

UN Reform and Mission Planning: Too Great Expectations?

MARC JACQUAND



Cover Photo: A welcome parade by the female component of the Bangladeshi formed police unit of the UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) in Miragoâne, October 2018. Leonora Baumann/MINUJUSTH..

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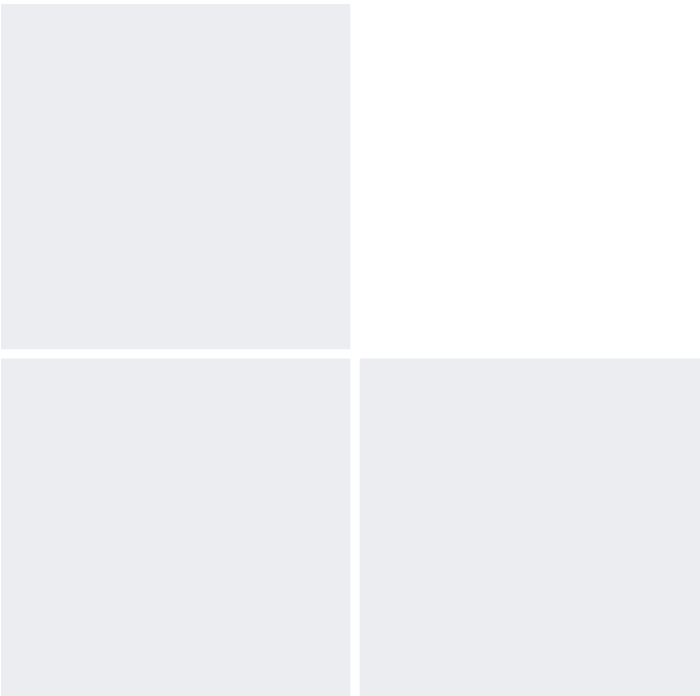
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ABBREVIATIONS

BINUH	UN Integrated Office in Haiti
CPAS	Comprehensive Performance Assessment System
DFS	UN Department of Field Support
DMSPC	UN Department of Management, Strategic Policy and Compliance
DPO	UN Department of Peace Operations
DPA	UN Department of Political Affairs
DPKO	UN Department of Peacekeeping Affairs
DPPA	UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
EC	UN secretary-general's Executive Committee
EOSG	Executive Office of the UN Secretary-General
FARC-EP	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia–People's Army
HIPPO	High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations
MINUJUSTH	UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti
MINUSTAH	UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti
PBSO	UN Peacebuilding Support Office
RC	Resident coordinator
UNAMID	African Union–UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur
UNDP	UN Development Program
UNITAMS	UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan
UNMHA	UN Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement

Executive Summary

Since 2017, the UN system has undergone a historic process of reform at several levels and across many entities. Several of these reforms have implications for the planning of UN missions—an area where the UN has often struggled to adopt a cohesive, tailored approach. While these reforms are still being rolled out, a preliminary stocktaking reveals some of the challenges and opportunities they present to those designing new missions or reconfiguring existing ones.

The most relevant reform for mission planning has been the reorganization of the peace and security pillar. The creation of shared regional divisions between the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) and Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) has streamlined communication and offered interlocutors a single point of entry. The reform has also brought greater attention to peacebuilding during planning processes. At the same time, the peace and security reform has left the management of missions divided between DPO (for peacekeeping operations) and DPPA (for special political missions), exposing ongoing divisions and gaps. Moreover, while some personnel have welcomed the opportunity to adopt new lenses and look to new partnerships, others are stuck in outdated ways of thinking.

The two other major reforms have also had an impact on mission planning. The management reform has made missions more flexible and efficient by delegating greater authority to mission leaders. It also created the Department of Operational Support (DOS), which has centralized operational planning capacity. The development system reform has helped UN peace operations better coordinate planning with UN country teams, including by empowering the resident coordinator and enhancing country teams' analysis and planning processes. However, the impact of all three streams of reform is challenged by budgetary

constraints, including the separate funding streams for peacekeeping operations and special political missions.

A number of other initiatives have also had an impact on mission planning processes. Independent strategic reviews of peace operations can provide mission planners with new ideas and higher-quality data. The secretary-general's increased use of planning directives can set a clear direction, expectations, and parameters for mission planners. The Comprehensive Performance Assessment System is a useful planning tool, though it has not yet been extended to special political missions. Finally, the secretary-general's Executive Committee can be a forum for setting a common course of action for the UN system.

Based on this assessment, and taking into account the political constraints imposed by UN member states, the UN can consider the following:

- Tying together the strands of reform related to planning to prevent fragmentation;
- Making increased and better use of peace and security management mechanisms at the initial stages of planning to ensure that UN leaders have a unified tone and vision;
- More formally and transparently involving the Security Council in strategic reviews;
- Clarifying and strengthening the role of all relevant departments and the shared regional divisions in the mission budget process;
- Repositioning DPO's planning cell in the Office of Shared Services to move toward a shared planning capacity; and
- Incentivizing lateral movement of personnel across departments and entities to broaden their perspectives.

Introduction

A UN “fit for purpose” is the catchall frame that has been used to explain the purpose and aims of many UN reform efforts. It has been applied with particular frequency to efforts to improve the functioning of peace operations. The challenges these operations face have been well documented. They were cast in sharp relief by the report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) in 2015 and by several reviews following incidents in 2016 and 2017.¹

Among these challenges, the way in which missions are planned has been particularly scrutinized. From the HIPPO report to external reviews undertaken by think tanks and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), one reads a common refrain.² The planning of missions has often suffered from a lack of coherence between missions’ political strategies and their other mandated tasks (security sector reform, gender, etc.) and between missions’ mandates and the work of the rest of the UN system. Planning also often leaves a gap between missions’ substantive and operational dimensions, which can undermine the effective implementation of mission mandates. Analysis is insufficiently integrated and often unmoored from both local dynamics and broader regional and global considerations. At times, the UN has put forward template-based approaches that were insufficiently tailored to the context, instead reflecting the institutional interests of headquarters departments. Loss of institutional memory, high transaction costs during the planning process, and internal divisions belie the professed commitment to efficiency and “One UN.” In light of these challenges, some have argued that the goal of becoming “fit for purpose” remains elusive.

At the same time, the UN system has undergone a historic process of reform at several levels and across many entities. Several of these reforms have

either directly aimed at improving the planning of UN missions or included elements that have a significant bearing on mission planning. As the focus shifts from designing to implementing these reforms, it is possible to begin reflecting on whether these aims have been met. The intent of this paper is therefore to take stock of the various strands of UN reform and explore their impact on the planning of UN missions, drawing on the experiences of four missions that have recently started or transitioned (see Box 1).

This paper takes a broad perspective on UN reform. In addition to the restructuring of the peace and security pillar, it discusses a number of other changes since 2017. These include the management and UN development system reforms, the launch of a series of independent strategic reviews of peace operations, the reinvigorated use of the secretary-general’s transition planning directives, the rollout of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment System (CPAS), and the establishment of the Executive Committee. Albeit to different degrees, all of these initiatives were meant to improve the planning of peace operations.³

For the purposes of this analysis, impact is explored across four dimensions, including the extent to which UN reform has:

- Enabled high-quality analysis that benefits from a wide range of perspectives;
- Enabled the development of more context-specific options for the UN’s presence;
- Increased the cohesion of the UN’s engagement, and the engagement of the UN Secretariat in particular, with the Security Council and other member states; and
- Lowered transaction costs and increased efficiency in the planning process.

