



UN Peacekeeping Operations and Pastoralism-Related Insecurity: Adopting a Coordinated Approach for the Sahel

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Executive Summary

In recent years, pastoralism has increasingly become associated with violent conflict, especially in the Sahel region of Africa. Pastoralism-related insecurity in the Sahel stems from a confluence of stressors. These include weak governance and predatory behavior by elites; climate change, which undermines pastoralists' livelihoods by exacerbating desertification, drought, and soil erosion; and protracted conflicts and insecurity that intersect with pastoralist migration routes throughout the region.

In the Sahel, pastoralism-related insecurity is directly linked to the macro-level conflict dynamics in contexts with UN peacekeeping missions, including Mali, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Darfur, Abyei, and South Sudan. None of the associated missions, however, have mandates that explicitly address pastoralism-related insecurity. While the UN Security Council has included references to local conflict in most of these missions' mandates, their approach has been ad hoc. The Security Council's reluctance to address the impact of climate change on conflict has also limited its ability to give missions the tools to address pastoralism-related insecurity.

Despite these limitations, UN peacekeeping missions in the Sahel have sought to address pastoralism-related insecurity, particularly through their civil and political affairs teams. They have directly provided mediation support and good offices, built the capacity of host governments to prevent and manage conflict, gathered information to predict the timing and scope of pastoralist migrations, and used joint police-military patrols to deter outbreaks of violence. These initiatives show how peacekeeping missions can use existing structures, tools, and approaches to address pastoralism-related insecurity.

Even if peacekeeping missions prioritize addressing pastoralism-related insecurity, however, their reliance on political and security-centered approaches and limited geographic mandates require them to partner with other UN and non-UN actors. These include the UN's regional offices, which have a clear mandate for conflict prevention, and UN country teams, which can complement missions through their peacebuilding efforts. Partnerships with national governments and civil society are also essential. Together with these partners, peacekeeping missions should leverage their comparative advantages to be part of a multi-stakeholder approach to pastoralism-related insecurity in the Sahel.

Introduction

Pastoralism, one of the dominant forms of livelihood for rural populations across the Sahel, has increasingly become associated with violent conflict in recent years. Pastoralism-related insecurity stems from a confluence of stressors, including climate change, weak governance, and regional insecurity. It leads to repeated incidents of inter-communal violence linked with macro-level security challenges such as civil wars and violent extremism, undermining international peace and security.

The UN system has been slow to adopt a coordinated response to pastoralism-related insecurity, even as it continues to grow in scope across the Sahel and surrounding regions, including in several countries that host large peacekeeping missions (see Figure 1). In Mali, the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Sudan, and South Sudan, peacekeeping missions face an increase in pastoralism-related insecurity.

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Although the spread of this violence undermines the ability of missions to implement their mandates to protect civilians and support peace processes, missions still lack adequate mandates and tools to address the root causes of this form of conflict. Without clear signals from the UN Security Council, missions instead rely on ad hoc programmatic interventions in conjunction with efforts by special political missions, UN country teams, and non-UN regional partners.

This report provides a preliminary overview of peacekeeping missions' efforts to mitigate growing pastoralism-related insecurity in their areas of operation. It analyzes six missions that are active

within or near the Sahel region, which hosts the majority of Africa's pastoralist population. It is based on both desk research and twenty-three interviews conducted between October 2019 and May 2020 in person and remotely with staff from UN headquarters, special political missions, peacekeeping missions, and country teams, as well as representatives of national governments, members of civil society, and independent experts.

Framing Pastoralism-Related Insecurity

Mobile pastoralism is a form of production whereby rural communities migrate alongside their livestock and maintain shared resource-management systems to ensure access to water and land

resources.¹ Between 30 and 50 percent of the Sahel's population is involved in pastoralism, and it is a significant source of economic activity for both rural and urban communities through the production of meat, milk, leather, and other secondary products.² Despite

their large share of the population and their economic importance, most pastoralists receive limited public services in the peripheral areas they inhabit, resulting in low access to education and high rates of malnutrition.³

Over the last few decades, Sahelian pastoralist systems have faced multiple sources of stress. As a result, there has been a marked increase in violent incidents targeting or perpetrated by pastoralist communities. This violence will henceforth be referred to as "pastoralism-related insecurity" rather than the more frequently used term "farmer-herder conflict" (see Box 1 on the difference between these terms).⁴ Pastoralism-related insecurity

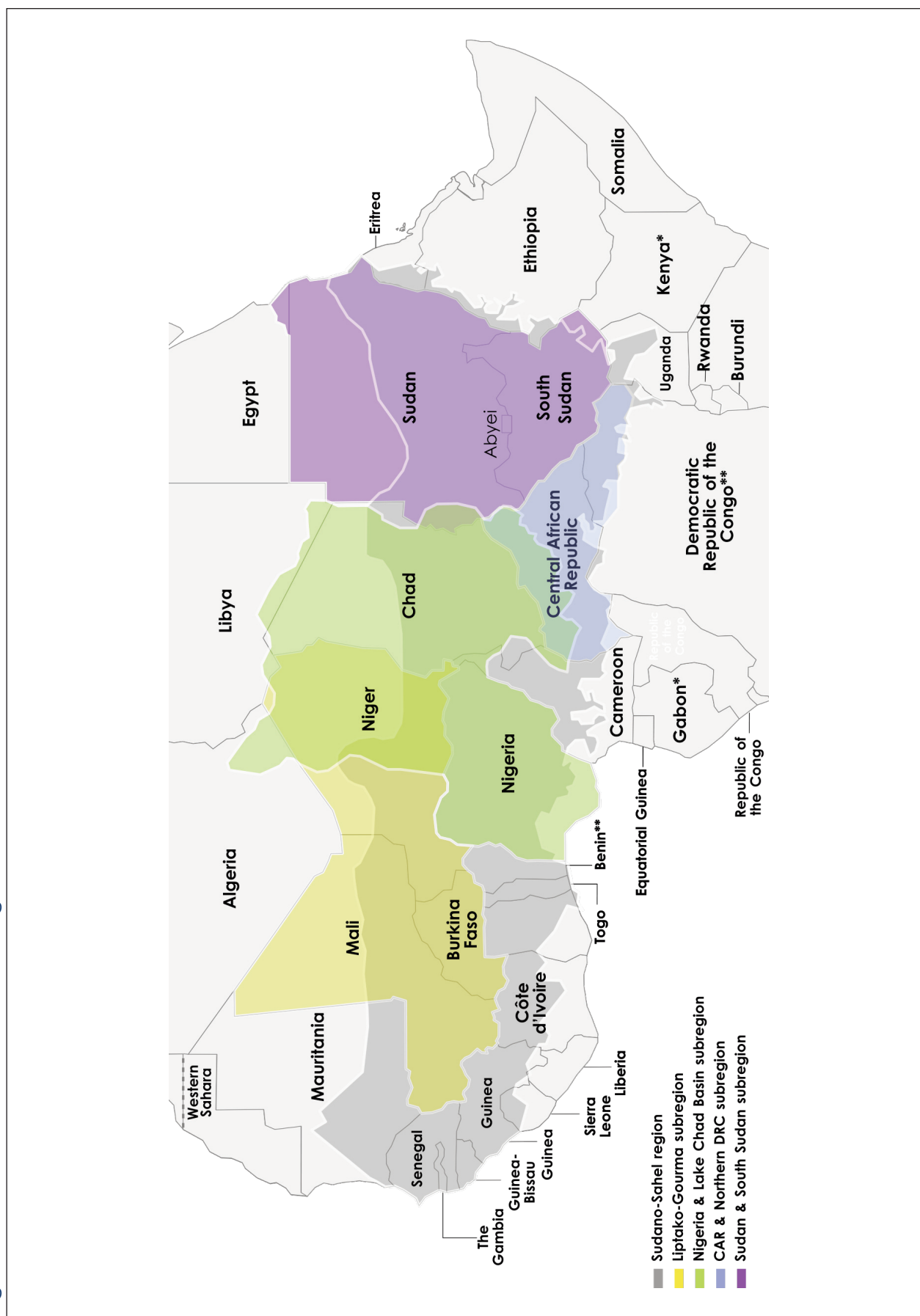
1 Saverio Krätli, Christian Hulsebusch, Sally Brooks, and Brigitte Kaufmann, "Pastoralism: A Critical Asset for Food Security under Global Climate Change," *Animal Frontiers* 3, no. 1 (2013), p. 43.

