourage members to more closely monitor operational impact, and, where necessary, adjust the scope of mandates based on realities on the ground. Within the Fifth Committee, it could encourage delegates to make more informed decisions about budget levels and operational tradeoffs.