The choice of these dimensions has been informed by past reviews of, and ongoing discussions on, UN planning, including the recommendations from the HIPPO report, studies of UN peace operations

¹ See, for example, United Nations, “Improving Security of United Nations Peacekeepers,” December 2017.

² Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, “Mission Drawdowns: Financing a Sustainable Peace,” March 2020.

³ In 2017, the secretary-general also launched the Action for Peacekeeping initiative (A4P). Conceived as an initiative to shore up support for peacekeeping in the face of financial, political, and operational challenges, A4P is structured around a set of commitments by all peacekeeping actors, from the Security Council members that design the mandates to the UN member states that resource them with troops or funds to the Secretariat that implements them. While the Declaration of Shared Commitments includes several references to planning, notably in Commitment 16, which reiterates the importance of integrated analysis and planning, A4P does not directly change planning methods or structures and thus falls outside the scope of this analysis.

Box 1. The four mission start-ups or transitions since 2017

Since the launch of the secretary-general's vast reform agenda in 2017, four peace operations have either been created or undergone transitions, resulting in major reconfigurations in the UN's mandate or presence.

Colombia: The UN Verification Mission in Colombia was established in 2017 as a follow-on to the UN Mission in Colombia, which had been established in 2016 to monitor and verify compliance with the cease-fire and the FARC-EP's laying down of arms. This reconfiguration was initiated after the president of Colombia sent a letter to the UN secretary-general requesting further assistance. The new mission had a mandate to "accompany the parties and verify their commitments regarding elements of the Final Peace Agreement on the reintegration of former FARC-EP members, and the implementation of measures of protection and security for former FARC-EP members and communities in territories most affected by the conflict."⁴ It was authorized as a special political mission under Chapter VI of the UN Charter and includes civilian staff as well as unarmed military and police observers.

Haiti: In 2019, the UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) transitioned into the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH), a special political mission with a focus on political dialogue, governance, and human rights. This came after a longstanding UN peacekeeping presence. MINUJUSTH, which focused on the rule of law and justice, had been established in 2017 as a smaller follow-on mission to the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), a much larger peacekeeping operation that had been in place since 2004. BINUH has an even smaller civilian presence than MINUJUSTH, with a mandate to assist the government in organizing an inter-Haitian dialogue and putting in place political, electoral, and judicial reforms.⁵ This reconfiguration has shifted the mission toward giving political advice, with the UN country team expected to lead all programmatic support to Haitian institutions.

Sudan: In the last few months of 2020, Sudan will experience the drawdown of the hybrid African Union–UN peacekeeping mission in Darfur (UNAMID) and the establishment, effective January 1, 2021, of the Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS). This reconfiguration follows intense negotiations in the Security Council on the withdrawal of UNAMID, which has been in Darfur since 2007 and is expected to leave at the end of 2020, providing for a period of overlap with UNITAMS's advance presence. UNITAMS is mandated to assist the transitional government in implementing the 2019 Constitutional Declaration and various peace agreements in conflict-affected areas, to support peacebuilding efforts and strengthen human rights and rule of law institutions, and to facilitate international support to economic reform.⁶ It will retain some elements of UNAMID's concept of operations, including the state liaison function offices, which combine human and logistical resources with UN agencies. The new mission, for which functional planning is ongoing, will also include strong structural links with the UN country team and the resident coordinator system, including through joint development coordination and peacebuilding structures.

Yemen: The UN Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement (UNMHA) was established in January 2019, first as an advance mission and shortly thereafter as a full-fledged special political mission with civilian and military personnel. It oversees the cease-fire agreement reached in Stockholm in December 2018 between the government of Yemen and Houthi militias in the city and port of Hudaydah.⁷ The set-up of the mission was notable for two reasons: the speed at which the mission was rolled out and its link with the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to Yemen, which has been in place since 2012. As the chair of the Redeployment Coordination Committee, the head of UNMHA reports to the secretary-general through the special envoy.

⁴ UN Security Council Resolution 2366 (July 10, 2017), UN Doc. S/RES/2366.

⁵ UN Security Council Resolution 2476 (June 25, 2019), UN Doc. S/RES/2476.

⁶ UN Security Council Resolution 2524 (June 3, 2020), UN Doc. S/RES/2524.

⁷ UN Security Council Resolution 2452 (January 16, 2019), UN Doc. S/RES/2452.

transitions, corporate assessments of strategic reviews, and the ongoing review of integration commissioned by the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG).⁸

The analysis and recommendations are based on interviews with member-state representatives and UN staff, as well as a review of the secretary-general's reports on UN reform. They are also shaped by the author's personal experience with both mission planning initiatives and UN reform in his capacity as an official in the EOSG until 2019 and in subsequent advisory functions, notably in planning the transition of the UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH).

This report is not an evaluation of mission planning processes. Nor is it a deep dive into recent or ongoing mission planning processes in Colombia, Haiti, Sudan, or Yemen, even if these examples are used to illustrate the findings. Rather, it is a stock-taking of where the UN stands three years after initiating many of these reforms to draw initial findings, propose adjustments before the reforms are set in stone, and inform subsequent reform initiatives.

The UN system has undergone a historic process of reform. Several of these reforms have directly aimed at improving the planning of UN missions or had a significant bearing on mission planning.

Caveats on Analyzing the Impact of the Reforms

A reflection on the link between UN reform and the planning of peace operations requires a few caveats, or reality checks, particularly concerning the role of member states in various stages of the process—from members of the Security Council to host governments.

The first reality check is that planning puritanism often falls victim to realpolitik. In places that are of high geopolitical value and concern to certain member states, the outcomes of planning processes have always been and will remain independent from the UN Secretariat. Security Council members in particular have always influenced the

shape of UN missions, either through the institutional planning process or outside of it.

When one Security Council member, especially a permanent member, has interests that outweigh those of other members, the UN can do little but design or reconfigure a mission accordingly. In Haiti, for example, the US played a significant role in determining how MINUJUSTH would transition to BINUH, even though it was not the penholder for the resolution. In Mali, France was heavily involved in the establishment of the UN peacekeeping operation (MINUSMA) and subsequent reviews of the mission, which it saw as a useful complement to its own force in the country (Operation Barkhane). When council members' interests collide, the status quo often prevails, even if this does not align with the interests and analyses of member states or the Secretariat. This can be seen in Cyprus, where the UN mission (UNFICYP) has gone

through very few changes in over fifty years.

While there is little that UN planning doctrine and guidance can do to alter this reality, the engagement of member states can be seen as a positive. It speaks to the enduring importance of UN peace operations in the eyes of member states that take a keen interest in how they come about. It also reflects the authority of the council, which the UN Secretariat must defer to. This reality explains why member states' perceptions of the impact of UN reforms on mission planning in general are colored by whether the outcomes of specific planning processes met their interests.

