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Decorating the “Christmas Tree”

The UN Security Council and the Secretariat’s Recommendations on Peacekeeping Mandates

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Abstract

Contemporary peacekeeping operations carry out many disparate tasks, which has triggered a debate about “Christmas Tree mandates.” Did the UN Secretariat or the UN Security Council drive this expansion? Using original data on nineteen UN peacekeeping missions, 1998–2014, this article compares peacekeeping tasks recommended by the Secretariat to those mandated by the Council. It finds that the two bodies expressed different preferences regarding the nature, number, and novelty of peacekeeping tasks. First, the Council dropped Secretariat-recommended tasks as often as it added new ones on its own initiative. Second, the two bodies disagreed more over peacebuilding and peacemaking tasks than over peacekeeping tasks. Third, the Council preferred to be the one to introduce novel tasks that had not appeared in previous mandates. Finally, among the countries that “held the pen” on peacekeeping resolutions, the United States was the most prone to dropping Secretariat-proposed tasks and the least willing to add tasks itself.

Keywords

international organization – United Nations – peacekeeping – peacebuilding – Security Council – Secretariat – international bureaucracy – penholder

1 Introduction¹

In the past three decades, UN peacekeeping operations have grown in size and complexity. The UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, a quintessential Cold War mission, had two main tasks: to prevent the resumption of hostilities and to contribute to the restoration of law and order. Its mandate was outlined in one paragraph of a Security Council resolution. One recent peacekeeping operation, the UN Mission in the Central African Republic, has to protect civilians, coordinate electoral assistance, support the extension of state authority, monitor human rights, assist with security sector reform, and support mediation and reconciliation at national and local levels. Its mandate is fourteen pages long. The expansion of peacekeeping activities has given rise to a new pejorative term in the UN jargon—“Christmas Tree mandates”—referring to missions that are overburdened with tasks that reflect the agendas of multiple actors involved in the mandate negotiations.

The evolution of peacekeeping mandates is affected by the relations between two of the UN’s principal organs, the Security Council and the Secretariat. The Secretariat provides reports that recommend the duration and scope of mandates, which serve as an informal basis for Security Council negotiations on resolutions that specify mandates. In the literature on peacekeeping, there are conflicting accounts of what the Secretariat and the Council want to see in peacekeeping mandates: both bodies have sometimes been portrayed as conservative and sometimes innovative. In this article, we assess these rival expectations, presenting the first systematic study (to our knowledge) of preferences expressed by the Secretariat and the Council. How do these preferences over peacekeeping mandates differ between the Secretariat and the Security Council? How are these differences distributed?

We used independently collected, task-level data to map and compare the recommended and adopted mandates of nineteen peacekeeping missions launched between 1998 and 2014.² Based on descriptive statistics—the count

1 The authors would like to thank two anonymous reviewers, *Global Governance* editors, Vincenzo Bove, Theresa Squatrito, and Jonas Tallberg for constructive and useful comments, as well as the organizers and participants of the workshop “Explaining Authority in International Organizations” at Maastricht University in Brussels (2014) and the section “21st Century International Bureaucracy: People, Power, and Performance” at the European Consortium for Political Research General Conference in Oslo (2017), where previous versions of this article were presented. All errors are the authors’ own. The authors are listed in reverse alphabetical order and equal authorship applies.

2 UN Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA), UN Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT), UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission

and categorization of tasks proposed in Secretariat's reports and Security Council resolutions authorizing peacekeeping missions—we observed five key patterns. First, although 89 percent of all tasks proposed by the Secretariat survived into Council resolutions, the two bodies repeatedly diverged with regard to their preferred mandates. Second, the Council was equally likely to introduce a task not proposed by the Secretariat as to reject a Secretariat-proposed task, which casts doubt over the perception that the Council is invariably opposed to peacekeeping expansion. Third, the Council was more likely to reject Secretariat-proposed tasks if they had not appeared in previous mandates, suggesting a desire to maintain the initiative. Fourth, the Secretariat and the Council disagreed more often over peacemaking and peacebuilding tasks than over peacekeeping tasks. Since peacemaking is a politically delicate activity and peacebuilding is a costly one, the divergence may betray the two bodies' varying sensitivity to risks and costs. Fifth, among the two permanent Council members that drafted the majority of peacekeeping resolutions in our sample, the United States was more cautious about peacekeeping expansion than France, which is in line with behavior expected from the United States in peacekeeping negotiations.

The article has four parts. First, we review existing accounts of the Secretariat's and the Security Council's behavior, drawing on general international organization (IO) scholarship and specialized peacekeeping literature. Second, we introduce the Secretariat's and the Council's roles in peacekeeping mandate negotiations and outline our expectations about their preferences. Third, we describe the construction of our task-level dataset of mandate preferences, present general patterns, and discuss what the data unveil about the Secretariat's and the Council's preferences. We conclude by outlining the implications of our findings for the understanding of IO behavior and suggesting directions for further research.

in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), UN Operation in Burundi (ONUB), UN-African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), UN Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISSET), UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), UN Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT), UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), UN Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL), and UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET).

2 The Secretariat, the Security Council, and the Evolution of Peacekeeping

The UN Secretariat, like other international bureaucracies, has both institutional and policy interests.³ In terms of institutional interests, principal-agent models expect secretariats to prefer expansive task sets, which can motivate larger budgets and new posts.⁴ In the popular imagination, “UN bureaucrats are seen as profligate globalists who spend first, budget second, and simply pass along the costs to member states.”⁵ With regard to peacekeeping, the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) argued that “comprehensive reports of the Secretary-General ... drive large mandates with often formulaic mandate tasks.”⁶

Yet secretariats also have policy interests. They want their organization to succeed for self-serving and (due to self-selection or professional socialization)⁷ ideational reasons. International bureaucrats pursue personal and organizational gains.⁸ Member states often find it desirable for secretariats to develop preferences that are closer to the organization’s collective goal than the positions of national governments of the day. For example, the delegation of legislative initiative to the European Commission has been driven partly by the aspiration to empower a pro-integrationist agenda setter.⁹ Similarly, the management of peacekeeping has been delegated to the UN Secretariat, which has a keen interest, both self-serving and ideational, in the maintenance of international peace and security.¹⁰