2 Abdul Monium K. Osman, Emmanuella Olesambu, and Camille Balfroid, "Pastoralism in Africa's Drylands," Food and Agriculture Organization, 2018, pp. v, ix, 1–2; and Kennedy Mkutu, "Pastoralism and Conflict in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel," *Population and Development Review* 44, no. 4 (2018), p. 857.

3 William Avis, "Rebuilding Pastoralism Livelihoods during and after Conflict," K4D, September 2018.

4 The lack of comprehensive data collection or standardized research methods makes it difficult to capture the exact data on this topic. One UN official claimed that pastoralism-related insecurity has accounted for roughly one-third of conflict incidents in CAR since 2013. The 2019 Global Terrorism Index Report identifies "Fulani extremists," a problematic term for coding pastoralist violence, as the largest conflict driver in sub-Saharan Africa, responsible for a 261 percent increase in deaths from 2018 to 2019. See "Global Terrorism Index 2019: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism," Institute for Economics and Peace, November 2019; interview with UN official, New York, November 2019; and phone interview with government official, January 2020.

Figure 1. The Sahel and relevant subregions



Box 1. “Farmer-herder conflict” versus “pastoralism-related insecurity”

This paper will use the term “pastoralism-related insecurity” instead of “farmer-herder conflict,” which is the term often used by member states in the UN Security Council and General Assembly. The term “pastoralism-related insecurity” seeks to make pastoralists the primary point of analysis without making assumptions about the conflict parties or their motives. The term “farmer-herder conflict” associates pastoralist communities with violence and is often used by elites to encourage cycles of retaliation, even though most pastoralists and farming communities maintain peaceful relations. Moreover, it simplifies this type of conflict into a two-actor situation, when in reality these conflicts can be intracommunal or involve additional actors such as nomadic hunters, non-state armed groups, and state security services. Finally, in local contexts, the term connotes a groups’ assumed ethnic or religious identity and therefore fails to capture the variety of non-identity factors contributing to conflict.

rity is driven by three main factors: climate change, poor governance, and regional insecurity. Understanding each of these dynamics can help the UN assess potential responses to pastoralism-related insecurity.

First, pastoralism-related insecurity is exacerbated by weak governance and predatory behavior by elites. The peripheral areas inhabited by pastoralists have historically been neglected, and recent macro-economic policies have further weakened rural development, undermined informal cross-border economic networks, and worsened environmental degradation.⁵ For example, governments in the region are disregarding customary land and water governance mechanisms and privatizing land for natural resource extraction and industrial farming.⁶ Some national elites also fuel pastoralism-related insecurity by using ethnically charged narratives around “farmer-herder conflict” to shore up support in their constituencies.⁷ Other elites engage in neo-pastoralism by investing in herds as a lucrative asset, as seen in the ties between Chadian

and Sudanese security elites and armed pastoralist movements in CAR and Abyei, respectively. Such neo-pastoralism is highly militarized, bypasses traditional herder associations, and fuels conflict and environmental degradation.⁸ Weak governance and predatory behavior by elites deplete pastoralists’ incomes and exclude them from decision making, fostering distrust and marginalization, especially among youth.

Second, anthropogenic climate change directly affects the Sahelian belt by exacerbating problems such as desertification, drought, and soil erosion.⁹ The shrinking of water and land resources due to population growth forces pastoralists to migrate further for longer periods of time, disrupting farmers’ harvest cycles.¹⁰ However, the causal link between climate change and local conflict remains uncertain. Desertification in the Sahel is driven by a combination of human activity and environmental factors and has historically fluctuated between extremes.¹¹ The impact of climate change on conflict is therefore best framed as a threat

5 Phone interview with independent expert, November 2019; UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and UN Department of Peace Operations (DPO) Policy, Evaluation and Training Division (DPET), “Preventing, Mitigating, and Resolving Transhumance Related Conflicts,” 2020, p. 7; Edoardo Baldaro and Michele Nori, “Cooling up the Drylands: Disentangling the Pastoralism-Security Nexus,” *Middle East Directions* no. 25 (2017), p. 12; and Madeline Velturo, “The Erosion of Pastoralism in the Sudano-Sahel,” Stimson Center, April 24, 2020.

6 Phone interview with representative of civil society organization, December 2019; UN DPPA and DPET, “Preventing, Mitigating, and Resolving Transhumance Related Conflicts,” p. 7; Mkutu, “Pastoralism and Conflict in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel,” p. 858; Osman, Olesambu, and Balfroid, “Pastoralism in Africa’s Drylands,” p. 11; and Matthew Bolton, “How to Use the Arms Trade Treaty to Address Armed Violence in Pastoralist Communities,” *Control Arms*, March 2017, p. 7.

7 Phone interview with UN official, December 2019; and UN DPPA and DPET, “Preventing, Mitigating, and Resolving Transhumance Related Conflicts,” p. 18.

8 UN DPPA and DPET, “Preventing, Mitigating, and Resolving Transhumance Related Conflicts,” p. 18; Matthew Luizza, “Urban Elites’ Livestock Exacerbate Herder-Farmer Tensions in Africa’s Sudano-Sahel,” *New Security Beat*, June 10, 2019; and Jonah Leff, “Pastoralists at War: Violence and Security in the Kenya-Sudan-Uganda Border Region,” *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 3, no. 2 (2009), pp. 192-193.

9 Phone interview with UN official, December 2019; and UN DPPA and DPET, “Preventing, Mitigating, and Resolving Transhumance Related Conflicts,” p. 5.