A second, related reality check is that several member states in the Security Council, particularly the permanent members, have their own systems, networks, and capacities to analyze any given situation and shape their preference for the type of UN presence. These member states do not rely on UN planning processes. At times, this creates tension with other member states that are more reliant on the Secretariat's analysis, using it as a starting point for framing their positions on the

⁸ The EOSG's review will be finalized by the end of 2020

type of UN presence and mission mandates. This, too, is a reality that predates and will survive waves of UN reform.

A third reality check is that the outcome of planning for a mission's deployment, reconfiguration, or exit hinges on the host government's behavior and engagement. When host governments engage in a planning process in a coherent and sustained manner, including through lobbying other member states, they can drive the outcome. This engagement can trump other considerations that might drive a textbook UN planning process. In Colombia, for example, the government made its needs clear and requested specific types of UN assistance early on in the process. It also consistently engaged with, and obtained the support of, council members. The government's clarity of purpose was further buttressed by the peace agreement, which spelled out the areas of UN involvement desired by the signatories. As a result, there was little need for a UN planning process to explore different strategic configurations. The planning instead focused on operational matters and the relationship between the new mission and the UN country team. In Sudan, the government's opposition to a uniformed presence also shaped the UN's analysis and the options prepared for the Security Council during the pre-planning process, despite dissenting views from some officials in UN headquarters.⁹

The creation of shared regional divisions has made planning more efficient, reduced the potential for diverging views, and enabled continuity of knowledge.

These caveats do not preclude a reflection on UN mission planning and how the process can or should benefit from reforms. Nonetheless, the unchanged political dynamics must shape expectations for UN planning efforts.

One last caveat relates to the concept of impact itself. Especially in a vast bureaucracy, the impact of reforms takes time to materialize. When discussing impact in the UN, the unit of analysis is often understood as residing in the field, relating to sustained changes in conditions on the ground and

people's lives, including improved security, more inclusive political processes, or more accountable governance institutions. Assessing impact at this level requires taking a long-term perspective, which is not possible with reforms that are at most three years old. Some have thus argued that it is too soon to assess the impact of these reforms. But three years into their implementation, and with a report by the secretary-general on the peace and security reform already out, an external perspective seems timely.¹⁰ The ongoing nature of the reforms has shaped this paper's findings, recommendations, and tone.

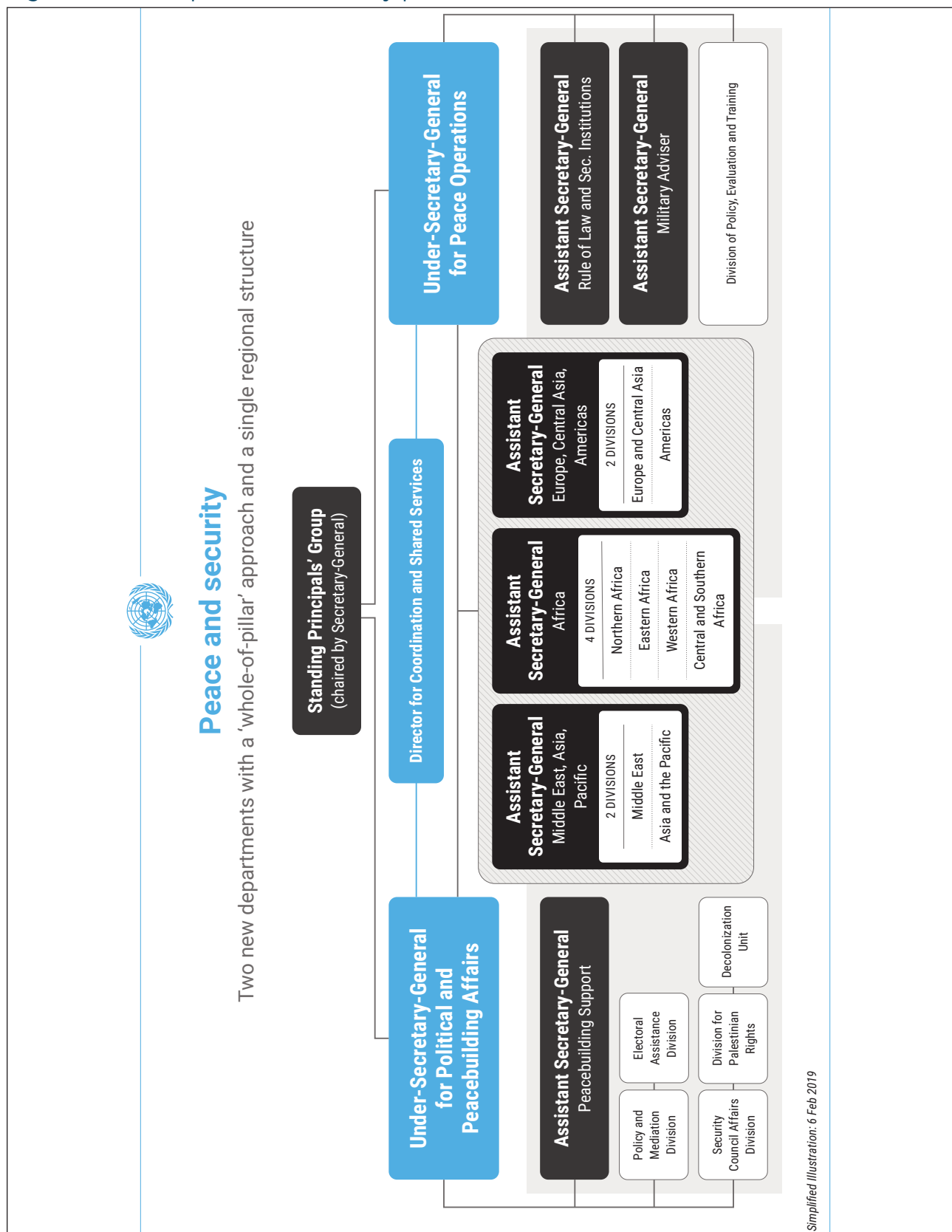
The Peace and Security Pillar and UN Planning

The most relevant reform for UN mission planning has been the reorganization of the peace and security pillar (see Figure 1). This resulted in several major changes: the establishment of integrated regional divisions under a dual management structure; shared services between the Department of Peace Operations (DPO, formerly the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, or DPKO) and Department of Peacebuilding and Political Affairs (DPPA, formerly the Department of Political Affairs, or DPA); and the integration of the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) into DPPA. Although

the creation of DPO was initially intended to consolidate UN headquarters' political support for and backstopping of all peace operations, DPPA ultimately retained responsibility for special political missions, while DPO continues to manage peacekeeping operations. The restructuring also replaced the Department of Field Support (DFS), which had been joined at the hip with DPKO, with the Department of Operational Support (DOS), which has more autonomy and capacity and a remit to support the entire UN Secretariat, not just peace operations. A year and a half into the

⁹ To some extent, this was a repeat of the dynamics that shaped the planning of the UN special political mission in Libya (UNSMIL) in 2011.

¹⁰ UN General Assembly, *Review of the Implementation of the Peace and Security Reform—Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. A/75/202, July 20, 2020.