The interaction of these underlying interests can lead to expansive or conservative preferences regarding new IO initiatives. Enlarging its portfolio of responsibilities can enable an IO to address cooperation problems more effectively. As examples of IOs that have ventured into climate change adaptation, bioethics, or structural adjustment lending show, secretariats often push for expansion into new areas.¹¹ In UN peacekeeping, the Secretariat has played an entrepreneurial role with regard to relatively uncontroversial multidimen-

3 Dijkstra 2016.

4 Pollack 2003.

5 Hawkins et al. 2006, 4.

6 UN 2015, 60.

7 Cortell and Peterson 2006; Gould 2006.

8 Ege 2020.

9 Pollack 2003.

10 Allen and Yuen 2014.

11 Sharma 2013; Hall 2016; Littoz-Monnet 2020.

sional peacekeeping tasks such as public information and strategic communications,¹² or those that help protect the UN's reputation such as environmental management.¹³

Alternatively, the desire to succeed can lead to an unwarranted attachment to tried and tested methods. Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore argue that the organizational culture of international secretariats is often conservative and suspicious of rapid change and significant risk.¹⁴ Especially in the field of conflict resolution, as Hylke Dijkstra notes, secretariats want “achievable mandates, as they will be first in line to be blamed for military failure” and, thus, “will try to prevent overly ambitious objectives.”¹⁵ For example, during the 1994 Rwandan genocide, the UN Secretariat did not push for innovative solutions to protect civilians, but remained “timid” and “indecisive,”¹⁶ leaving the advocacy for such solutions to non-governmental organizations and elected Council members.¹⁷

For their part, member states tend to seek to keep expansionary tendencies of international secretariats in check and costs low.¹⁸ In UN peacekeeping, states have traditionally been wary of delegating significant staff resources and competencies to the Secretariat.¹⁹ At the same time, the Security Council, has often been willing to expand the scope of peacekeeping. Member States have championed the addition of new tasks to peacekeeping mandates, for example, those related to the protection of civilians (Canada) or the so-called women, peace, and security agenda (Namibia). The trend toward expansion through activities such as electoral assistance or security sector reform has been linked to the Western ambition to promote democracy and market liberalization.²⁰ Since the advent of stabilization missions, some claim that this liberal project has been supplanted by using peacekeeping to advance counterterrorism objectives.²¹

Some UN officials resent the tendency to expand peacekeeping toward robust action against militias, urban gangs, and terrorist groups: for them,

12 Oksamytna 2018.

13 Maertens 2019.

14 Barnett and Finnemore 2004. See also Bauer et al. 2009; Kamradt-Scott 2010.

15 Dijkstra 2016, 38.

16 Barnett 2002, 3.

17 Oksamytna 2017.

18 Vaubel, Dreher, and Soylyu 2007.

19 Dijkstra 2012.

20 Paris 2004.

21 Karlsrud 2019.

peacekeeping is “not the SWAT team ... sent in to clean up the bad neighbourhoods of the world.”²² While principal-agent models would expect secretariats to welcome any kind of task expansion, a more sophisticated view of their policy interests requires taking into account the nature of such expansion.

Taken as a whole, these expectations boil down to two conflicting accounts of the Secretariat’s and the Security Council’s preferences in peacekeeping. According to the first view, the Secretariat, for self-serving or ideational reasons, has sought the expansion of UN peacekeeping. According to the second view, the Council has imposed new tasks on an unwilling Secretariat, which has tried to resist unrealistic mandates. In the following section, we discuss what information about their preferences is revealed by the positions that the two bodies express in the process of negotiating peacekeeping mandates.

3 Peacekeeping Mandate Negotiations

3.1 *The Negotiation Process*

Unless an exceptional situation requires immediate action, the Security Council requests a report from the Secretariat before the establishment, adjustment, or closure of a peacekeeping operation. Following such a request, the Department of Peace Operations (DPO)²³ dispatches an assessment mission to the region and, based on what it learns, develops mandate recommendations. The Secretary-General then transmits the DPO-prepared report to the Council, where Member States produce the draft resolution. Most resolutions are drafted by one of the three Western permanent members: France, the United Kingdom, and the United States, referred to as the Permanent Three (P₃). This practice is called “penholding.” The P₃ usually negotiate among themselves; then with China and Russia, the other two of the five permanent members (P₅); and, finally, with the elected members.²⁴ Penholders have a considerable influence on the drafting of peacekeeping resolutions.

As for the Secretariat’s recommendations, the Security Council is free to disregard them. For example, in the planning for the mission in South Sudan, the United States “essentially ignored the recommendations of the UN Secre-

22 Former Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Jean-Marie Guéhenno, as quoted in Paddon Rhoads 2016, 103.

23 Before 2019, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO).

24 Security Council Report 2013.

tariat.”²⁵ A senior US official noted, tellingly, that the US government examined “UN reports on peacekeeping, taking them for what they are: recommendations. And the eventual resolutions voted by the Security Council often differ significantly from UN Secretariat recommendations.”²⁶ Yet informally, as Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore argue, the Secretariat’s reports provide “parameters of the Council’s discussions, shaping which options are given serious or slight consideration.”²⁷ Sebastian von Einsiedel, David M. Malone, and Bruno Stagno Ugarte also deem that these reports “play an important role in shaping the Council’s decisions.”²⁸ Manuel Fröhlich and Abiodun Williams concur that the Secretariat is “able to preconfigure some of the options available to the Council through reporting.”²⁹

These reports are not the only way in which the Secretariat influences the direction of peacekeeping: other ways include the circulation of key individuals and shaping Member States’ policy through persuasion and advocacy.³⁰ For example, Ban Ki-moon’s reframing of cultural heritage protection as a security issue has encouraged France and Italy to propose Security Council resolutions on the matter.³¹ In this article, we focus on public reports and resolutions as a source of aggregate data on the Secretariat’s and the Council’s expressed preferences.

