STANDING FOR PEACE: A MODEL FOR UN RAPID RESPONSE

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INTRODUCTION

During the Cold War, peacekeeping served largely to prevent interstate conflict from escalating to the direct involvement of the world's bipolar powers, the United States and the Soviet Union.[1] With the collapse of the Soviet Union, this structure ended, and a new type of conflict rose to prominence. The world witnessed a rapid rise in intrastate conflict particularly in Africa, along ethnic, nationalist, and religious fault lines, often exacerbated by competition for natural resources. Peacekeeping missions were ill-equipped to respond to the resulting extensive violence against civilians, most starkly illustrated by the impotence of the world to prevent the Rwandan genocide of 1994. Such tragedies prompted an evolution in peacekeeping with a new focus on human security.[2] They also prompted more "serious thought to the idea of a rapid reaction force,"[3] as declared by UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, that would enable the UN Security Council to reduce global response timelines to conflict and save lives.

A challenging undertaking for even modernized militaries, robust and credible response forces require political will, well-trained and equipped forces, agile strategic lift capability, and secure logistical lines of communications. As identified in multiple reports such as the Agenda for Peace in 1992[4] and the Panel on UN Peace Operations in 2000 (Brahimi Report)[5], rapid deployment has been a long-standing limitation of UN peacekeeping. Despite the General Assembly's endorsement of "a requirement to be able to establish a…complex mission within 90 days…[with the] mission headquarters…fully installed and functioning within 15 days"[6] of a UNSC Resolution, UN officials have acknowledged "the process of planning, mounting, and deploying a new operation can take on average, from 6 to 12 months."[7] The 2015 Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) concluded that 70 years after the first UN Secretary-General proposed a standing capacity, no significant progress had been made.[8] Global

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[1] Bellamy, Alex J. and Paul Williams. *Understanding Peacekeeping*. 3rd ed. Cambridge, UK;Malden, MA;: Polity, 2021.

[2] Human Security is an approach to international security that prioritizes the individual as the referent object rather than the state.

[3] "Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization. Supplement to an Agenda for Peace: Position Paper of the Secretary-General on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations." *International Peacekeeping* (London, England) 2, no. 2 (1995): 263.
https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/168325/files/A_50_60_S_1995_1-EN.pdf.

[4] Boutros-Ghali, Boutros. "An agenda for peace: Preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping." *International Relations* 11, no. 3 (1992), 210.

[5] Brahimi, Lakhdar and United Nations. Panel on United Nations Peace Operations. *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*. (New York: United Nations, 2000), 14.

[6] United Nations. *Handbook on United Nations Multidimensional Peacekeeping Operations*. Department of Peacekeeping Operations (New York: United Nations, 2003), 66.
https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/peacekeeping-handbook_un_dec2003_0.pdf.

[7] United Nations, Department of Field Support, *Global Field Support Strategy*, UN Doc. A/64/633, (January 26, 2010), para 10.

[8] United Nations Secretary-General. *Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) on uniting our strengths for peace: Politics, partnership and people,* UN Doc. A/70/95-

reluctance to commit resources in a competitive security space is one cause of this lack of capacity. Despite the introduction of initiatives such as the Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System (PCRS) in 2015, rapid deployment "continues to be one of the most vexing operational challenges for UN peacekeeping."[9]

Africa bears the worst consequences of this failure. Six of the UN's 12 current missions occur on the continent.[10] Africans from multiple nations have suffered because of delays in the world's response to crises. A recent example is the six-month timeframe it took the United Nations to reinforce and transition the African Union (AU) mission in the Central African Republic after UN Security Council Resolution 2149 (2014).[11] Delays cost lives.

Accordingly, the AU has gained momentum in taking on a greater share of the burden of African peacekeeping. Given the UN's acknowledgement of the increasing significance of regional partnerships, the UN peacekeeping model must adapt and devise a new peace and security architecture for the continent. The UN should further leverage the emerging experience and capabilities of African regional organizations while recognizing its own limitations in modern peace enforcement. As noted by the HIPPO, "with its partners, the UN must overcome constraints to rapid deployment in response to crises. A more strategic force generation approach must be supported by political efforts."[12] Although other potential partnerships with standby arrangements such as the European Union Battlegroups and NATO Response Force exist, this paper will focus on collaboration between the UN and the African Union.