10 Interview with UN official, New York, November 2019; and UN DPPA and DPET, “Preventing, Mitigating, and Resolving Transhumance Related Conflicts,” p. 5.

11 Phone interview with independent expert, November 2019.

multiplier, amplifying existing social and economic conflict drivers.¹²

Third, pastoralist migration routes intersect with areas affected by protracted conflicts and insecurity in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, CAR, the DRC, Sudan, and South Sudan. The West African coastal wars in the 1990s and 2000s, the collapse of the government of Muammar Gaddafi in Libya in 2011, and decades of civil war in Sudan and South Sudan have made inexpensive small arms and light weapons readily available in the region.¹³ The resulting insecurity can prevent pastoralists from carrying out regular migrations. In response, they may form militias or align themselves with non-state armed groups, which increases the risk that local conflict will escalate.¹⁴ Young men who are unable to sustain their herds may turn to cattle rustling, join armed groups, or participate in illicit economies such as drug and arms trafficking to secure revenue and meet society's expectations around masculinity.¹⁵ Additionally, while the majority of pastoralists are not armed combatants, they often form complex social and economic linkages with conflict actors out of necessity and, as a result, face securitized responses from governments.

This combination of climate change, governance challenges, and regional insecurity amplifies existing stressors, increases the number of potential triggers for the outbreak of violence, and weakens de-escalation and mediation mechanisms. While the resulting violence is localized, it is driven by macro-level factors and can have implications for regional security if left unaddressed. Pastoralism-related insecurity also exacerbates other conflicts,

including between state security services and non-state armed groups, and deepens social cleavages, which can result in higher-casualty conflicts and increase the risk of mass atrocities.¹⁶ Despite the macro-level nature of its conflict stressors, pastoralism-related insecurity often becomes self-perpetuating at the local level and therefore must be addressed with both local- and macro-level solutions.¹⁷

Security Council Politics and the Challenge of Effective Peacekeeping

Pastoralism-related insecurity is directly linked to macro-level conflict dynamics in contexts with UN peacekeeping missions, including Mali (MINUSMA), CAR (MINUSCA), the DRC (MONUSCO), Darfur (UNAMID), Abyei (UNISFA), and South Sudan (UNMISS). Despite increased demands by member states, civil society, and the UN Secretariat for responses from the Security Council, none of these missions have mandates that explicitly address pastoralism-related insecurity.¹⁸ In fact, only two of the missions' preambular texts reference pastoralism-related insecurity: MINUSCA's 2019 mandate urged the government of CAR to address the root causes of this violence, and UNAMID's 2018 mandate recognized it as one of the main sources of continued conflict in Darfur (see Table 1).¹⁹ Since mandates lay out peacekeeping missions' objectives, this limited guidance on pastoralism-related insecurity has forced missions to resort to ad hoc responses.²⁰

12 Phone interview with UN official, December 2019; Philipp Heinrigs, "Security Implications of Climate Change in the Sahel Region: Policy Considerations," Sahel and West Africa Club, 2010, p. 5; Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, "The Relationship Between Climate Change and Violent Conflict," 2015, p. 10; Karolina Eklöw and Florian Krampe, "Climate-Related Security Risks and Peacebuilding in Somalia," Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, October 2019, p. 2; and International Crisis Group, "Le Sahel central, théâtre des nouvelles guerres climatiques?" April 24, 2020, p. 3.

13 Phone interview with independent expert, November 2019; and Mkutu, "Pastoralism and Conflict in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel," p. 858.

14 For example, the predominantly Fulani armed group, *Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique* (UPC), emerged during the Central African civil war in part to defend Fulani pastoralists who were targeted during sectarian reprisal attacks at the conflict's onset. Interview with UN official, November 2019; UN DPPA and DPET, "Preventing, Mitigating, and Resolving Transhumance Related Conflicts," pp. 12, 17-18; Mkutu, "Pastoralism and Conflict in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel," p. 858; Leff, "Pastoralists at War," pp. 192-193; and Osman, Olesambu, and Balfroid, "Pastoralism in Africa's Drylands," p. 6.

15 This point draws on the logic presented in Valerie M. Hudson and Hilary Matfess, "In Plain Sight: The Neglected Linkage Between Brideprice and Violent Conflict," *International Security* 42, no. 1 (2017). See also: UN DPPA and DPET, "Preventing, Mitigating, and Resolving Transhumance Related Conflicts," p. 12; and Osman, Olesambu, and Balfroid, "Pastoralism in Africa's Drylands," pp. 9-10.

16 Velturo, "The Erosion of Pastoralism in the Sudano-Sahel."

17 Osman, Olesambu, and Balfroid, "Pastoralism in Africa's Drylands," p. 12.

18 Phone interview with UN official, November 2019; and Interview with UN official, New York, November 2019.

19 UN Security Council Resolution 2499 (November 15, 2019), UN Doc. S/RES/2499, p. 5, para. 9; and UN Security Council Resolution 2429 (July 13, 2018), UN Doc. S/RES/2429, p. 2.

20 Gorur and Velturo, "Local Conflict, Local Peacekeeping," p. 5.

Table 1. Peacekeeping mandates' language relevant to pastoralism-related insecurity (see Annex 1)

Mission Mandate	Mandated Tasks on Addressing Local Conflict	References to Climate Change	Explicit References to Pastoralism-Related Insecurity
MINUSMA Resolution 2480 (2019)	(c) Protection of civilians; (d) good offices and reconciliation	Emphasizes need for climate change-sensitive risk assessment.	---
MINUSCA Resolution 2499 (2019)	(a) Protection of civilians; (b) good offices and support to the peace process	Recognizes effect of climate change on insecurity.	Urges government peace-building efforts to address the root causes of "issues related to trans-humance."
MONUSCO Resolution 2502 (2019)	(i) Protection of civilians; (ii) strengthening of state institutions	Recognizes effect of climate change on insecurity.	---
UNAMID Resolution 2429 (2018)	(iii) Mediation of inter-communal conflict	Emphasizes need for climate change-sensitive risk assessment and programmatic activities.	Notes that inter-communal conflicts resulting from resource competition and migration are one of the main sources of violence.
UNISFA Resolution 2497 (2019)	---	---	---
UNMISS Resolution 2459 (2019)	(a) Protection of civilians	---	---

Failing to Address Local Conflict Drivers

Peacekeeping missions across the Sahel are increasingly confronted by local conflict, including inter-communal conflict, local insurgencies, and transnational crime. This conflict can cause insecurity, exacerbate violence at the national and regional levels, and become self-sustaining by

cementing social cleavages.²¹

Peacekeeping missions facing increased local conflict confront multiple risks. First, they may find themselves unable to meet their mandated objectives to protect civilians and support peace processes.²² Local conflict tends to generate high rates of civilian casualties and human rights abuses,²³ and in Mali and CAR it has produced

21 Tom O'Bryan, Sara Rendtorff-Smith, and Marco Donati, "The Role of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in Addressing Local Conflicts," UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and Department of Field Support (DFS), 2017, p. 4.