3.2 *The Secretariat’s and the Security Council’s Expressed Preferences*

We acknowledge that the Security Council can pressure the Secretariat behind the scenes to make its recommendations align with the Council’s preferences before a report’s release.³² The Secretariat can also tweak its recommendations to make them palatable to Member States on its own initiative. In general, international bureaucracies strive to foresee member states’ wishes and adjust recommendations accordingly.³³ This behavior is typical of many secretariats that prepare drafts or options for member states’ consideration, such as the European Commission,³⁴ although international bureaucracies differ in their

25 Dijkstra 2015, 37.

26 Senior US official, as quoted in Dijkstra 2015, 35.

27 Barnett and Finnemore 2004, 153.

28 von Einsiedel, Malone, and Stagno Ugarte 2016, 835.

29 Fröhlich and Williams 2018, 220.

30 Karlsrud 2016.

31 Foradori and Rosa 2017.

32 Peck 2016, 458.

33 Martin 1993; Pollack 1997, 2003; Gould 2006.

34 Tallberg 2002.

inclination to anticipate member states’ “red lines,”³⁵ and some may do so to accommodate only specific countries like the US.³⁶

Many studies note that the UN Secretariat takes the views of Member States—especially the P5—into account when developing peacekeeping options.³⁷ Although the seminal Brahimi Report enjoined the Secretariat to “tell the Security Council what it needs to know, not what it wants to hear,”³⁸ HIPPO found it necessary to remind that the Secretariat should “be frank in its assessments.”³⁹ Therefore, the Secretariat’s reports might not always reflect its sincere preferences. However, they do represent expressed preferences, or views that the Secretariat is comfortable communicating publicly. This is an improvement over “ignoring bureaucratic preferences all together or simply assuming them *ex ante*,” which is typical in research on international secretariats.⁴⁰ Below, we outline what expressed preferences of the Secretariat—as well as of the Security Council—tell us about their views on peacekeeping.

3.3 *Similarity and Divergence in the Expressed Preferences*

When the Secretariat’s recommendations on peacekeeping correspond to the provisions of subsequent Security Council resolutions, it signals one of the following: consensus on the direction of peacekeeping; an anticipation of the Council’s reactions; or persuasion of the Council by the Secretariat. Differences emerge when the Secretariat misjudges the Council’s preferences; fails to convince the Council; or finds it necessary to declare an unpopular position. Adjudicating between these scenarios is a challenging task, given the general difficulties involved in measuring preferences. For example, preferences revealed to an interviewer can be subject to “justifications, embellishments, lies, or selective memories.”⁴¹ Several alternative approaches are possible, each with its advantages and disadvantages. Here, we opt for looking at the aggregate patterns of the expressed preferences on the assumption that, if all discrepancies between peacekeeping reports and resolutions were the result of the Secretariat’s inability to anticipate Council’s wishes, they would have been distributed evenly across all types of tasks. In contrast, a nonrandom distribution would suggest that the Secretariat chooses to emphasize

35 Knill et al. 2019.

36 Clark and Dolan 2021.

37 Allen and Yuen 2014; Weinlich 2014; Fröhlich and Williams 2018.

38 UN 2000, x.

39 UN 2015, 25.

40 Ege, Bauer, and Wagner 2020, 562.

41 King, Keohane, and Verba 1994, 112.

certain tasks over others. In light of the current literature dominated by case studies, a systematic overview of the divergences between the two bodies, across all missions where such analysis is feasible, is an important step in improving our understanding of institutional preferences in UN peacekeeping.

Each report and resolution is context-specific, and tasks that are appropriate in one situation may be counterproductive elsewhere. This is another reason for looking at peacekeeping mandates in the aggregate, which allows examining general patterns of the Secretariat–Security Council divergences as opposed to disagreements over a specific conflict that may be influenced by geopolitics or public opinion. The host government also tries to shape peacekeeping mandates,⁴² but it is reasonable to assume that it can lobby both the Secretariat and the Council, thus affecting reports and resolutions in equal measure.

In our analysis of the Secretariat's and the Security Council's expressed preferences, we looked at several patterns of behavior by the two bodies that are significant theoretically. First, we assessed whether the Council is more likely to drop suggested tasks or add tasks on its own initiative. If the Council drops many tasks or drops tasks without adding any, it signals the Secretariat's preference for more expansive mandates than the Council can accept. Second, we analyzed whether tasks over which the two bodies disagree are of a specific nature, classifying them into the categories of peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding. Disagreements over one of the categories mean that the Council and the Secretariat do not have the same views on how prominent it should be in contemporary multidimensional missions. Third, we investigated whether the Council reacted differently to suggestions concerning new as opposed to well-established tasks. If the Council tends to reject Secretariat-proposed tasks that have not appeared in previous mandates, it indicates that the Council seeks to maintain the initiative and shape peacekeeping's evolution, rather than allowing the Secretariat to play such a role. Fourth, we compared penholders in their propensity to follow the Secretariat's recommendations. If penholders react differently to the Secretariat's proposals, it suggests cleavages within the Council.