Arguments for both an international standing force and improvements to standby mechanisms for rapid response to human security crises are well documented.[13] A recent iteration is the brigade-sized standby UN Vanguard Capability proposed in 2015 by the HIPPO. This paper will contend that reliance on pledges that compete for scarce security resources required to field a reactive and credible peacekeeping force is an unreliable rapid response strategy. The UN should instead focus on the establishment of an operational-level UN Standing High Readiness Headquarters (SHQ) and leverage growing African standby arrangements to respond to crises in Africa. This organization would serve to provide planning and initial leadership of UNSC Chapter VII missions or

S/2015/446. (June 17, 2015), 13. https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/181/45/PDF/N1518145.pdf?OpenElement.

[9] United Nations, Department of Peace Operations. *Current and Emerging Uniformed Capability Requirements for United Nations Peacekeeping*. (New York, United Nations, 2019). https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/uniformed-capability-requirements-un-peacekeeping_may-2019.pdf.

[10] "Peacekeeping Operations," United Nations Peacekeeping, accessed 10 April, 2023, https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/data.

[11] "Peacekeepers Greenlighted for CAR, but Mission Will Take Months," Relief Web, accessed 14 April 2023, https://reliefweb.int/report/central-african-republic/peacekeepers-greenlighted-car-mission-will-take-months.

[12] United Nations. HIPPO, 25.

[13] Reykers, Yf and Karlsrud, John. "Multinational Rapid Response Mechanisms: Past Promises and Future Prospects." *Contemporary Security Policy* 38, no. 3 (2017): 420 – 426.

Chapter VIII missions executed by the African Union.[14] This would capitalize on the UN's strengths and augment limitations in the AU peace construct. The size, command scope and operational mechanics of this unit are beyond the scope of this paper. The aim is to demonstrate how the model would serve to reduce UN response timeframes, narrow the gap between troop contributors and financial contributors to peacekeeping, increase the efficacy of regional organizations like the AU, and enable more efficient employment of global peacekeeping resources.

UN RESPONSE MECHANISMS

The UN has attempted to address longstanding limitations to peacekeeping responsiveness through various mechanisms over time. Created in 1995, the UN Standby Arrangement System (UNSAS) was the framework for organizing trained and equipped uniformed forces for peacekeeping operations. The system was intended to create a pre-selected pool of military and police from member states, available to quickly respond from standby status in their home nations to calls from the Department of Peace Operations (DPO).[15] "They took the form of listings that helped [DPO] to plan once a resolution creating a peacekeeping operation had been adopted. But there was no guarantee of any sort attached to the various pledges made by member states."[16] Although the system saw multiple revisions during its use, it was ultimately a non-binding, conditional arrangement contingent upon voluntary contributions from member states. The final decision to deploy pledged resources remained with the member state.[17] The system also had limited mechanisms to measure the performance of Troop/Police-Contributing Countries (TCC/PCCs) and struggled to provide an accurate picture of the capabilities of TCC/PCCs. Thus, "UNSAS never met its envisaged purposes—neither as a planning nor as a rapid deployment tool."[18]

In response, the Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System (PCRS) was created in 2015 to "establish a predictable, efficient and dynamic process…for ensuring readiness and timely deployment of quality peacekeeping capabilities."[19] Managed by the newly formed Strategic Force Generation and Capability Planning Cell (SFGCPC) within DPO,

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[14] Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations sets out the UN Security Council's powers to maintain peace. Chapter VIII provides the constitutional basis for the involvement of regional organizations in the maintenance of international peace and security for which the Security Council is primarily responsible.
[15] As part of restructuring the UN's peace and security architecture, the DPKO was renamed the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) in 2019. For continuity, this paper will use DPO, even for historical instances.
[16] Koops, Joachim A. and Alexandra Novosseloff. "United Nations Rapid Reaction Mechanisms: Toward a Global Force on Standby?" *Contemporary Security Policy* 38, no. 3 (2017): 430, DOI: 10.1080/13523260.2017.1350815
[17] United Nations, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, *United Nations Stand-By Arrangements System Military Handbook*, Edition 2003 (New York: United Nations, 2003), 4.
[18] Smith, A and Boutellis, A, "Rethinking Force Generation: Filling the Capability Gaps in UN Peacekeeping," *Providing for Peacekeeping* No. 2, (May 2013), 3. https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/ipi_rpt_rethinking_force_gen.pdf
[19] United Nations, "Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System (PCRS)," last modified 1 January 2021, 9. https://pcrs.un.org/Lists/Announcements/Attachments/17/2019.01%20Peacekeeping%20Capability%20Readiness%20System_Guidelines.pdf?Mobile=1.