22 Gorur and Velluturo, "Local Conflict, Local Peacekeeping," pp. 9-10.

23 Velluturo, "The Erosion of Pastoralism in the Sudano-Sahel."

spoilers and disincentivized compliance with national-level peace processes.²⁴ Second, civilians facing continued violence may lose trust in the ability of peacekeepers to protect them, damaging their legitimacy and resulting in rising unrest.²⁵ In the DRC, for example, armed groups assaulted major urban centers that hosted peacekeeping bases, which has resulted in a public backlash against MONUSCO for failing to provide adequate security.²⁶ Finally, the self-sustaining nature of local conflict can make it harder for missions to draw down and engage in post-conflict peacebuilding efforts. For example, despite a decline in open hostilities between armed groups in Darfur after 2014, a resurgence of local conflict required UNAMID to further reconfigure itself before it could prepare to draw down.²⁷

The Security Council recognizes many of these challenges and increasingly issues mandates that give missions greater flexibility to address local conflict.²⁸ The mandates of five of the six peacekeeping missions analyzed here reference local conflict in laying out their tasks. However, the Security Council has yet to adopt a standardized approach across missions, and mandates vary widely in the specificity of their stated objectives to address local conflict.²⁹ Of these missions, UNAMID is the only one that has a standalone mandate to mediate intercommunal violence. The other five missions, MINUSMA, MINUSCA, MONUSCO, UNISFA, and UNMISS, all address local conflict as a means to achieve other goals: all five mandates reference the protection of civilians, two reference broader support to peace processes, and one references strengthening state institutions.

The lack of explicit mandates to address pastoralism-related insecurity contributes to inconsistent efforts across missions, with each adopting ad hoc approaches.

This variation among missions leads them to take ad hoc approaches to local conflict rather than more targeted approaches that engage with the drivers of conflict.³⁰ At the strategic level, in missions without explicit mandates to address local conflict, the special representative of the secretary-general engages less directly with national actors, especially spoilers, to manage the root causes of violence.³¹ This lack of strategic engagement on local conflict can also lead to short-term approaches and underinvestment in mission components that have the tools to address long-term conflict drivers.³² These challenges are compounded by a broader discourse within the UN system—amplified in the Security Council and by mission leadership—that frames local conflict as “intractable” and separate from macro-level challenges.³³

While the Security Council must be careful when identifying specific threats in mandates to avoid undermining missions’ flexibility to adapt and respond to emerging priorities, identifying specific types of conflict can help missions adopt more tailored approaches. Furthermore, clearly mandating missions to respond to local conflict can encourage them to expand their geographic focus, increase logistical and political support to mediation efforts and relevant mission components, and further collaborate with partners. For example, UNAMID’s mandated focus on mediating local conflict as a standalone task helped the mission respond flexibly to an uptick in violence throughout 2014. The mission was able to align local and national strategies by convening stakeholders, sharing information, and rehabilitating

24 International Crisis Group, “Mali: la paix à marche forcée?” May 22, 2015; and International Peace Institute, Security Council Report, and Stimson Center, “Prioritizing and Sequencing Peacekeeping Mandates: The Case of MINUSCA,” October 2019.

25 Phone interview with independent expert, November 2019; and Séverine Autesserre, “Hobbes and the Congo: Frames, Local Violence, and International Intervention,” *International Organization* 64 (2009), p. 249.

26 Daniel Levine-Spound, “Backlash in Beni: Understanding Anger against the UN Peacekeeping Mission in the DRC,” Center for Civilians in Conflict, December 18, 2019.

27 Daniel Forti, “Navigating Crisis and Opportunity: The Peacekeeping Transition in Darfur,” International Peace Institute, December 2019, p. 6.

28 O’Byrne, Rendtorff-Smith, and Donati, “The Role of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in Addressing Local Conflicts,” p. 5.

29 Gorur and Velturo, “Local Conflict, Local Peacekeeping,” p. 11.

30 Ibid., pp. 27–28.

31 O’Byrne, Rendtorff-Smith, and Donati, “The Role of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in Addressing Local Conflicts,” p. 25.

32 Sarah Brockmeier and Philipp Rotmann, “Civil Affairs and Local Conflict Management in Peace Operations,” Global Policy Institute, 2017, pp. 2, 5, 18.

33 Autesserre, “Hobbes and the Congo,” p. 276.

natural water sources.³⁴ Similarly, MINUSMA's shift in focus to central Mali, in part a response to an uptick in intercommunal conflict, has increased the mission's programmatic engagement on pastoralism-related insecurity through the creation of early-warning systems and the protection of wells and marketplaces.³⁵ The Security Council can better address pastoralism-related insecurity through tailored mandates that are sensitive to the geography of local conflict.

Politics of Climate Change and Security

Pastoralism-related insecurity is exacerbated by climate change. As a result, sensitivities among some members of the Security Council regarding the extent to which climate change is a threat to international peace and security, and consequently how it should be addressed, make it harder for the council to address pastoralism-related insecurity in mission mandates.

The issue of climate change and security emerged in the Security Council relatively recently, with the first reference made in 2007 when the United Kingdom organized a debate on the issue. Subsequent efforts, led largely by Sweden and Germany, resulted in statements by the president of the Security Council, council visits to affected regions, and expert testimonies.³⁶ However, progress has largely stalled in recent years. Some members, notably the five permanent members, argue that anthropogenic climate change is beyond the scope of the council.³⁷ Others, including some nonpermanent members, worry about involving the council in what they regard as sovereign political disputes, especially in situations concerning control over cross-border water resources.³⁸ Finally, some UN member states express concern about the risk of the Security

Council taking over the climate change agenda from other UN organs.³⁹

Despite the current gridlock, the council's increased discourse and engagement around climate change since 2007 has produced two tangible results. First, the Security Council has increasingly linked climate change to security in mission mandates.⁴⁰ Among the peacekeeping mission mandates analyzed, four reference climate change in their preambular text: MONUSCO, MINUSCA, UNAMID, and MINUSMA. MONUSCO and MINUSCA's mandates generally recognize the impact of climate change on insecurity, while UNAMID and MINUSMA's mandates emphasize the need for climate change-informed analysis.

While these references show a shift toward recognizing climate change as a threat to international peace and security, they are outpaced by the more explicit language in the mandates of regional special political missions: both the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) are tasked with considering the impact of climate change in their risk assessments and programmatic interventions. However, these regional missions have broad mandates and limited resources compared with peacekeeping missions.

The second shift was the creation of the Climate Security Mechanism in 2018, which produces climate change-informed guidance on conflict risk assessments to inform the work of the UN Secretariat, General Assembly, and Security Council.⁴¹ Managed by the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, it is co-staffed by the UN Environment Programme and UN Development Programme (UNDP). While this mechanism represents a step forward in integrating

34 UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur*, UN Doc. S/2015/141, February 26, 2015.

35 UN Security Council Resolution 2480 (June 28, 2019), UN Doc. S/RES/2480; and IPI virtual roundtable on "UN Peacekeeping Operations and Pastoralism-Related Insecurity: Risk Factors and Mitigation Approaches," New York, May 22, 2020.