42 Yuen 2020.

4 Data

4.1 *Sample and Methodology*

To assess peacekeeping preference patterns, we created a dataset covering nineteen peacekeeping missions established between 1998, the year when the Security Council started to spell out all mandated tasks consistently,⁴³ and 2014, when the last peacekeeping mission was authorized at the time of this writing that met the criteria for inclusion in our sample.⁴⁴ This sample excluded political and civilian missions,⁴⁵ peacebuilding offices, and small cease-fire or border monitoring missions whose mandate is set out in a bilateral agreement between the parties.⁴⁶

For each of the missions, we gathered the full text of relevant Secretary-General's reports and Security Council resolutions from official electronic archives. The Secretariat's reports before the establishment of a new operation consist of two parts: the first part provides relevant background information and political analysis, while the second part offers recommendations regarding the size and mandate of the mission, frequently in the form of a list of tasks. Security Council resolutions have preambular paragraphs and operative paragraphs. Our data emerged from a comparison of the tasks recommended in the second part of the Secretariat's reports with those stipulated in the operative paragraphs of the corresponding Security Council resolution.⁴⁷

Since the Secretariat and the Security Council do not produce a joint text but two separate ones, the methods for studying formal agenda-setting processes, such as in the European Union (EU) institutions,⁴⁸ were not suitable in our case. Similarly, methods of quantitative content analysis, which are useful for

43 During the UN's early days, the Security Council delegated the responsibility for defining tasks and sizes of peacekeeping operations to the Secretariat. From 1998 onward, the Council has specified all tasks explicitly in its resolutions.

44 The UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) authorized in 2017 is a rule of law mission without a military component and, therefore, differs from other missions in the sample.

45 Civilian presences such as the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

46 Small border monitoring missions such as the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA).

47 Although mandates undergo substantial changes over the course of a mission, the Secretariat's reports recommending mandate alterations are not as specific about recommended tasks as reports issued before a new mission. It is unclear whether a task that the Secretariat does not mention before mandate extension is expected to be eliminated from the resolution or continue unchanged. For this reason, our analysis is restricted to initial mandates.

48 For example, Kreppel 1999; Kasak 2004.

understanding wide patterns in UN resolutions, did not provide sufficient granularity in our case,⁴⁹ since task categorization required us to capture subtleties in the language and exposition of UN resolutions and reports. We followed the practice of inductive category development in qualitative content analysis,⁵⁰ recording tasks of one peacekeeping mission, checking whether those tasks were present in the mandate of the next mission, and adding tasks that were not on the list.

Three clarifications regarding the coding deserve mentioning. First, we strived to attain a balance between wide and narrow task definitions. While widely defined categories risk lumping together disparate tasks, more fine-grained categories would have complicated cross-mission analysis and led to under- or overestimation of the differences between the Secretariat and the Council if the language was more or less precise but the intentions were the same.

Second, delineating tasks in peacekeeping mandates involved unavoidable generalizations. For example, the language on the protection of civilians varies greatly across resolutions. Some missions, such as UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), received a cautious mandate to afford protection to civilians under imminent threat of physical violence within the mission's capabilities and areas of deployment without prejudice to the responsibilities of the host government. In contrast, the UN Organization Stabilization Operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (MONUSCO) received a much stronger and more specific mandate to "ensure the effective protection of civilians," mentioning specific categories in need of attention.⁵¹ However, in our dataset, this task was recorded as "protecting civilians," with two variations: executive (the mission undertakes the task itself) and advisory (the mission advises the host government on how to protect civilians).

Third, we excluded provisions regulating missions' internal organization of work, such as providing HIV testing to peacekeepers, promoting gender equality within its ranks, or developing specific strategies, since the Security Council might not always find it necessary to mandate them explicitly.

Based on the task-level data, we carried out two further data operations. For every mission since 1998, we assessed whether the Security Council's resolution accepted tasks outlined in the Secretariat's report, dropped tasks, or added new tasks not recommended by the Secretariat. The resulting variables enabled us

49 For example, Baturo, Dasandi, and Mikhaylov 2017.

50 Mayring 2004.

51 UN Security Council 2010, 4.

to study patterns of change. We also categorized each task into larger groups, based on type, novelty, and penholder, according to definitions specified in the two following subsections.

4.2 *Patterns in UN Peacekeeping Mandates, 1998–2014*

Figure 1 exhibits data across the nineteen missions in our sample, outlining the scope of peacekeeping mandates recommended by the Secretariat and subsequent modifications by the Security Council.⁵² Since 1998, the Secretariat has recommended a total of 238 tasks be included in the mandates in our sample, with an average of 13.1 tasks per mission. Around this average, we observed significant variation over time. With a few exceptions, the general trend is one of expansion: the scope and specificity of peacekeeping mandates, as measured by the count of tasks, have increased over time. This increase was not linear. After recommending mandates with around five to ten tasks during the 1990s and early 2000s, with the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in 2003 the Secretariat moved to suggesting more elaborate and extensive mandates, typically including between twelve and twenty tasks.

Figure 2 also exhibits data on mandate changes, as expressed in the Security Council's acceptance or rejection of the Secretariat-recommended tasks. Of the 238 recommended tasks, the Council adopted 212 (89 percent). Seventeen of nineteen missions experienced some kind of modification. The Council rejected a total of twenty-six tasks (11 percent) and added twenty-four new tasks (equivalent to 11 percent). The Council thus dropped recommended tasks approximately as often as it added new ones.

Tasks varied in their probability of being modified by the Security Council. A few tasks, including electoral support, were never modified, whereas others were more contested. Support for early recovery is one example: of the nine instances where it was proposed by the Secretariat, the Security Council declined it four times, or in nearly half of the cases. Similarly, the Council rejected suggested tasks related to justice sector reform (three out of ten times) and natural resource management (two out of five times). The fact that the Secretariat insisted on tasks that had previously been dropped by the Council suggests that it expressed its preferences even when it could imagine they would not be endorsed. Conversely, the Council added certain tasks to the list suggested by the Secretariat more often than others. Examples were the protec-

⁵² Figure A1 in the Appendix presents accepted, added, and dropped tasks across all missions in our sample.