the new system is intended to improve the management and oversight of pledged forces. It categorizes pledged units into four readiness levels, from Level One, registering a capability in the system, to Level Four, the Rapid Deployment Level (RDL). In theory, "a unit at the RDL is ready for deployment to any UN field mission within 60 days of a formal invitation from the Secretariat."[20] Elevation from levels one to three is authorized by the UN Secretariat based on an analysis of "operational requirements in field missions, geographical diversity, a Member State's historical performance record, language, level of female participation, and availability of Secretariat human and financial resources."[21] Not until consideration for elevation to the RDL does the DPO conduct Verification Visits to validate that major equipment tables, mobilization plans and pre-deployment training requirements are met. For units accepted at the RDL level, the UN provides reimbursement to the TCC/PCC "to help defray a portion of the costs of maintaining equipment for units in the RDL and support their ability to meet the 60 days readiness to start the deployment."[22]

Although the PCRS improved the DPO's overall awareness of the state of pledged capabilities, significant issues remain in the goal of reducing UN response times. The 2023 Study into Delays into the Deployment to TCC/PCC – Deployment Timelines Project identified cross-cutting themes that still inhibit responsiveness. Issues such as the "lack of TCC pledges for specialized units", "[the inability of] some member states…to pledge for RDL due to national regulations," as well as political issues and host country delays caused by "re-hatting AU to UN" are all friction points in the UN's attempt to maintain its own sufficient standby forces.[23] In a critique of the UNSAS, Secretary-General Kofi Annan noted the system created "arrangements with Member States; [however,] the availability of the designated forces is unpredictable and very few are in a state of high readiness. Resource constraints preclude us even from being able to deploy a mission headquarters rapidly."[24] Although improved, the PCRS shares similar constraints. Without a standing force, the UN response system still relies on what Kofi Annan once described as "last minute, ad hoc arrangements that guarantee delay."[25]

MULTINATIONAL STANDBY HIGH READINESS BRIGADE (SHIRBRIG)

Following calls in the 1995 Supplement of the Agenda for Peace for a UN "strategic reserve for deployment when there was an emergency need for peacekeeping

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[20] United Nations, "PCRS," 4.

[21] United Nations, PCRS, 6.

[22] United Nations, 2023 COE Working Group, *Expansion of the Rapid Deployment Level of the Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System*, Secretariat Issue Paper #34, (2023), 1. https://operationalsupport.un.org/sites/default/files/secretariat_issue_paper_34_-_expansion_of_the_rdl_of_the_pcrs.pdf.

[23] United Nations, 2023 COE Working Group, *Study Into Delays in the Deployment of T/PCC – Deployment Timelines Project*, Secretariat Issue Paper #34, (2023), 3. https://operationalsupport.un.org/sites/default/files/secretariat_issue_paper_5_-_mandated_study_-_study_into_delays_in_the_deployment_of_t-ppcs_-_timelines_project.pdf.

[24] United Nations, Secretary-General Kofi Annan, *We The Peoples: The Role Of The United Nations In The 21st Century* (New York: United Nations, 2000), para. 224–225, p. 37.

[25] Annan, *We The Peoples*, 7.

troops,"[26] SHIRBRIG was an initiative led by The Netherlands, Denmark, and Canada, among other nations. Created in 1996, the proposed 4000 – 5000 strong Brigade was a potential solution to the UN's "often torpid response"[27] to the human security issues of the post-Cold War era. An ambitious undertaking, upon the issuance of a UNSC mandate, SHIRBRIG was to be able to deploy within 15 – 30 days. The unit's aim was to "provide the UN with a reliable, readily available and rapidly deployable military means for guaranteeing and swiftly restoring international peace and security."[28]