36 UN Security Council Presidential Statement 2011/15 (July 20, 2011), UN Doc. S/PRST/2011/15*; UN Security Council Resolution 2349 (March 31, 2017), UN Doc. S/RES/2349; Interview with UN official, November 2019; and interview with government official, November 2019.

37 Interview with UN official, New York, November 2019.

38 Interviews with government officials, New York, November 2019.

39 Interview with government official, New York, November 2019.

40 Interview with UN official, New York, November 2019; and interview with government official, New York, November 2019.

41 Camilla Born, Karolina Eklöv, and Malin Mobjörk, "Advancing United Nations Responses to Climate-Related Security Risks," Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, September 2019.

analysis and expertise from different UN agencies at headquarters, it lacks the funding and staffing required to support the UN at the country level.⁴²

Overall, the Security Council's reluctance to address the effect of climate change on conflict limits its ability to assess the risk of increased pastoralism-related insecurity at UN headquarters. This hinders the council's ability to adequately equip missions with the required mandates needed to inform their response.

Peacekeeping Missions' Engagement on Pastoralism-Related Insecurity

The lack of explicit mandates to address pastoralism-related insecurity contributes to inconsistent efforts across missions, with each adopting ad hoc approaches, making it difficult to identify and share best practices. The effectiveness of a mission's response depends on factors including support from its leadership, its cooperation with external partners, its presence in peripheral areas experiencing pastoralism-related insecurity, the extent to which elites are involved in the conflict, and the conflict's transnational nature. Regardless, all missions have the capacity to address pastoralism-related insecurity.

Civil affairs teams and community liaison officers have the clearest avenue for engagement.⁴³ They can gather information, convene stakeholders, and build relationships with civil society organizations, local communities, and national governments to predict, prevent, and mediate pastoralism-related insecurity. However, their ability to dedicate time and resources to these efforts is largely dependent on support from mission leadership.⁴⁴ Another

challenge is these teams' limited access to rural populations, especially in countries like CAR and Mali, where civil affairs officers are often unable to deploy to insecure areas where mediation support is most needed.⁴⁵ Finally, civil affairs teams lack the capacity to tackle the macro-level drivers of pastoralism-related insecurity, especially when this insecurity is driven by national-level elites.

Political affairs teams can use their connections to national elites to manage spoilers and build national ownership of conflict-resolution mechanisms, including land-management commissions and specialized mediation units focused on seasonal migration.⁴⁶ However, given the UN Secretariat and Security Council's focus on macro-level security, political affairs teams are rarely tasked with addressing local conflict or directed to cooperate closely with civil affairs teams to conduct local-level analysis.⁴⁷

Other relevant components include police, troops, joint mission analysis centers (JMACs), joint operations centers (JOCs), and mission leadership. UN police and military personnel have the logistical capacity and mandate to operate in insecure areas and deter attacks against local communities.⁴⁸ JMACs and JOCs can gather information at various levels and develop predictive threat matrices to help missions efficiently allocate resources to addressing remote, localized violence. Mission leadership can facilitate intra-mission cooperation and engage with host governments. Communications staff within mission leadership can also promote neutral messaging around pastoralism-related insecurity.

These different components can use several approaches to prevent and mitigate pastoralism-related insecurity.

42 Eklöw and Krampe, "Climate-Related Security Risks and Peacebuilding in Somalia," pp. 41-42; and interview with government official, November 2019.

43 Brockmeier and Rotmann, "Civil Affairs and Local Conflict Management in Peace Operations," p. 11.

44 UNMISS has a particularly active civil affairs team, which engages with a variety of local and international partners on pastoralism-related insecurity. Multiple officials interviewed identified the dynamic mission leadership, particularly from the head of civil affairs, as the reason for this engagement, rather than the mission's structure or mandate. Phone interview with UN official, November 2019; interview with UN officials, New York, November 2019; Gorur and Velluro, "Local Conflict, Local Peacekeeping," p. x; and Brockmeier and Rotmann, "Civil Affairs and Local Conflict Management in Peace Operations," pp. 17-18.

45 Interview with UN officials, New York, November 2019.

46 O'Bryan, Rendtorff-Smith, and Donati, "The Role of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in Addressing Local Conflicts," p. 24; and interview with UN official, New York, November 2019.

47 O'Bryan, Rendtorff-Smith, and Donati, "The Role of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in Addressing Local Conflicts," p. 24; and Brockmeier and Rotmann, "Civil Affairs and Local Conflict Management in Peace Operations," pp. 55-56.

48 Interview with UN officials, New York, November 2019.

Mediation Support and Good Offices

Missions are mandated to engage directly with local communities at all stages of the conflict cycle by supporting traditional community leaders and customary conflict-resolution mechanisms. Missions can train community leaders in mediation and conflict management and provide logistical and political support to the establishment of multi-stakeholder mediation committees. These efforts are enhanced by information gathering, which missions can use to develop threat-assessment matrices and early-warning systems.⁴⁹ To tailor this engagement to pastoral migration, UNMISS and UNISFA hold pre- and post-migration conferences that convene mission staff, government officials, and community leaders to agree on guidelines for timing, routes, resource sharing, and disarmament. Post-migration, such conferences reconvene these stakeholders to collect lessons for future migrations. These conferences have measurably reduced pastoralism-related insecurity and, in the case of South Sudan, have been institutionalized through government policy.⁵⁰

However, peacekeeping missions still face barriers to assessing the risk of conflict and deploying mediation efforts accordingly. Within missions, early-warning systems and threat matrices rarely adopt gendered frames and often exclude key local partners such as women's organizations and internally displaced persons, limiting their predictive ability.⁵¹ Political affairs teams often fail to address macro-level drivers of pastoralism-related insecurity such as influential elites who undermine local mediation efforts (so-called "faraway spoilers").⁵² Moreover, while traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms have been critical to the sustained, locally owned mediation of conflict, some of them exclude women and therefore require creative

approaches to ensure adequate representation.⁵³

Strengthening of State Institutions

Strengthening state institutions is a crucial mandate for missions seeking to transfer key responsibilities to state authorities. Political affairs teams and their external partners can support host governments in building national land-management institutions, while civil affairs teams can identify conflict stressors and recommend the development of income-generating activities and the creation of veterinary facilities along migration routes. For example, MINUSMA staff collaborated with national experts to recognize informal land-sharing agreements in central Mali. Additionally, MINUSCA personnel implemented quick-impact projects in Bangui to rebuild slaughterhouses, which reinforced economic linkages between urban population centers with a significant state presence and primarily pastoralist populations.⁵⁴

Challenges facing this approach include the UN's lack of engagement with the informal arrangements that often govern pastoralist migration, the limited legitimacy of governments in the eyes of many pastoralist communities, and the lack of incentives for some national elites to address pastoralism-related insecurity when it is a source of economic or political gain.⁵⁵ Moreover, development support can backfire if it is ill-informed, as routine development assistance can amplify competition over resources in resource-scarce environments.⁵⁶

Information Gathering

JOCs and JMACs routinely gather information to predict the timing and scope of pastoralist migration and its potential to trigger conflict. They can then share this information with the UN

49 O'Bryan, Rendtorff-Smith, and Donati, "The Role of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in Addressing Local Conflicts," pp. 27-28.