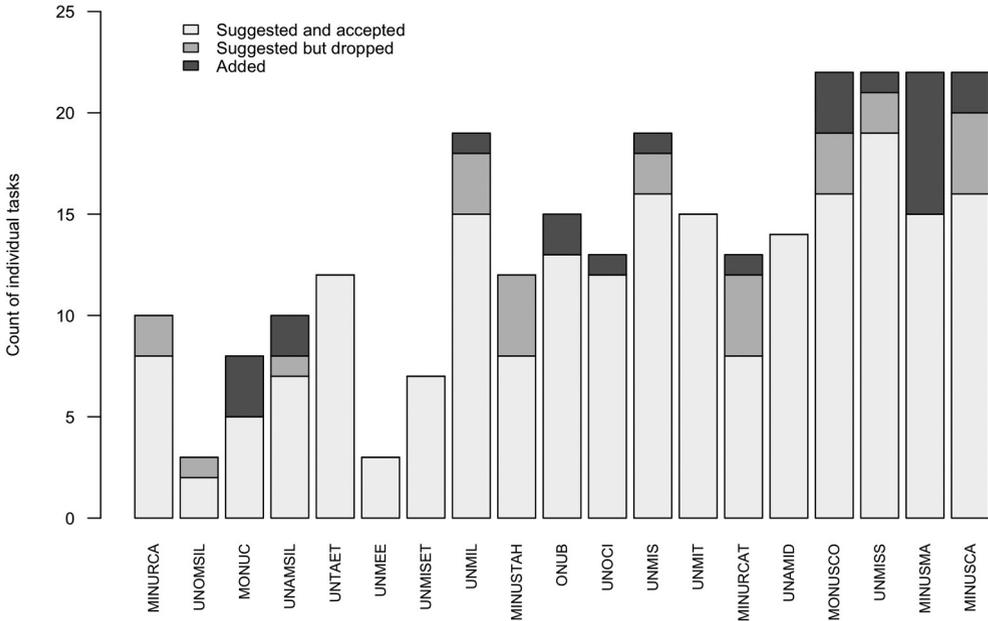


FIGURE 1 Scope of peacekeeping mandates, 1998–2014; tasks suggested by the Secretariat and subsequent modifications by the Security Council; missions organized chronologically

tion of civilians (added twice) and of women (added twice), as well as safety for refugees and their return (also added twice). These tasks entail a possibility of UN troops being called on to provide physical protection to (specific groups of) civilians, which might require the use of force, and the protection of civilians has been interpreted as necessitating robust operations against rebel groups in some context such as in the DRC. This finding supports the view of the Council as willing to expand peacekeeping in the direction of robust operations, while the Secretariat cautions against using the Blue Helmets as “SWAT teams in bad neighborhoods,” as discussed above.

Intriguingly, there were a few tasks on which the Security Council alternated between dropping them for one mission but adding them for another. For example, the task of assisting in the delivery of justice was removed from the suggested list in one instance (UNMIL), but added for two other missions: the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). It might reflect situation-specific analysis or the growing acceptance of this task by the Council over time.

To examine variation across different types of tasks, we categorized tasks into *peacemaking*, *peacekeeping*, or *peacebuilding*, relying on the UN defini-

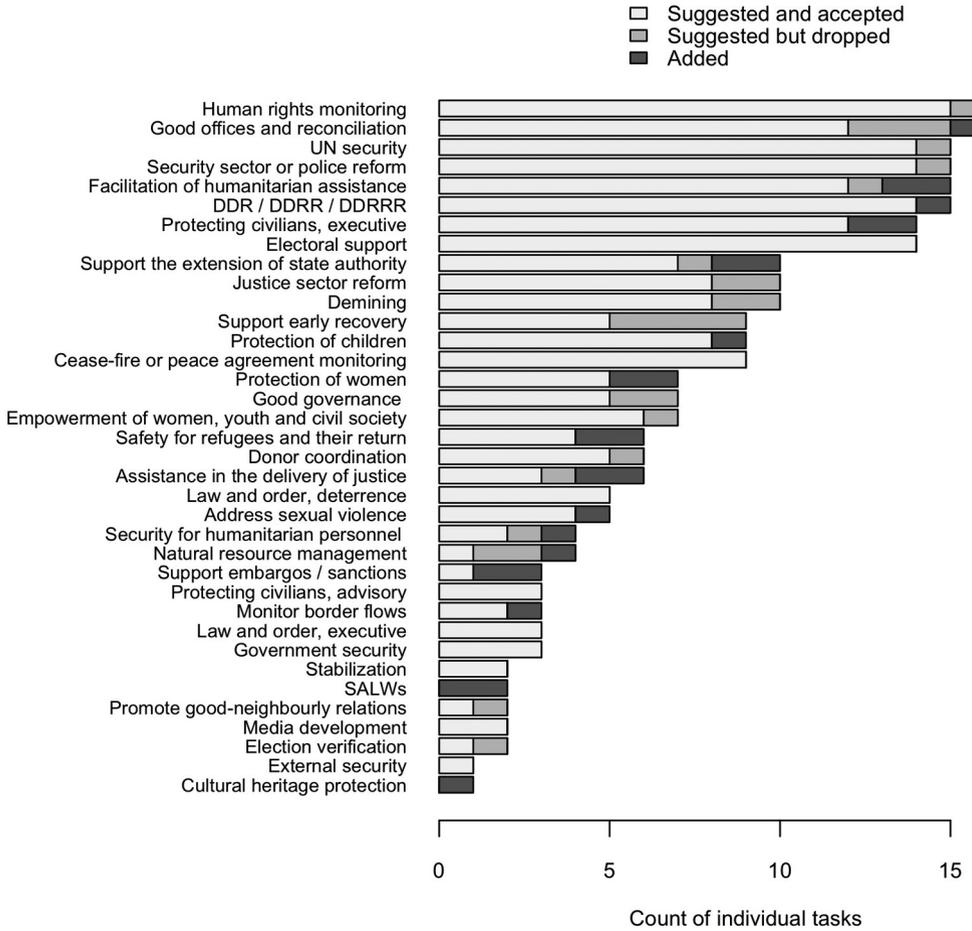


FIGURE 2 Tasks specified in UN peacekeeping mandates, 1998–2014

tions of these core functions. *Peacemaking* seeks to address conflicts in progress and bring hostile parties to an agreement, for example, via good offices or mediation; *peacekeeping* seeks to preserve peace and assist in implementing agreements; and *peacebuilding* aims to improve structural conditions for long-term peace (see Figure A1 for the categorization).⁵³ Whereas peacebuilding

53 UN 1992. While most tasks fit into one of these categories, some tasks—such as the extension of state authority—could be reasonably categorized as, for example, both peacekeeping and peacebuilding. In these cases, we categorized tasks based on the dominant orientation. We categorized a task as peacekeeping if the task does not aim to transform host

represented 41 percent of all tasks in the 1990s, its share grew to 50 percent in the 2000s and to 52 percent by the 2010s. Over the same period, the share of peacekeeping tasks shrunk from 50 percent to 38 percent. This reflects the reorientation of peacekeeping away from its conventional core and to multidimensional, complex operations with wider mandates.