Although the concept demonstrated some noteworthy successes, it ultimately failed to meet even the lower thresholds of its envisioned size and swiftness of deployment. The standby brigade supported five UN peacekeeping missions but deployed as a brigade only once. It sent 1300 troops on the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) within two months of UNSC Resolution 1320 in 2000.[29] Although a landmark event, SHIRBRIG failed to meet deployment expectations and subsequent years saw a decrease in the willingness of member states to contribute. Despite troop generation issues, the unit found some success after its transformation to a rapidly deployable core headquarters. It enabled the quick establishment of integrated mission headquarters in both Liberia and South Sudan.[30]

Unfortunately, in addition to diminishing political will from member states, SHIRBRIG also faced other internal and external challenges. The organization lacked a direct link to DPO, which created an internal rivalry with the UN body charged with the oversight of peacekeeping. By design, the brigade excluded Security Council Permanent Members and stronger powers. This was an attempt to avoid the excessive influence of dominant states, but also led to a dearth of lead nations "that could shoulder heavy financial and material burdens."[31] Resource rivalries with other regional standing arrangements also created inter-organizational competition. This was the unit's primary disadvantage. The organization was eventually reduced to a planning unit. Even in this configuration, however, it was able to meaningfully contribute, mainly through capacity-building efforts at the request of the AU for the African Standby Force (ASF) system.[32] Ultimately SHIRBRIG's inability to rapidly deploy a full brigade meant it did not

[26] United Nations, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace: Position Paper of the Secretary-General on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the organization*, (New York: United Nations, January, 3, 1995), UN document A/50/60–S/1995/1, para. 44.

[27] Canada. Dept. of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and Canada. Dept. of National Defence. Towards a Rapid Reaction Capability for the United Nations: Report of the Government of Canada. Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1995.

[28] United Nations, *SHIRBRIG Lessons Learned Report,* (New York: United Nations, 2009), 2. https://www.cryptomuseum.com/crypto/hagelin/hc3300/files/SHIRBRIG.pdf

[29] Koops, J. A. and Varwick, J. "Ten years of SHIRBRIG: Lessons learned, development prospects and strategic opportunities for Germany." *Global Public Policy Institute*, (2008). https://www.gppi.net/media/Koops_Varwick_2008_Ten_Years.pdf

[30] United Nations, "SHIRBRIG Lessons Learned," 21.

[31] Koops, J.A. and Novosseloff, A, "United Nations Rapid Reaction Mechanisms: From SHIRBRIG to a UN Vanguard Force." *In Multinational Rapid Response Mechanisms*, (2019), 83.

[32] United Nations, "SHIRBRIG Lessons Learned," 21.

exercise its primary function. Although significant advancements were made in the expansion of the capabilities of regional organizations, the unit was dissolved in 2009.

AFRICAN SOLUTIONS

An emerging space for an increased role of regional organizations in the global peace and security architecture has developed in the past twenty years, especially in Africa. Prior to this period, based on the principles of objectivity and impartiality, "UN peacekeeping missions were often considered as the only viable and legitimate actor in managing conflicts."[33] A rebalancing of decision-making influence in international peacekeeping has occurred. Stalemates in the Security Council, such as the inability of the Permanent Members to authorize a UN intervention in Kosovo in 1999, as well as a rise in the capabilities of the global south have created this space.

The involvement of regional organizations can now reinforce the concept of legitimacy. This was demonstrated in 2006 when Sudan insisted on a joint mission involving the AU in Darfur.[34] A manifestation of this rebalancing, African nations now contribute 45% of the UN's approximately 76 000 military peacekeepers.[35] The AU has conducted multiple deployments on its own in support of "Silencing the Guns"[36] across the continent. Although significant limitations still exist, African solutions to African problems have matured to the point where "the UN can no longer deploy peace operations of its own in Africa, without at least close consultations with the AU and sub-regional bodies."[37]

The conditions of modern intrastate conflict contribute to this trend. Modern peacekeeping missions occur in "inhospitable, remote and dangerous environments where they face an unprecedented scale of challenges especially when protecting civilians, under asymmetric threats."[38] The UN peacekeeping model is often hard-pressed to address these mounting challenges. "UN peacekeeping missions are structurally ill-equipped and politically ill-suited to use force effectively in support of strategic objectives."[39]

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[33] de Coning, Cedric and Mateja Peter. "UN Peace Operations: Adapting to a New Global Order?" in *United Nations Peace Operations in a Changing Global Order*, (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing AG, 2018), 3.