50 Hannah M. Smidt, "United Nations Peacekeeping Locally: Enabling Conflict Resolution, Reducing Communal Violence," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 64, nos. 2-3 (2019), p. 1; and interview with UN officials, New York, November 2019.

51 O'Bryan, Rendtorff-Smith, and Donati, "The Role of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in Addressing Local Conflicts," p. 29.

52 Phone interview with UN official, November 2019.

53 Interview with UN official, New York, November 2019.

54 UN DPPA and DPET, "Preventing, Mitigating, and Resolving Transhumance Related Conflicts."

55 Interview with UN officials, New York, November 2019; and O'Bryan, Rendtorff-Smith, and Donati, "The Role of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in Addressing Local Conflicts," p. 15.

56 Phone interview with independent expert, November 2019; interview with independent expert, May 2020; and International Crisis Group, "Le Sahel central, théâtre des nouvelles guerres climatiques?"

country team, government officials, and community leaders to prevent this conflict. Military assets can also support information gathering, as when MONUSCO deploys unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), traditionally used to track the movement of armed groups, to monitor nighttime, cross-border cattle migration.⁵⁷

However, information gathering and sharing can be hampered by an ineffective division of labor. For example, these efforts are often split between those focusing on national-level political developments and those focusing on local insecurity, with little integrated planning or analysis.⁵⁸

Deterrence

Deterrence is a strategy involving the use of joint police-military patrols to provide security to and engage with communities. During times of escalating pastoralism-related insecurity, often in the dry season, missions can deploy temporary operating bases to patrol high-risk areas to deter threats to civilians.⁵⁹ During its initial deployment, UNISFA would periodically deploy Ethiopian peacekeepers to known hot spots during the dry season to reassure communities and deter raids, which reduced migration-related conflict.⁶⁰ This type of engagement can also serve as an entry point for dialogue with communities. Peacekeepers can build trust between the mission and local leaders and gather information from rural communities in insecure areas where civil affairs teams have limited access.

However, deterrence through joint patrols is a short-term solution with limited potential in some missions. For larger missions where pastoralism-related insecurity occurs in peripheral areas far from bases, deterrence depends on helicopter transport, which is expensive and often prioritized for other tasks. This is especially restrictive for police units, which, while better suited to carrying out protection of civilians efforts, are largely

deployed in urban environments.⁶¹ Finally, these security-based tools cannot address conflict stressors related to governance and development.⁶²

These initiatives show how peacekeeping missions can use existing structures, tools, and approaches to address pastoralism-related insecurity according to their comparative advantage. Stronger initiatives by headquarters and mission leadership can help position peacekeeping missions as key partners in addressing pastoralism-related insecurity across the Sahel.

Leveraging Partnerships

Even if peacekeeping missions prioritize addressing pastoralism-related insecurity, their reliance on political and security-centered approaches and limited geographic mandates require them to partner with regional and subregional organizations, UN special political missions, UN country teams, national governments, and civil society organizations. While these actors are better placed to engage in peacebuilding interventions, they also benefit from the financial, logistical, and political resources of peacekeeping missions.

Regional Initiatives

UN member states have recognized regional initiatives as the entry point for coordinated action on pastoralism-related insecurity.⁶³ The UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) have a leading role in developing policy, engaging governments, and supporting other UN actors on pastoralism-related insecurity in their respective regions (see Figure 2). Tasked with conflict prevention and mediation, UNOCA and UNOWAS both work to build the capacity of regional and subregional organizations and national governments. They engage on pastoralism through their support to their respective regional economic communi-

57 Interview with UN officials, New York, November 2019.

58 Interview with UN officials, New York, November 2019.

59 O'Bryan, Rendtorff-Smith, and Donati, "The Role of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in Addressing Local Conflicts," p. 23.

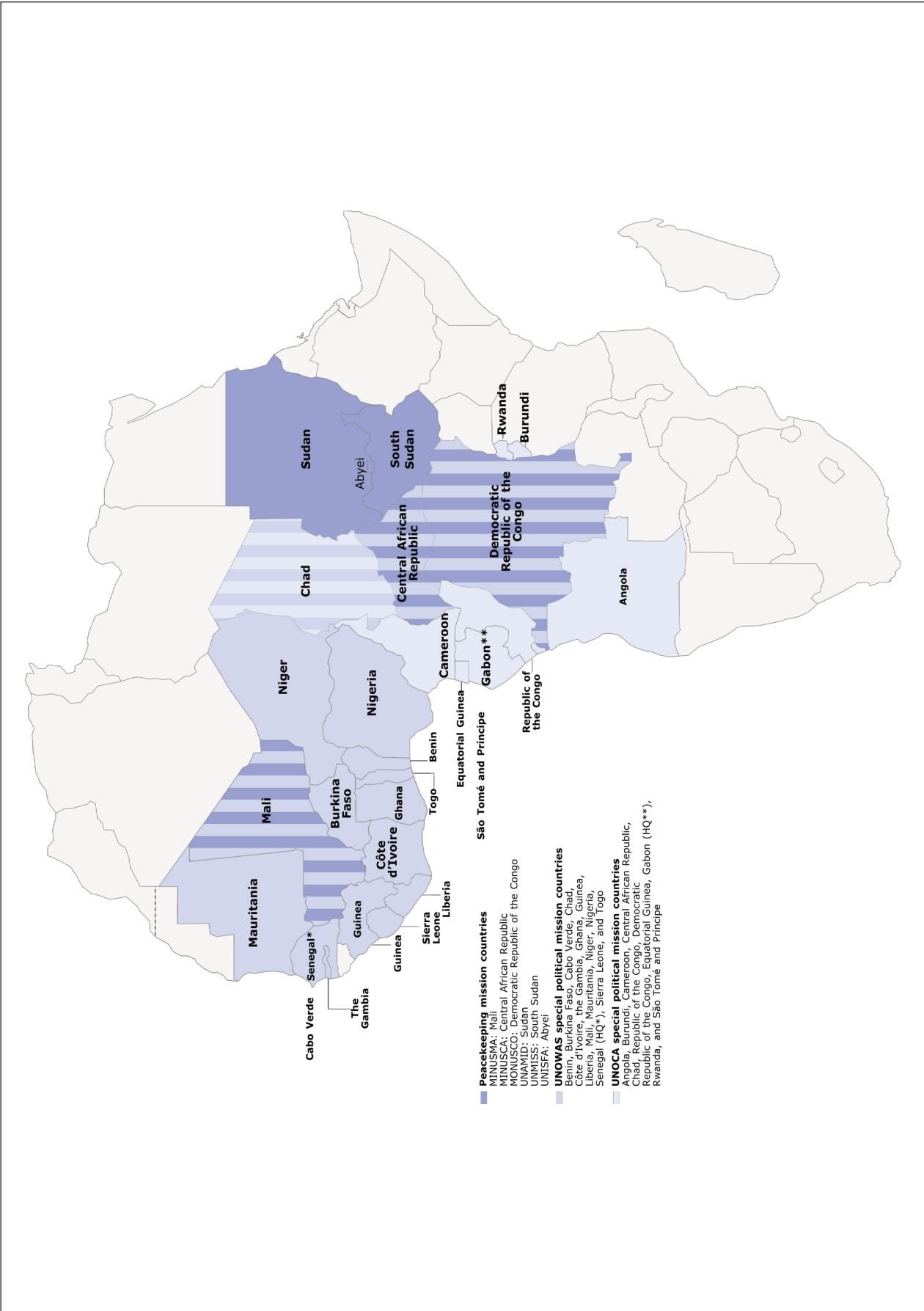
60 Interview with government official, New York, December 2019.