To summarize, we identified three major patterns in the descriptive data. To begin with, our data clearly demonstrate the expansion of UN peacekeeping, from mandates narrowly focused on peacekeeping to more extensive mandates that incorporate a greater number of peacebuilding tasks. Next, the fact that the Security Council adopted 89 percent of the tasks recommended by the Secretariat demonstrates that significant portions of the task portfolios from the Secretary-General's reports survived into the adopted resolutions. Finally, while there is considerable overlap between the two bodies, our data point to islands of contestation and diverging preferences, further examined in the next section.

4.3 *The Nature of the Secretariat–Security Council Disagreements*

We examined instances of overlap and divergence between the Secretariat's and the Security Council's preferred task sets, focusing specifically on the propensity of the Council to accept or drop tasks proposed by the Secretariat, as well as add tasks of its own. With this focus, we examined variation across three dimensions of theoretical interest: the *type* of task, the *novelty* of task, and the *penholder*.

Turning first to the *type*, Figure 3 summarizes the proportion of tasks accepted, dropped, or added in each of the three categories of peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding. With regard to peacekeeping tasks, there was less disagreement between the Secretariat and the Security Council. Only 6 percent of such tasks suggested by the Secretariat were dropped by the Council, pointing to a considerable alignment regarding the nature of conventional peacekeeping. Peacemaking tasks are the most likely to be adjusted by the Council, with 14 percent of suggested tasks dropped and a further 14 percent added. The combination of a low baseline (only twenty-two tasks in total) and a high likelihood of revisions suggests that peacemaking is not seen as the key element of UN peacekeeping and that the Secretariat and the Council view it differently. This may reflect political dilemmas inherent to the good offices

country's society or politics (the authority that is extended can still lack legitimacy or inclusiveness), which makes it different from peacebuilding.

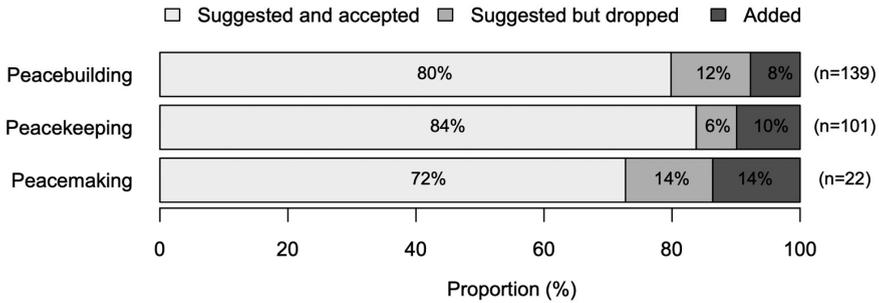


FIGURE 3 Accepted and amended tasks, by category

role.⁵⁴ Peacemaking might require the UN to engage with host country elites with questionable human rights records.⁵⁵

The Security Council appears to be wary of peacebuilding tasks. In the studied period, the Council was twice as likely (12 percent) to drop a suggested peacebuilding task than a suggested peacekeeping task (6 percent). Peacebuilding tasks were also the least likely to be added by the Council. The Council's greater caution about peacebuilding, as compared with conventional peacekeeping, may reflect its hesitance to expand the UN's remit, extend mission duration, and incur costs. Many peacebuilding tasks require the UN to remain engaged for a considerable time in the host country. The Secretariat's tendency to recommend peacebuilding tasks might be an expression of its policy interests (based on the belief that peacebuilding is the best way to support sustainable peace) or institutional interests (based on the anticipation that peacebuilding could translate into greater responsibilities and more funding), or a combination of the two.

With regard to the *novelty* of a task, we analyzed how a proposed task's inclusion in a previous mandate affected its chances of approval. This allowed us to determine whether or not precedent and “previously agreed language,” which the Security Council is expected to value,⁵⁶ facilitated tasks' acceptance, as well as whether the Council was willing to cede the initiative to the Secretariat in terms of orienting peacekeeping into new areas. Figure 4 summarizes our data, disaggregating acceptance and modification across “old” tasks (those that had appeared in previous mandates) and “new” tasks (those that had never before appeared in a mandate). Of the twenty-six new tasks proposed by the Secretariat, 77 percent (twenty) were accepted by the Council. Of the 192 old tasks

54 Engell and Jacobsen 2019.

55 von Billerbeck and Tansey 2019.

56 Giffkins 2016.

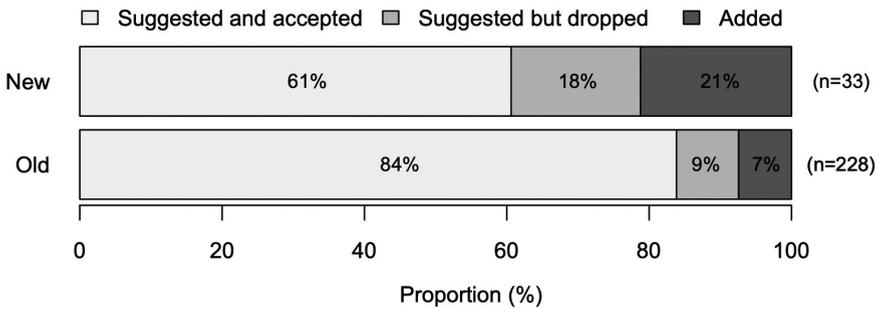


FIGURE 4 Accepted and amended tasks, by novelty

proposed, 92 percent (196) were accepted. In other words, the Council was considerably less resistant to tasks that had been included in previous mandates.