Figure 1. The UN peace and security pillar¹¹

11 Downloaded on October 20, 2020, available at <https://reform.un.org/news/peace-and-security-pillar>.

implementation of the restructuring of the peace and security pillar, definitive outcomes for mission planning remain elusive.

Initial Successes: A Streamlined Structure with a Stronger Peacebuilding Lens

For both UN insiders and external observers, the creation of shared regional divisions has met its first and most obvious objective of streamlining communication and offering interlocutors a single point of entry. Previously, in a country where a peacekeeping operation was present, support for the UN's engagement on peace and security came from two headquarters teams: one from DPKO and one from DPA. This often led to confusion, parallel communication, divergent analyses, and disjointed messaging. Today, responsibility for providing this support in any given country lies with one shared regional division, regardless of the nature of the UN presence. Engagement with the peace and security pillar has therefore become easier for the rest of the UN as well as for member states.

This change has improved the planning of UN operations at three levels. First, it has made planning more efficient by reducing the number of peace and security interlocutors involved. Second, with one director overseeing each country file, it has reduced the potential for diverging views within the Secretariat, even if the risk of disharmony persists, as discussed below. Finally, it has enabled continuity of institutional knowledge and memory, which in the past was undermined when the file shifted between departments during transitions between peacekeeping operations and special political missions. This benefit was particularly evident during the recent transition in Haiti, where the same headquarters team that had worked on MINUJUSTH managed the creation of BINUH with little friction or loss of institutional knowledge and relationships.

The reform has also increased the profile of peacebuilding across the Secretariat, both institutionally, with the placement of PBSO within DPPA, and conceptually. This has resulted in the more

meaningful inclusion of a peacebuilding lens in mission processes, including transitions. In Haiti, for example, PBSO supported the desk managing the transition from MINUJUSTH to BINUH, expanding its assessment to include core development obstacles based on multidimensional risk analyses. The benefits have been felt not just by PBSO itself but also by the regional divisions, which expressed appreciation that the greater inclusion of a peacebuilding lens raises the quality of the analysis underpinning the planning process.

This attention to peacebuilding has been reinforced by the Peacebuilding Fund's increased investment during mission transitions.¹² While the fund's contributions to transitions predate the reform and remain small compared to the actual requirements, its positioning within the peace and security pillar has helped it coordinate its investments with broader political strategies and contribute to mission planning.

PBSO's integration into the peace and security pillar has also allowed planning processes to better consider the UN–World Bank partnership, which PBSO manages. This was demonstrated during the transition in Haiti and the planning process in Sudan. In both cases, “World Bank issues” related to macroeconomic vulnerabilities were incorporated into assessments and used to inform the roles and responses of the missions and UN country teams.

Ongoing Challenges: “Jargon and Boxes?”

Beyond these immediate and real benefits, the reforms have also led to disappointment. During a session on UN reform, a former US ambassador to the UN pleaded with the Secretariat not to produce just “jargon and boxes.” But for many, the reform has been and remains an exercise in reconfiguring and shuffling boxes (i.e., organizational units), with many missed opportunities for impactful change that would benefit UN mission planning.

At the start of the reform process, some current and former UN officials called for the complete integration of all mission management functions

¹² In its 2020–2024 strategy, the Peacebuilding Fund commits to spending 35 percent of its funds on transition contexts. UN Peacebuilding Fund, “2020–2024 Strategy,” p. 5.

and capacities into one department. This was not realized, in part due to dissenting voices within DPKO and DPA and the concerns of certain UN member states. Instead, when it comes to UN missions, the shared regional divisions maintain a dual reporting line: to DPO for the management of peacekeeping operations and to DPPA for the management of special political missions. Under this dual arrangement, the determination of who leads the planning process for creating a new mission or reconfiguring an existing one has not been codified.

The persistence of two different sources of authority depending on the nature of the peace operation has had detrimental consequences. For example, the initial planning process in Sudan exposed bitter divisions over whether the follow-on presence to UNAMID should remain a peacekeeping operation or instead be a special political mission. As a result, the UN failed in its ambition to present a cohesive front to member states. While these divisions were eventually overcome, some saw them as an indication that nothing had really changed. The reform of the peace and security pillar had failed to correct the institutional cacophony they saw as one of the key weaknesses in UN planning. To these critics, the process in Sudan was reminiscent of past processes, as when DPA and DPKO competed bitterly over the design and control of the peacekeeping mission in Mali due to different understandings of the conflict dynamics, different resource-related incentives, and centrifugal pressures from African regional organizations and Security Council members. In both cases, different parts of the Secretariat lobbied different member states in a disparate fashion, pushing in opposite directions and sending confusing, territorial messages.

While UN planning processes will always be subject to such centrifugal pressures, which no amount of UN reform can fully overcome, several UN officials argued that the UN's experience in Sudan demonstrated the need for shared planning

capacity between DPO and DPPA, which the reform did not establish.¹³ Prior to the reform, DPKO had a small dedicated planning cell located in its Office of Operations to support, inter alia, the planning of peacekeeping operations led by DPKO's regional desks, including for transitions. DPA never had a formal mission planning capacity. Instead, it relied on ad hoc arrangements and teams led by regional directors (as in the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia in 2013), dedicated planning coordinators from outside the department (as in the UN Support Mission in Libya in 2011), or planners borrowed from another department (as in UNMHA in Yemen in 2018 and the UN Mission in Colombia in 2016). DPA also often received support from the Guidance and Learning Unit as the repository of previous planning practices.

For many, the peace and security reform has been an exercise in reconfiguring and shuffling boxes, with many missed opportunities for UN mission planning.

The reform created an Office of Shared Services between DPPA and DPO to provide both departments with a range of enabling functions. Attempts were made to include mission planning as one of those services and to bring in DPKO's planning cell

as the nucleus of a shared planning capacity that would play a substantial role in mission planning. These efforts never bore fruit. Institutional resistance prevailed, driven by each department's desire to retain control of these processes and enabled by the division of mission management between them.

As a result, DPPA and DPO continue to plan for missions separately (and to manage communications and monitoring separately as well, as addressed below). This has perpetuated an asymmetry in planning capacity for UN missions: even though the last four new UN missions have all been special political missions, DPO, which retains its planning cell, has more planning capacity than DPPA. It also maintains a system where those developing options for the UN's presence in a country are beholden to a specific department and thus have professional incentives to propose a mission configuration that satisfies that department's interests. A shared planning function led by a senior official and drawing on planning resources

13 Phone interviews with UN officials, June 2020.

from DOS, DPO's Office of Military Affairs, and other departments across the system could address these challenges. It would provide dedicated capacity (which DPPA does not have), an impartial approach (which neither department has on its own), and institutional memory (which is diffuse across the system).

There is also less than meets the eye when it comes to the unity and coherence of the joint DPPA-DPO regional divisions. Structures and processes still vary greatly across the divisions, reflecting historical practices inherited from the old departments. On some country files, there is one team providing oversight for the entire Secretariat's presence. This is the case in Lebanon, for example, where the peacekeeping operation (UNIFIL) and special political mission (UNSCOL) are under one structure at headquarters.