61 Charles T. Hunt, "Protection through Policing: The Protective Role of UN Police in Peace Operations," International Peace Institute, February 2020, p. 23.

62 Phone interview with UN official, November 2019; phone interview with independent expert, November 2019; and Interview with UN officials, New York, November 2019.

63 UN Security Council, Statement by the President of the Security Council, UN Doc. S/PRST/2018/16, August 10, 2018.

Figure 2. The geographic coverage of UN peacekeeping missions, UNOCA, and UNOWAS



ties—the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)—which manage regional frameworks on cross-border movement and, in the case of ECOWAS, maintain early-warning networks. At the headquarters level, UNOWAS chairs the UN Working Group on the Prevention and Resolution of Herder-Farmer Conflicts, which seeks to align interagency planning and messaging.

These two regional political offices compile lessons learned and convene regional fora and bilateral commissions for countries to develop policies to facilitate cross-border migration. Relevant regional and subregional frameworks include the 2010 African Union (AU) Policy Framework for Pastoralism in Africa and the 2019 Bamako Declaration.⁶⁴ The regional offices have two advantages in their response. First, their regional scope allows them to address the transnational nature of pastoralist movements, which peacekeeping missions and country teams cannot easily do. UNOCA in particular is focusing on reviving cross-border bilateral commissions with CAR and its neighbors, which can help facilitate pastoralist migration and improve communication between national governments and local communities.⁶⁵

Second, unlike the peacekeeping missions they operate alongside, these two special political missions have a clear mandate for conflict prevention and a greater focus on peacebuilding, allowing them to be a conduit for the UN system to address climate change–related stressors. UNOWAS has facilitated expert-level conversations on how to better integrate analysis of climate change into conflict-prevention efforts, sharing lessons learned with ECOWAS, UNDP, and others.⁶⁶ Therefore, regional special political missions can complement

peacekeeping missions' responses to pastoralism-related insecurity with political and financial support while addressing the cross-border nature of the conflict.

However, the potential added value of these regional special political missions is complicated by their vast mandates and numerous partnership obligations. They have faced challenges implementing efforts to support regional economic communities through research and convening. The Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), for example, has struggled to reach consensus among its members on standardizing border regulations.⁶⁷ ECOWAS, on the other hand, ratified standardized cross-border regulations for pastoralists in the early 2010s, though these are rarely adhered to.⁶⁸ UNOWAS and UNOCA also struggle to ensure coherence among the increasingly complex array of regional and subregional organizations, development initiatives, national governments, and UN actors in the Sahel. These include efforts by the AU, ECOWAS, the Sahel Alliance, the World Bank's Regional Sahel Pastoralism Support Project, and the UN. While UNOWAS is tasked with implementing the 2013 UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel to better align these entities' resources and programming, the strategy has had limited effect.⁶⁹

UN Country Teams

UN country teams are the clearest partners for peacekeeping missions, as they engage in complementary programmatic interventions through their peacebuilding efforts. Across the Sahel, UN country teams address pastoralism by gathering information, mediating, and supporting state institutions, with varying degrees of alignment with peacekeeping missions' efforts. The two UN

64 African Union, "AU Policy Framework for Pastoralism in Africa," October 2010; and AU Peace and Security Council Communiqué (December 21, 2019), AU Doc. PSC/PR/COMM.2.

65 UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General: The Situation in Central Africa and the Activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa*, UN Doc. S/2019/913, November 29, 2019, p. 13.

66 UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel*, UN Doc. S/2019/1005, December 30, 2019.

67 Interview with UN official, New York, November 2019; and interview with government official, New York, December 2019.

68 ECOWAS member states ratified a policy on facilitating cross-border pastoralist migrations. This policy standardizes migration policies for pastoralist communities across all member states. However, implementation varies widely among member states, with some still refusing free migration. Meanwhile, IGAD is unable to overcome political disputes among its member states, which has limited joint action on harmonized border regulations. Phone interview with UN official, November 2019; interview with UN official, New York, November 2019; and interview with government official, New York, November 2019.

69 UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel*, UN Doc. S/2019/1005, December 30, 2019; and UN Security Council, 8435th Meeting, UN Doc. S/PV.8435, December 20, 2018.

agencies most engaged on pastoralism are the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). IOM tracks migration through satellite technology, carries out community-level mediation, and sensitizes partners, including host governments, to the needs and attitudes of pastoralist communities.⁷⁰ FAO uses long-term development activities, such as the development and maintenance of official transhumance corridors, to address conflict stressors and facilitates the development of cross-border regulations.⁷¹ Other relevant organizations include UN Women and the UN Environment Programme, which both support the development of inclusive and sustainable resource-sharing mechanisms at the community level.⁷² These programs provide crucial support to missions in addressing conflict drivers, especially given the limited bandwidth of missions.

While UN country teams bring a much-needed peacebuilding approach to addressing the root causes of pastoralism-related insecurity, peacekeeping missions still play an important role by providing logistical support and resources to their efforts.⁷³ Moreover, the political significance of missions can improve the UN's collaboration with national governments and increase headquarters-level support for UN efforts at the country level.

However, without clear signals from the Security Council on how peacekeeping missions should address pastoralism-related insecurity, their partnerships with UN country teams vary widely. These partnerships are therefore dependent on leadership and financial flexibility. For example, UNMISS has robust partnerships with several agencies on addressing migration-induced conflict and cattle

raiding, largely attributed to the dynamism of the head of the mission's civil affairs team.⁷⁴ MINUSMA's partnership with the UN country team has benefited from an external funding mechanism, the G5 Sahel Priority Investment Program, which gives UN agencies more flexibility to undertake quick-impact projects alongside the mission's strategic efforts to prevent pastoralism-related insecurity.⁷⁵

Beyond the lack of a standardized approach to partnerships with UN country teams, there remains a risk that an overly securitized approach by peacekeeping missions, combined with their financial and political clout, could undermine peacebuilding approaches.⁷⁶ Finally, while developmental approaches are critical to addressing the root drivers of conflict, interventions often fail to properly assess pastoralist economies and can inadvertently undermine livelihoods in these communities.⁷⁷

National and Local Partnerships

National governments remain the main *de jure* partners for peacekeeping missions. Their security and law enforcement apparatuses are the primary authorities for managing local conflict, although they often have limited capacity. Moreover, they develop the legal and development frameworks for addressing the land- and resource-related stressors of pastoralism-related insecurity. In Mali, for example, the government's Charter on

While peacekeeping missions are not the primary means for addressing the multidimensional drivers of pastoralism-related insecurity, they can help mitigate risks in partnership with other actors.