However, when it came to adding new tasks on its own initiative, the Security Council was not particularly restrictive. Of the twenty-four tasks added by the Council, nearly a third (29 percent) were new tasks. Together, these data suggest that the Council is not necessarily opposed to the expansion of peacekeeping's functions, but prefers to control the direction of its evolution.

Finally, we examined whether the acceptance of the Secretariat's recommendations depended on the Security Council member(s) that "held the pen," or led the negotiations, on a particular mission. Figure 5 illustrates the proportion of accepted and modified tasks across different penholders. The United States and France were the most active penholders, responsible for more than two-thirds of all resolutions, so we grouped the rest of the penholders into the "other" category. The data show that the United States and France were considerably more likely to modify mandates suggested by the Secretariat as compared with the other penholders. This might mean that smaller powers and collective penholders invest more effort into prenegotiations with the Secretariat, or that the Secretariat plays an important coordinating role in those cases. We also note that the United States (which is responsible for 27.89 percent of peacekeeping expenses) was more likely to drop suggested tasks than France (which pays 5.61 percent). The United States was also less likely to add tasks without the Secretariat's prompting. While we cannot be entirely certain about how the negotiating dynamic within the Council unfolds in each case, or how the United States' preferences change across different administrations, these aggregate patterns suggest that the United States appears to be cost-sensitive when it comes to peacekeeping, which is in line with existing qualitative evidence.⁵⁷

57 Williams 2020.

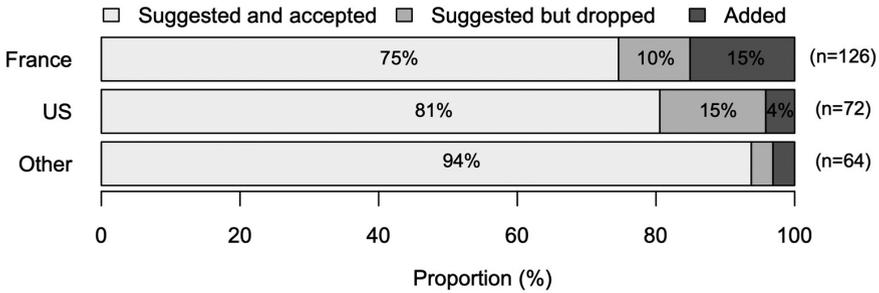


FIGURE 5 Accepted and amended tasks, by penholder

Taken together, these patterns suggest several implications for our understanding of the relationship between the Security Council and the Secretariat. First, the fact that the greatest consensus has formed around peacekeeping tasks suggests that the Council and the Secretariat are most likely to find common ground around organizational tasks that are well established and uncontroversial. By contrast, peacemaking tasks, which present political dilemmas, are most likely to be a source of divergences. With regard to tasks that might involve the use of force, such as the protection of civilians and vulnerable groups, the Secretariat has expressed greater caution than the Council. The Council's reluctance to assign peacebuilding tasks without the Secretariat's prompting, or the greater likelihood of dropping them, points to its attention to their resource implications. In turn, the Secretariat's preference for peacebuilding could stem from its policy or institutional interests, or a combination of the two. However, while remaining wary of new tasks proposed by the Secretariat, the Council has been willing to introduce new tasks itself.

This suggests that the Security Council and the Secretariat largely behave in ways that are expected from intergovernmental bodies and international bureaucracies: the former is wary of the latter's expansionary tendencies, but not necessarily opposed to the growth of IOs' portfolio of responsibilities if it can direct the evolution itself. In terms of the peacekeeping literature's expectations, the Secretariat can be entrepreneurial with regard to certain categories of tasks (e.g., peacebuilding), but also cautious toward other tasks. The Council appears to be enthusiastic about tasks that might entail the use of force while expressing reservations about those with significant cost implications. Finally, the Council's suspicion of new tasks when they were proposed by the Secretariat, coupled with the propensity to add new tasks itself, suggests that the Council has been the main body responsible for the shape of UN peacekeeping in its contemporary form.

5 Conclusions

UN peacekeeping mandates have grown in complexity since the end of the Cold War. We have analyzed the views expressed by the two principal UN organs, the Secretariat and the Security Council, on peacekeeping's evolution between 1998 and 2014. The Secretariat, which makes recommendations on peacekeeping that can be taken up or disregarded by the Council, expressed preferences over tasks that should be included in peacekeeping mandates that sometimes differed from those supported by the Council. The Council was particularly suspicious of peacebuilding tasks and more likely to drop tasks proposed by the Secretariat if they had not appeared in previous mandates. Yet it added new tasks itself, suggesting it is not invariably opposed to peacekeeping expansion. The Secretariat did not push for mandates with more tasks than the Council was ready to accept: the number of tasks added and dropped by the Council was roughly the same. The Secretariat and the Council were least likely to disagree over peacekeeping tasks. Both of them promoted peacemaking tasks, but of a different nature. The Council was particularly suspicious of peacebuilding tasks. Among the penholders, the United States was most likely to drop Secretariat-suggested tasks and least likely to add tasks on its own initiative.

These findings suggest several implications for the literature on IO evolution. First, while secretariats are often assumed to be cautious and conservative, their behavior depends on the nature of innovations. Those that are likely to lead to organizational success or expansion (or ideally both) often enjoy the support of IO officials.

Second, member states are eager to steer IO evolution, even if it entails an expansion of the organization's task set. With UN peacekeeping operations, which are temporary organizations, the addition of new tasks poses a smaller risk of creating lasting institutional effects as compared with expanding responsibilities of the regular Secretariat departments. This gives the Security Council more space to experiment with different peacekeeping approaches. Still, the Council is aware of the cost implications of different types of peacekeeping activities.