For other countries, different teams manage different UN outfits on the ground, with varying degrees of coordination. In Sudan, an integrated operational team covers UNAMID, while the Horn of Africa team covers planning for UNITAMS. Both teams report to the director of the East Africa Division, but they have different equities, institutional memories, and capacities. More generally, integrated operational teams, which were a fixture of DPKO's headquarters arrangements, remain the norm for peacekeeping operations in Africa but are seldom in place in other regions. Coordination between DPO and DPPA also often comes down to personal relationships rather than institutional connections, as with UNMHA in Yemen, where DPPA's file holder previously worked for DPKO, which enables strong engagement with DPO's Office of Military Affairs.

In his July 2020 report to the General Assembly, the secretary-general indicated that "integration in the regional divisions is still in progress but, where it has occurred, divisions have been able to produce higher-quality analysis in terms of breadth, coherence and depth."¹⁴ While this seems to be the case, and these arrangements may become more standardized as the reform takes hold, ongoing fractures point to an inconvenient truth: the design

and implementation of the reform process was not impervious to considerations of departmental control and existing posts. There was an effort to ensure that all personnel would have a place in the regional divisions. As one UN official said, "If integration is truly achieved, this will have difficult implications for staff, and the day of reckoning has not come yet."¹⁵ True integration would make many posts redundant. Instead, the leadership avoided hard decisions, in part due to pressure from member states that feared that senior posts occupied by their nationals would be cut.

Broadening the Perspective to Organizational Culture and Identity

Beyond these structural and operational changes, mission planning also faces both hurdles and opportunities related to the UN's organizational culture and identity. The creation of the integrated regional divisions has exposed director-level staff to a wider set of issues and UN instruments. After years of managing peacekeeping operations, where considerations related to troops and police predominate, many directors now manage smaller special political missions or, more often than not, a UN presence without any peace operation. This has forced them to adopt new lenses and look to new partnerships, including with resident coordinators and others on the development side of the UN.

Many have embraced this expanded perspective, including in Colombia and Haiti. In both cases, staff in New York who had traditionally focused on peacekeeping operations are now managing a special political mission that requires new approaches to peace and security and more active engagement with the development side of the UN. Many see this as professionally enriching, which bodes well for their ability to take a wider perspective on conflict drivers and potential institutional responses during future mission planning efforts.¹⁶

Here and there, of course, one spots resistance or reluctance to embrace these broader perspectives. Some people are operating and thinking in terms of

¹⁴ UN General Assembly, *Review of the Implementation of the Peace and Security Reform—Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. A/75/202, July 20, 2020.

¹⁵ Phone interview with UN official, June 2020.

¹⁶ Phone interviews with UN officials, May–June 2020.

where they came from—whether DPKO or DPA—and these old identities are “still very much ingrained.”¹⁷ But changes in mindsets and habits take time. It is at this cultural level that the reform could yet have its greatest impact. It is also at this level that the reform can be accelerated through more systematic incentives for staff to expose themselves to new roles and perspectives and the many ways the UN engages on different issues. These could include short-term job exchanges between DPO and DPPA, among their shared regional divisions, between these two departments and UN agencies, or between missions’ oversight and planning functions.

The successes and shortcomings of the peace and security restructuring thus point to the unfinished business of the UN reform agenda: human resources. Human resources reform would see more staff moving from headquarters to the field, within the Secretariat, and between Secretariat departments and UN agencies. Having these different experiences is essential for staff to gain exposure to the variety of contexts in which UN missions now operate. It can also allow them to acquire diverse tools and skills in areas ranging from peacekeeping to peacebuilding and development, all of which are required to prevent or resolve conflict. This more diverse set of experiences can help build a rich, broad UN identity that transcends each pillar’s lenses and reflexes. When the outcome of a planning process is tightly linked to a narrow departmental identity, its integrity is compromised well before member states get involved.

The Impact of the Management and Development System Reforms

Mission planning has been affected by a range of other reforms and initiatives beyond the reorganization of the peace and security pillar. This section briefly describes the relevant features of the other two major reform streams—the management

reform and the development system reform—and discusses their impact on the mission planning process.

Management Reform: An Enabler with Strings

More so than the peace and security reform, the management reform has had a direct bearing on field operations. It is underpinned by the principles of flexibility and efficiency, both highly prized attributes when it comes to planning UN missions, especially during reconfigurations and transitions. Two dimensions of the management reform are particularly relevant for mission planning and start-up: the expanded delegation of authority to mission leaders, which gives them greater latitude in the allocation and redeployment of resources; and changes within DOS as a standalone department.

The delegation of authority, which lies at the heart of the reform, has increased flexibility and efficiency.¹⁸ Prior to the reform, the special representative of the secretary-general often had to get clearance from headquarters to redeploy staff from one location to another, which often prevented missions from anticipating or seizing opportunities. With the reform, clearance is no longer required, allowing mission leaders to react more swiftly to changes on the ground. There are some growing pains, with staff in the field requiring training and support to translate the delegations of authority into practice.¹⁹ Nonetheless, there is evidence, notably from the UN mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) that the reform has allowed missions to be more proactive in adjusting their means to support their objectives through country-level planning.

Several changes at headquarters have also helped improve mission planning. The creation of DOS as a standalone department with an established operational planning capacity has systematized its presence and authority at the planning table,

¹⁷ Phone interviews with UN officials, June 2020.

¹⁸ Under the Delegation of Authority, a range of decisions and accountabilities are decentralized, notably in the areas of budget management, certification and approval of payments, procurement, and human resources. For further information, see: UN Secretariat, “Secretary-General’s Bulletin: Delegation of Authority in the Administration of the Staff Regulations and Rules and the Financial Regulations and Rules,” UN Doc. ST/SGB/2019/2, December 17, 2018.

¹⁹ Wolfgang Weisegger, “Implementing the UN Management Reform: Progress and Implications for Peace Operations,” July 2020.

especially in the crucial early stages. UN mission planning has historically struggled to ensure the adequate and timely inclusion of operational matters (logistics, procurement, etc.). Reforms within DOS are gradually addressing this weakness. Most notably, the practice of mobilizing or “surging” additional staff from across the department (e.g., from the logistics, supply-chain, or medical divisions) has meant that planning processes usually address the gamut of operational matters that need to be considered. However, DOS only has six dedicated planners. This limited capacity is a source of concern, especially given that the department supports all UN deployments, including new outfits such as the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da’esh/ISIL (UNITAD) and the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM). DOS also focuses only on operational planning and thus does not fill gaps in planning for the substantive side of mission mandates.

The management reform is underpinned by the principles of flexibility and efficiency, both highly prized attributes when it comes to planning UN missions.

Several officials within the Secretariat expressed concern over the increased operational gap between DOS and DPO compared to DFS and DPKO, which were joined at the hip.²⁰ As part of a previous reform in 2007, DFS had been split from DPKO to provide support to both peacekeeping operations and special political missions (although most of its resources were dedicated to peacekeeping). Now, DOS has acquired responsibilities above and beyond mission support, while some of its mission planning work, notably on budgeting, has been transferred to the field and to other departments at headquarters. For now, though, close collaboration at all levels, including between under-secretaries-general, has endured through close relationships, legacy, and more formal coordination mechanisms.