Pastoralism aims to coordinate land management in alignment with local customary mechanisms. Peacekeeping missions can therefore support the expansion of state authority, when mandated, and help implement national peace processes and

⁷⁰ Phone interview with UN official, November 2019.

⁷¹ The merit of external partners developing and maintaining transhumance corridors is a subject of debate, with strong support from within the Secretariat due to its adaptive nature, and criticism from some academics due to the environmental harm it causes. Phone interview with independent expert, November 2019; and interview with UN official, December 2019.

⁷² Interviews with UN officials, New York, November 2019.

⁷³ Interview with UN officials, New York, November 2019.

⁷⁴ Interview with UN official, New York, November 2019; and interview with government official, New York, December 2019.

⁷⁵ IPI virtual roundtable on "UN Peacekeeping Operations and Pastoralism-Related Insecurity: Risk Factors and Mitigation Approaches," New York, May 22, 2020.

⁷⁶ Interviews with UN officials, New York, November 2019.

⁷⁷ Vellturo, "The Erosion of Pastoralism in the Sudano-Sahel."

complementary local efforts. In South Sudan, UNMISS supported pre- and post-migration conferences in close coordination with the South Sudanese government, which eventually took ownership of the process.⁷⁸

Yet missions must also balance support for and deference to governments, ensuring both accountability and local ownership. Some national and local elites contribute to pastoralism-related insecurity, both directly and indirectly. Security services often adopt a heavily securitized approach, using disarmament campaigns and occasionally military operations that can result in human rights abuses and further drive conflict.⁷⁹

Civil society is especially important to addressing pastoralism-related insecurity, although its involvement varies widely among countries. Civil society can engage in advocacy domestically and abroad and provide information to and support the interventions of missions and UN country teams. Moreover, working with civil society on long-term conflict management can increase local ownership, especially given the dominance of non-state, customary organizations in pastoralist societies. However, in some countries, civil society faces a closed political space, has limited resources, and is coopted by political elites, the last of which can reduce its legitimacy, particularly in the eyes of disaffected pastoralist youth.⁸⁰

Conclusions

While peacekeeping missions are not the primary means for addressing the multidimensional drivers of pastoralism-related insecurity, they can help mitigate risks, including through political and logistical support to the UN system, national governments, regional and subregional organizations, and civil society organizations.

The overarching priority should be for the UN and other actors to understand and address pastoralism-related insecurity in a coherent way,

which is already a concern within the UN Secretariat. Toward this end, the AU's Policy Framework for Pastoralism in Africa should inform the development of a similar document within the UN system reflecting a common understanding of the potential causes and outcomes of pastoralism-related insecurity. This document could also inform further inter-mission cooperation, amplifying existing efforts by the Department of Peace Operations' Policy, Evaluation and Training Division to provide peacekeeping missions a toolkit of programmatic approaches.

Regional special political missions provide an entry point for collecting more data, which can be used to assess the economic, social, and political pressures facing pastoralists, track changes in migration routes, monitor demographic trends and herd sizes, and record instances of local conflict, all while keeping in mind the diversity of pastoralist populations. Increased financial and staffing support for the Secretariat's Working Group on Pastoralism, led by UNOWAS, could enable it to further coordinate resources and approaches among UN agencies. Clear direction from the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Department of Peace Operations could also encourage missions and UN country teams to allocate more resources and staffing to such efforts.

Additionally, the Secretariat should shore up existing efforts to ensure that conflict-prevention and peacebuilding efforts are sensitive to the impact of climate change, given the current gridlock on this topic in the Security Council. While continued engagement by nonpermanent members can keep the conversation alive in the council, increased staffing and funding is also needed for the Climate Security Mechanism. This would amplify the mechanism's voice within the Secretariat and enable it to work with a wider range of partners across the UN system.

Similarly, the Security Council should further support missions in addressing localized violence.

⁷⁸ Interview with UN official, New York, November 2019; and interview with government official, New York, December 2019.

⁷⁹ International Crisis Group, "Jonglei's Tribal Conflicts: Countering Insecurity in South Sudan," December 23, 2009; International Crisis Group, "The Security Challenges of Pastoralism in Central Africa," April 1, 2014; and Human Rights Watch, "We Used to Be Brothers: Self-Defense Group Abuses in Central Mali," December 7, 2018.

⁸⁰ For example, West Africa's political space and sizable pastoralist community foster a strong, transnational network of herders' associations that are influential in lobbying for policy change. See Osman, Olesambu, and Balfroid, "Pastoralism in Africa's Drylands," p. 8.

While overly specific mandates can undermine the flexibility of missions, stronger language on the importance of addressing local conflict, even within preambular text, can encourage mission leadership to allocate more resources and personnel to address the drivers of this conflict. Other bodies, such as the Peacebuilding Commission, can also sustain member-state engagement in the Security Council by advising on this topic. Local conflict should help inform the geographic focus of mandates, as with UNAMID and MINUSMA, allowing missions to more sustainably engage on pastoralism-related insecurity in remote areas.

Finally, UN peacekeeping missions need to strengthen partnerships with actors undertaking complementary interventions. Regional political offices are a useful entry point for encouraging cooperation among missions and with UN country teams on cross-border conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Regional efforts to address the root causes of pastoralism-related insecurity are vital but suffer from weak implementation. The UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel should be fully operationalized to align funding and programming, while ECOWAS and ECCAS should support member-state efforts to implement ratified frameworks on cross-border movement. At the country level, the reforms to the UN development system

could improve coordination and provide a more direct line between UN country teams and peacekeeping missions' leadership and encourage them to undertake complementary conflict-prevention and peacebuilding interventions. Similarly, both missions and country teams should ensure that governments and civil society actors have ownership of long-term development, political, and security approaches.

Within peacekeeping missions, leaders should identify pastoralism-related insecurity as a priority and encourage intra-mission coordination. Joint efforts between mission leadership and missions' political affairs, civil affairs, and human rights sections can simultaneously address local conflict stressors, ensure buy-in from national governments, and manage the threats posed by "faraway spoilers" and overly securitized government approaches.

Pastoralism-related insecurity is one of the many multidimensional challenges facing contemporary peacekeeping. It requires a multi-stakeholder approach that combines peace and security, economic development, and political engagement. Peacekeeping missions are an integral part of this approach and should leverage their comparative advantages to work with other actors in managing pastoralism-related insecurity in the Sahel.

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