[34] "Sudan Rejects UN Peacekeeping Plan," Burkeman, O, and Rice, R, The Guardian, last modified September 1, 2006, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/sep/01/sudan.oliverburkeman.

[35] "Troop and Police Contributors," United Nations, Department of Peace Operations, accessed 5 April 2023. https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors.

[36] Check, N.A and Puleng, H, "Evaluation of Silencing the Guns in Africa: Issues, Challenges, and Future Prospects." *African Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies* 10, no. 3 (2021), 78.

[37] de Coning, Cedric and Mateja, Peter. "Africa and UN Peace Operations: Implications for the Future Role of Regional Organisations." in *United Nations Peace Operations in a Changing Global Order*. (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing AG, 2018), 238.

[38] United Nations, "Military."

[39] de Coning, Cedric and Mateja Peter, "What are the Limits to the use of Force in UN Peacekeeping?" in *United Nations Peace Operations in a Changing Global Order, (*Switzerland: Springer International Publishing AG, 2018), 127.

Aggression perpetrated against civilian populations by non-state actors, violent extremist organizations, and transnational criminal threats all strain UN enforcement mechanisms, which are largely tied to state actors and the political will of outside international contributors. Many member states are often unwilling to assume elevated risk to their personnel. This has been demonstrated in multiple conflicts such as the inability of the UN Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) to counter violent militias in Eastern DRC. UN inertia led to the deployment of the Force Intervention Brigade, comprised entirely of TCCs from the South African Development Community to address the kinetic nature of the problem. While debate exists regarding the efficacy of the Brigade, the African regional organization force, subsumed into the UN mission, was able to conduct offensive operations rarely seen in peace enforcement.

Ad hoc, regional alliances such as the Multinational Joint Task Force, formed to fight the terrorist group Boko Haram in the Lake Chad basin in 2012, and the G-5 Sahel Force, which conducts counter-terrorism operations in Western Africa, are examples of African nations filling a peace enforcement void. Valid concerns regarding the effectiveness of these bodies exist; however, regional organizations are increasingly seen as "viable providers of security."[40] Representing the societies directly affected by conflict, AU and sub-regional organizations have shown to be more willing and sometimes more capable of addressing kinetic threats.[41] A serious concern with regional partnerships, however, is the "longstanding, if unwritten, principle that UN peacekeeping missions should seek to avoid deployment of troops…from neighbours"[42] in order to avoid the potential for countries to pursue national interests in border states. Regardless, given the growing proportion of African peacekeepers, the UN now needs the AU. The African Union, however, is not able to maintain regional security on its own. The AU needs the UN.

Although African organizations have assumed greater responsibility for regional security, significant challenges limit the AU's independence. Much like the UN, the AU is often crippled by a lack of political will, best exampled by the continued delays in the operationalization of the African Standby Force. This entity, envisioned in 2003 to consist of a Regional Standby Brigade in each of the five Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms (REC/RMs), has faced significant delays in actualization.[43] "The lack of concerted political buy-in from relevant regional blocs and

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[40] Dobbins, James et al. "How African Institutions Help Keep the Peace," Rand Online. Accessed 5 April 2023, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB10078.html, 3.
[41] Dobbins, "African Institutions," 3.
[42] Williams, Paul D., and Thong Nguyen. "Neighborhood Dynamics in UN Peacekeeping Operations, 1990–2017." *IPI Providing for Peacekeeping* 16 (2018), 1. https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/IPI-Rpt_Neighborhood-Dynamics.pdf.
[43] "Update on Operationalization of the African Standby Force (ASF)," Insights on the Peace and Security Council, last modified March 10, 2022, https://amaniafrica-et.org/update-on-operationalization-of-the-african-standby-force-asf/.

the lack of predictable resources, including adequate financing, have been the two main hindrances to the deployment of the ASF."[44]