Development Reform: Stepping Up to Help?

Several dimensions of the reform of the UN development system are also relevant to mission planning. The most important is the function of the

resident coordinator (RC), who is now separate from the resident representative of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and reports directly to the deputy secretary-general through the new Development Coordination Office. The RC is now expected to focus solely on leading the UN country team and coordinating the UN’s development work with the support of a more robust office. The RC’s dual- or triple-hatted role as humanitarian coordinator and deputy head of a UN mission has not been affected. In addition, the reform introduced significant changes to the UN development system’s common country analysis and put in place a new planning framework known as the Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. Both the common country analysis and the cooperation framework focus more on risk and prevention under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as the intersection between the UN’s humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding activities, where relevant.

These changes to the RC system are particularly pertinent for, and consistent with the spirit and letter of, the secretary-general’s 2019 directive on transition planning. The directive requires peace operations to plan for their reconfiguration and exit on the basis of closer coordination with the UN country team. According to the directive, RCs lead transition planning in their triple-hatted capacity. Transition planning should be based on the UN country team’s analysis and frameworks, as well as mapping exercises conducted under the authority of the RC to inform the tasks the country team should focus on following the peace operation’s reconfiguration and exit. Similarly, in developing the cooperation framework, the UN country team is now required to explore if and how it should be reconfigured to be more fit for purpose and deliver efficiently on the framework’s objectives. This requirement enables peace operations to ensure that their own reconfiguration is consistent with the the arrangements of country teams.

These changes have brought real and immediate benefits to the ways missions are planned. Ever

²⁰ Phone interviews with UN officials, June 2020.

since the planning of missions became a system-wide effort in the mid-2000s, Secretariat officials had expressed frustration over the inability of their development counterparts to coalesce around coherent positions, engage quickly, and provide a robust response in unstable environments. In several instances, this irritation led missions to claim more of a role in coordinating and assisting development interventions. In Haiti, for example, relations between MINUSTAH and the development system have a long, bitter history. In 2008, MINUSTAH assumed a greater role in development coordination, starting a trend that would be replicated in other missions. Yet the recent transition from MINUJUSTH to BINUH involved better collaboration between DPO, DPPA, and the UN development system.

Many have attributed this improved climate for coopera-

tion to the establishment of an impartial RC who is no longer beholden to UNDP's interests, which at times clash with those of the mission due to their overlapping mandates. RCs can now mobilize the entire UN development system, both in-country and in regional and global offices, and have greater authority to build unity of purpose among development entities. In the case of Haiti, this has reduced transaction costs by reducing the number of interlocutors the mission needs to engage with. Both missions and headquarters departments appreciate the investment of authority in an empowered RC tasked with bringing coherence and discipline to a system they had perceived as too fractured and chaotic to be a meaningful partner in mission planning. Stronger RC offices are expected to be more reliable interlocutors, especially during transitions.

DPO and DPPA also see the new UN common country analysis, with its emphasis on risk and prevention, as relevant to mission mandates. This is the type of analysis that missions themselves often lack but could use to better understand the development-related causes of, and responses to, instability. The changes to the UN's development planning process through the cooperation framework are also seen as beneficial for mission planning. More generally, the EOSG's insistence

The changes to the resident coordinator system are consistent with the spirit and letter of the secretary-general's 2019 directive on mission planning.

that the UN step up its development work—an imperative that has been reinforced by the pandemic—resonates with departments that have often seen the development system as the UN's weakest link, blaming development failures for the extended presence of peace operations and humanitarian interventions.

The reform of the development system has also brought challenges, however. While the delinking of the RC from UNDP's resident representative has made RCs more impartial, it has also taken away their direct authority over programming portfolios that are relevant to peace operations mandates,

including elections and governance. It is therefore not uncommon for peace operations, UNDP, and other UN entities to bypass the RC when they need to work together. This can undermine the ability of RCs to coordi-

nate a coherent response across the UN country team and to engage with the peace operation, especially with limited funds at their disposal. New accountability systems and direct oversight and support from the Development Coordination Office and EOSG can partially, but not yet fully, compensate for this loss.

The Budget Hurdle

The impact of all three streams of reform is fundamentally challenged by budgetary matters. The management reform put in place a new streamlined process for mission budgets with a larger role and more responsibilities for DOS and a new Department of Management, Strategic Policy and Compliance (DMSPC). Within the Secretariat, differences of opinion linger between DOS and DPO over this new process. Some in DPO are concerned that they are insufficiently involved in finalizing the budget information that is then submitted to the UN's legislative organs. Their lack of visibility and control over the budget's fine print undermines their subsequent role in overseeing missions. It could also exacerbate the gap between the substantive and the budgetary components of the mission planning process, leading to further discrepancies between the expected results and the resources available to

achieve them (staff, logistics, etc.).

Staff in DOS, on the other hand, argue that DPO should have a more upstream role in developing the budget as part of the mission planning process, which is when strategic choices must be made. To them, DPO's engagement at a granular level toward the end of the process would increase transaction costs for little added value. The frustration expressed by officials in both departments may also reflect a lack of understanding of a complex management reform that requires greater clarity on roles and expectations throughout the budget process.

A broader budgetary question poses a greater risk to UN planning. Due to opposition from influential member states, the secretary-general's final reform proposal did not follow the HIPPO report's recommendation to merge the budget streams of special political missions, which are funded through the regular budget, and peacekeeping operations, which are funded through the peacekeeping budget and support account. In the end, the reforms skirted budgetary reform, and the integration of the peace and security pillar is not supported by the integration of its funding sources.

As a result, the UN system remains in a bind. The trend toward special political missions which are supported by the shared regional divisions would seem to call for an increase in the regular budget, from which both of these structures are funded since they cannot access the peacekeeping budget. But this is unlikely due to current financial realities. A more realistic solution would be to merge funding sources to increase fluidity and flexibility and to align budget sources with departmental functions and responsibilities.²¹

The current funding situation does not preclude different departments and offices across the peace and security pillar from contributing to any mission planning process. For example, DPO's Office of Military Affairs has been actively involved in the planning of UNMHA, a special political mission. But without either more funding or merged funding, planning of UN missions will remain restricted and unduly influenced by

budgetary considerations. Different funding streams distort planning and introduce biases and calculations. Instead of planning for the right option—one tailored to the circumstances on the ground—the current funding paradigm often forces the UN to plan for the option that is least complicated from a budgetary perspective.

These constraints call into question the extent to which the principle of “form follows function,” a central tenet of mission planning, can truly be implemented. Several interlocutors expressed concern about the UN Secretariat's vulnerability to self-censorship by quickly moving to low-budget options in anticipation of member states' resistance (notably in the Fifth Committee). In this regard, mission planning is still held hostage to budgetary dynamics that the reforms were not designed to address.

A Mix of Other Initiatives, with Mixed Results

Beyond the three main streams of reform, a number of other initiatives have also had an impact on mission planning processes.