Third, the engagement between intergovernmental bodies and secretariats depends on the member state that leads on a particular portfolio. During peacekeeping mandate negotiations, smaller powers and collective penholders were far less likely to modify Secretariat-proposed tasks than the most active penholders, France and the United States. Although the case of UN peacekeeping is unique in many ways,⁵⁸ it adds to our knowledge of how different types of

58 The ease with which the Security Council can disregard the Secretariat's recommenda-

secretariats and intergovernmental bodies express their preferences over organizational evolution.

As the first study of systematic patterns in the Secretariat’s and Security Council’s expressed preferences over peacekeeping, this article opens several avenues for further research. First, it demonstrates the utility of collecting disaggregated data on peacekeeping mandates, a line of research that has also resulted in a dataset of peacekeeping mandates, including pre-1998 missions.⁵⁹ Second, our data can be used as a starting point for qualitative analyses of peacekeeping mandate negotiations examining how a specific round of talks unfolded, including the positions of the Secretariat and various types of Member States, such as the penholder, other Council members, the host government, and troop-contributing countries. This would allow assessing the drivers behind the frequent alignment in expressed preferences between the Secretariat and the Council, which might be the result of policy paradigms of “what works in peacekeeping” shared by Member States and UN officials.⁶⁰ Third, studies should look into how the Secretariat develops its recommendations on the basis of information from assessment missions, other parts of the UN system, and open sources. The Secretariat might pressure predeployment assessment missions to adjust their recommendation not to displease the Council,⁶¹ which impedes information collection and analysis. Fourth, while this study has looked at the peacekeeping mandate design process, researchers should also assess the dynamics between the Secretariat and the Council at the implementation, reporting, and performance evaluation stages.⁶²

Finally, our findings suggest two implications for policy. While it is conventional to blame the Secretariat for the expansion of peacekeeping, the Security Council should accept responsibility for its role in the process. Shifting the blame can undermine the Secretariat’s morale, complicate the relationship between the two bodies, and allow governments to evade responsibility

tions stands in contrast to the EU, where the institutions work on a joint text. Member States’ penholdership also makes the UN different from the African Union (AU), where the AU Commission has informal drafting responsibilities (Hardt 2016).

59 Di Salvatore et al. 2020.

60 For an application of this concept to UN peacekeeping, see Coleman, Lundgren, and Oksamytna 2020.

61 Salton 2017.

62 For example, a dataset of activities listed in the Secretary-General’s reports on peacekeeping operations that followed, rather than preceded, their deployment has been used to investigate the conditions under which peacekeeping missions implement their mandates. Blair, Di Salvatore, and Smidt 2020.

for the design of interventions. Second, if the high level of agreement between the Secretariat and the Council is due to UN officials' inability to be forthcoming, it can prevent the Council from receiving vital information necessary for crafting effective mandates. The Secretariat has acquired significant expertise in peacekeeping over the past three decades and has an interest in promoting peace. The Council should make better use of this expertise and commitment.

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Appendix

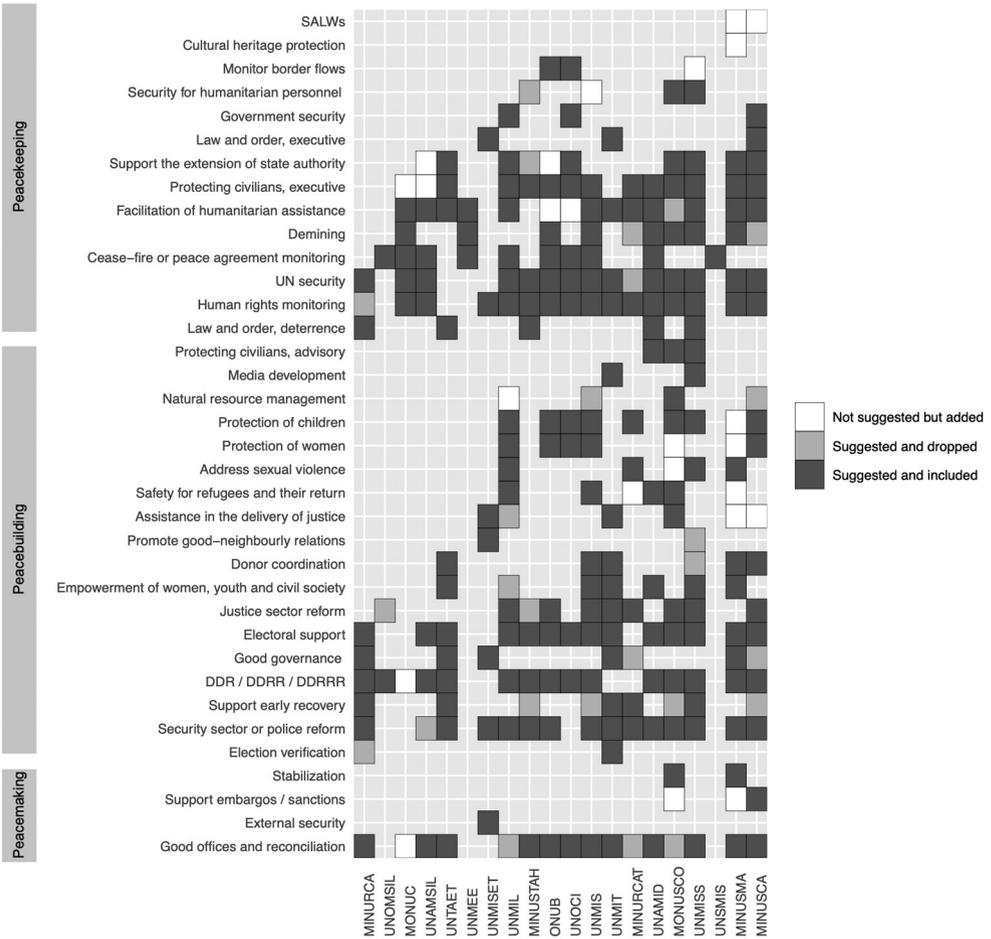


FIGURE A1 Agreed, dropped, and added tasks across missions