Strategic Reviews of UN Peace Operations

In 2017, the secretary-general tasked DPKO (now DPO) and the EOSG's Strategic Planning and Monitoring Unit with undertaking a series of strategic reviews of select peace operations. The methodology for these reviews included three important new features. First, the reviews were to be led by an external, independent senior adviser. Second, building on recent efforts by DFS (now DOS) to collect data from missions on their context and operations, they were to focus on providing data-driven recommendations. And third, they were to include a stress test by a “red team” of internal and external experts to challenge the review's recommendations. These experts would not be part of the review team or affiliated with the mission's management.

The strategic reviews have triggered mixed

²¹ See: Wasim Mir, “Financing UN Peacekeeping: Avoiding Another Crisis,” International Peace Institute, April 2019.

reactions. Overall, there seems to be support for the concept of having an impartial, unvarnished opinion of how missions are faring, especially as the quality of reviews has improved over time. This improvement was enabled by DFS's commitment to enhance its systems and capacity to collect, analyze, and present reliable data from a wide range of missions. This higher-quality data has helped reviewers challenge assumptions and generate new ideas for mission strategies and tactics that are grounded in operational realities and constraints. For example, the review of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) was provided granular data on military patrols, including their average distance and frequency, which shaped its recommendations on the appropriate level of ambition for a reinvigorated protection of civilians strategy.

In digging more deeply into UN missions' engine rooms and sifting through reams of data as a starting point for strategic planning, the UN has faced a learning curve. There has been some cultural resistance fueled by anxieties over the potential "tyranny of the data," as one UN official lamented. But with DFS's transformation into DOS and the EOSG's continued push to make the UN more data-smart, these changes are professionalizing the UN's approach to planning and helping increase the quality of reviews. The next step is to systematize this drive toward more and better use of data across all mission planning phases, from the design of new operations to their review, reconfiguration, and exit.

The stress-test requirement has also seemed to bring benefits. In a recent DPO stock-taking of the independent review process, many participants noted the added value of having an external "red team" weigh in on the review and subject its findings to reality checks and constructive challenges. The stress test, which is designed to improve the final review rather than fundamentally alter it, has helped reviewers sharpen their arguments, identify additional risks, and tie up loose ends. There are now attempts to extend this practice to mission planning processes, though this has not yet been widely implemented. A stress test was not done in Colombia, where planning

predated the practice's introduction, or in Haiti, where the EOSG, which is the gatekeeper for the stress-test exercise, only played a small part in the process. In Yemen, the mission's concept of operations was reviewed and tested within DPPA and by DPO's Office of Military Affairs, but the mission's limited mandate made a system-wide stress test less relevant. The exercise is being considered for Sudan.

The reviews still face two major challenges. The first is finding the right independent reviewer. Individuals who combine an inside understanding of peace operations with the right level of authority and sense of distance from both the UN and the country are few and far between. The struggle to go

beyond the "usual suspects" was noted by both member-state representatives and UN officials.

A second, more substantial issue concerns the many pressures to which the reviews are subjected. Within the UN, some have expressed doubt that the reviews remain truly independent through to the very end, especially when the findings do not align with departmental views. In such cases, the reviews' outcomes are at risk of being watered down before they even make it to the secretary-general's desk, and even more so by the time they make it into the report that then goes to the Security Council.

Member states have also expressed frustration over the process's opacity. While many reviewers engage with member states, especially at the start of the process, the final report is not officially shared beyond a small group of UN staff. This practice is designed to protect reviewers from undue political pressure, but some member states see it as denting the integrity of the process. To some degree, this helps explain why in late 2019 the EOSG agreed to share the entire independent review of MONUSCO directly with the Security Council. It also explains why the council itself is increasingly mandating such reviews, sometimes as tit for tat among the five permanent members. Nonetheless, the council's interest in mandating reviews speaks to their potential value in shaping planning discussions.

Overall, there seems to be support for having an impartial, unvarnished opinion of how missions are faring through strategic reviews.

Secretary-General's Planning Directives

In 2017, the EOSG's Strategic Planning and Monitoring Unit reinvigorated the practice of issuing planning directives. Through these mission-specific directives, the secretary-general initiates the planning for a mission's creation or reconfiguration by setting out expectations in terms of deliverables, planning timelines, and roles and responsibilities. They are intended to eliminate competition and jostling over leadership between DPPA and DPO.

In some cases, planning directives also establish the substantive parameters for planning based on the secretary-general's dialogue with the host government and Security Council members. In Colombia, for example, the directive instructed the UN to plan for a special political mission focused on verification. Given the needs on the ground and the peace agreement's explicit request for a mission focused on verifying certain provisions of the accord, there was little need to plan for other configurations (i.e., a peacekeeping presence for the first mission or an integrated presence with the UN country team for the second). Where there is less clarity or consensus on needs or on what the government is requesting, directives' parameters are often broader.

The Colombia case demonstrates how directives that set a clear direction, expectations, and parameters can enable field-led planning. With such clarity at the outset, there was little need for headquarters to be heavily involved in planning the transition between the first and second missions. The mission, in collaboration with the UN country team, was able to design a new configuration that was tailored to the realities on the ground rather than the wishes of UN headquarters.

At the same time, planning directives risk acting as a brake on creative thinking, especially if they set the type of configuration (i.e., a special political mission or peacekeeping operation) and its institutional relationships (e.g., whether or not the mission will have a human rights office). But even

if directives lay out the broader context that mission planners need to take into account, including the political constraints resulting from member states' requests or red lines, mission planners should not feel that they have to stick to just a few standard mission configurations. Within these constraints, the UN planning toolbox allows for many variations and innovations. UN planners should combine realism and creativity.

Comprehensive Performance Assessment System

In 2019, DPO rolled out its new Comprehensive Performance Assessment System (CPAS). This tool provides a platform and structure for identifying, quantifying, and reporting on results across mission mandates. As such, it seeks to help mission leaders make integrated, evidence-based, and risk-informed decisions.

Planning directives that set a clear direction, expectations, and parameters can enable field-led planning.

Feedback provided by mission planners during DPO's annual lessons-learned workshop in late 2019 was positive. For many, CPAS is making mission leaders care more about planning. The data-based, structured, rigorous

approach to defining results, along with a user-friendly digital visualization of progress (or lack thereof), make it a useful planning tool, including for strategic decision making, and course correction. Its rollout across DPO-led peacekeeping operations has been temporarily slowed by the pandemic but should be completed soon.

The next frontier for CPAS is twofold. First, it needs to incorporate more comprehensive risk management. Risk management is essential to strategic planning and mandate delivery and enables missions to define which results they can achieve. Mission planning processes include some elements of risk identification when missions are being designed. Once a mission is up and running, however, risk management becomes an isolated process. It is overseen by DMSPC and undertaken as a one-off event by the mission's focal point for risk management, with few links to other planning processes.

Embedding risk management in CPAS would alleviate the transactional burden on mission planners, who currently need to manage CPAS while also feeding into DMSPC's separate risk-management platform. Instead, it would tie risk management directly to mission planning and performance monitoring while automatically generating the information required by DMSPC (such as risks to each mission objective; the likelihood, impact, level, and trends of these risks; and mitigation measures taken). This would increase the relevance of information on risks and strengthen continuous mission planning. Because reporting on and oversight of risks would still remain with DMSPC, it would also help avoid any territorial concerns.

The second frontier is to extend CPAS to all peace operations, not just peacekeeping operations. For reasons that remain unclear, DPPA has yet to adopt CPAS despite frequent engagement between the CPAS team and DPPA management. As a result, regional divisions use it for some of the missions they oversee but not for all of them. This dichotomy does little to increase the coherence or efficiency of UN mission planning.

Secretary-General's Executive Committee

The establishment, in 2017, of the secretary-general's Executive Committee (EC), which serves as a cabinet-style decision-making mechanism, is also relevant to mission planning. It is in the EC that strategic reviews of UN missions are ultimately presented and validated. The EC is supported by a Deputies Committee, which also took over the function of the Integrated Steering Group in 2017 as part of the secretary-general's efforts to consolidate headquarters-level coordination and decision-making structures.

The value of the EC in mission planning remains elusive. At its inception, some within the system hoped that the EC, with the support of the EOSG's Strategic Planning and Monitoring Unit, would become a forum for resolving differing views among UN departments, especially when it comes

to planning missions. This expectation is inappropriate. As one UN official noted, differences between departments originate and mushroom faster than any formal, cabinet-style process can keep up with.²² The composition of the EC also does not lend itself to the difficult exchanges and internal arbitration needed to settle disagreements over planning, especially when it comes to the nature and configuration of UN missions. There are too many interlocutors around the table, and they do not have enough time for meaningful discussions on mission planning (e.g., the type of mission or messaging to member states). However, the EC has proven useful as a way to formalize agreements reached beforehand, thereby settling debates and setting a common course of action for the UN system.

Conclusion and Recommendations

On balance, reform efforts have the potential to improve the way UN missions are planned. In some instances, this potential is already materializing. Communication between the peace and security pillar and the rest of the UN system is more streamlined and cohesive. Planning exercises for new missions or transitions include a stronger peacebuilding dimension and are more data-driven and risk-informed.

In other instances, however, the rollout of the reforms has shown a spotlight on missed opportunities. The absence of a centralized, shared planning capacity between DPPA and DPO and the lack of a stronger planning role for the EOSG prevent planning processes from being more predictable and free of institutional biases. The fact that management of special political missions and peacekeeping operations is split between DPPA and DPO keeps the UN vulnerable to centrifugal messaging and engagement with member states.

When assessing impact, it is also useful to look beyond individual reforms or initiatives to examine how the reforms interact with each other to enable or constrain UN mission planning efforts. When

²² Phone interview with UN official, June 2020.

viewed through this broader lens, the multiplicity of initiatives raises concerns, even if they are each well-conceived and necessary. It is unclear whether there is a unifying thread between the various planning-related initiatives currently underway—for example, from efforts to strengthen capacities for UN mission transitions to the progress made with CPAS and the work of DPO's planning cell. The EOSG's Strategic Planning and Monitoring Unit is well placed to prevent fragmentation, but to do this it needs political will and incentives for collaboration, which the reforms have not yet provided.

Another barrier to impact is the UN's corporate culture. With some exceptions, the mindset and culture of the

organization lag behind the formal outcomes of the reforms. Many of the challenges or hurdles identified for each reform track and initiative are rooted in ingrained departmental perspectives and ways of doing business. There are few dimensions of the reforms that require more time than those related to culture and identity. Until the UN achieves large-scale cultural change, the impact of the reforms will be constrained.

Based on these observations, and while remaining cognizant of the introductory caveats, the UN Secretariat and member states could consider the following recommendations:

1. **The EOSG, DPPA, and DPO should identify opportunities to tie together the strands of reform related to planning to prevent the fragmentation and dilution of efforts.** There is scope for harmonizing planning approaches and tools for missions, for example by integrating risk-management requirements into CPAS. CPAS itself should also be adopted by all special political missions, as its principles are relevant to all peace operations. Similarly, field capacities related to the planning of mission transitions could merge with the new functions existing in resident coordinators' offices. When missions are planning a reconfiguration, this process should also be one and the same as the reconfiguration planning exercises that UN country teams undertake when developing their cooperation frameworks.

Until the UN achieves large-scale cultural change, the impact of the reforms will be constrained.

2. **DPPO and DPA should make increased and better use of peace and security management mechanisms such as the Senior Policy Group at the initial stages of planning to ensure that UN leaders have a unified tone and vision.** The Senior Policy Group is convened by the secretary-general and brings together the leadership of DPPA, DPO, DOS, and the Office of Counter-Terrorism. So far, it has not engaged in mission planning, focusing almost exclusively—and effectively—on shaping common political strategies in countries with peace operations. In the future, and in lieu of the Executive Committee, it could serve as the formal forum for discussing and developing mission planning approaches. The unified vision emerging from this group could then be reflected in the secretary-general's transition directives. This would help reduce internal cacophony and centrifugal pressures within regional divisions.
3. **The EOSG should explore how to more formally and transparently involve Security Council members in the strategic review process.** There is a delicate balance to strike between increasing trust in the process while maintaining its independence and protecting reviewers from undue political pressures. However, more formal and transparent engagement with the council could alleviate such pressures by bringing them out into the open.
4. **DOS, DMSPC, DPO, DPPA, and the shared regional divisions should clarify and strengthen their role in the mission budget process.** They should all systematically engage throughout the budget preparation process rather than DPO and DPPA engaging more heavily at the beginning and DOS taking over toward the end. Engaging the regional divisions requires commitment on all sides: commitment by the divisions to enhance the quality of their engagement at the beginning of the budget process, which will reduce transaction costs later on as budget details are being

finalized; and commitment by DOS and DMSPC to institutionalize a step at the end of the process for bringing in the regional divisions to jointly review all budget-related outputs, from strategic objectives to cost details. This will ensure the integrity of the entire planning chain and enable regional divisions to better support missions in implementing their mandates. However, it will not prevent budgetary dynamics among UN member states from continuing to undermine sound mission planning, which will require a new round of efforts initiated and led by member states themselves.

5. **DPO should consider repositioning its planning cell under the Office of Shared Services, with additional involvement of DPPA and other parts of the UN system.** The absence of a shared planning capacity remains one of the reforms' unfinished tasks and could be viewed as an expression of antiquated territorial concerns and an ingrained culture. If mission planners are to design options impartially and objectively, they must be part of a shared service. Such a common capacity could draw on, and even permanently include,

planning, monitoring, and evaluation capabilities from DPO's Policy, Evaluation and Training Division or DPPA's Guidance and Learning Unit. This could allow it to extend CPAS across all missions. Either on a case-by-case or a permanent basis, it could also include capabilities from other departments whose inputs into mission planning are critical, such as DOS, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Alongside EOSG's Strategic Planning and Monitoring Unit, whose remit extends beyond the Secretariat, this would streamline and create a stronger center of gravity for planning initiatives across the Secretariat, including planning for mission transitions.

6. **The Secretariat and member states should keep incentivizing and rewarding lateral movement of personnel across departments and entities.** Genuine human resources reform and mobility schemes are the only way to build a critical mass of UN staff who approach their mission planning tasks with the openness and broad perspective required.

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