Consequently, ad hoc coalitions have been a more frequent form of crisis response. A noted concern with these arrangements is the command and control of the forces. The ASF's Command, Control, Communication, and Information System for example was described as "not yet operational" as recently as 2018 in a European Union audit of the African Peace and Security Architecture.[45] An additional limitation is the integration of AU missions into a greater peacebuilding architecture. AU or REC missions generally lack a robust civilian component providing a broad set of peace-building good offices.[46] The missions tend to focus on security tasks and can fail to address political root causes that feed modern conflict.[47] Mitigations to this capability gap are increasing over time, such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). In spite of this "crucial program of the AU in tackling socio-economic and political factors that contribute to conflict and instability,"[48] the AU has yet to reach the level of peacebuilding actor integration of the UN. The AU has also demonstrated that it is "willing and able to undertake stabilization and counter-terrorism operations, but it lacks the broad sets of capacities necessary to implement comprehensive peace agreements."[49]

Critically, these missions also face serious challenges in the realm of mission support. Major shortfalls in the capacity to procure, organize and sustain logistical support to deployed forces make AU or REC missions heavily reliant on external partners, such as the UN or the EU. The AU seems to be better suited for rapid deployments of coalitions of regional peacekeepers; however, it cannot sustain itself logistically or financially.

This necessitates greater partnership with the UN and presents an opportunity for the UN to further adapt to a new security architecture based on an increased use of Chapter VIII missions. This was recognized in the 2017 Memorandum of Understanding, United Nations-African Union Partnership in Peacebuilding, intended to "further strengthen coordination of UN-AU efforts."[50] A mutually supporting relationship has developed with the African Union providing uniformed personnel and the UN implementing and consolidating peace processes. This multi-actor peacekeeping trend is

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[44] Darkwa, Linda. "The African Standby Force: The African Union's Tool for the Maintenance of Peace and Security." *Contemporary Security Policy* 38, no. 3 (2017), 477.

[45] European Union Court of Auditors, *The African Peace and Security Architecture: need to refocus EU support*, Report #20, (2018), 30. https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eca/special-reports/apsa-20-2018/en/.

[46] de Coning, Cedric, et al, "The Role of the Civilian Component in African Union Peace Support Operations," in *The African Standby Force: Quo Vadis*. (Stellenbosch: African Sun Media, 2017), 70.

[47] Dobbins, "African Institutions," 1.

[48] McNamee, Terence and Monde Muyangwa, "The African Union in Peacebuilding in Africa," In *The State of Peacebuilding in Africa*, (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing AG, 2020), 202.

[49] de Coning, "Implications for the Future Role of Regional Organisations," 223.

[50] "United Nations-African Union Partnership in Peacebuilding", United Nations Peacebuilding, accessed April 6, 2023, https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/policy-issues-and-partnerships/partnerships/un-au-partnership.

reflected in events such as regular meetings between the UNSC and the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) through the UN-AU Joint Task-Force of Peace and Security since 2007 and the establishment of the UN Office to the AU in 2010.[51] However, opportunities exist to better reinforce AU efforts while lessening the gap between those nations who fund peacekeeping missions and those who execute them.

UN STANDING HIGH READINESS HEADQUARTERS (SHQ)

Two key recommendations of the HIPPO Report were the establishment of a suite of tools for the Security Council to use including "(i) a rapidly deployable integrated UN headquarters, and (ii) national and regional standby arrangements."[52] The suggestion is not new, as one of the major successes of SHIRBRIG was its ability to rapidly deploy a headquarters element as demonstrated on the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS).[53] Expert mission planning and capacity building with the AU were additional enabling elements that would have a cascading impact on the effectiveness of UN missions executed by AU contingents.

Major criticisms of the only hybrid mission to date, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) included the challenges to implementation presented by "unresolved questions of authority relations between the UN and the AU."[54] Greater integration of AU elements into the UN mission command structure, as seen with the FIB on MONUSCO, could serve to mitigate this issue. Applying lessons from SHIRBRIG, its "strongest advantage was that its rapidly deployable headquarters fully integrated into UN missions and UN command once deployed—a feature that in recent experiments with regional bridging operations has not been feasible."[55] Although some African scholars have highlighted the asymmetries in UN-AU relations, using the term "hybrid paternalism,"[56] the co-dependent nature of modern peacekeeping warrants a deliberate rethink of the mechanisms of shared mission implementation. Given the AU's overwhelming reliance on the UN support and peacebuilding ecosystem, the proposal of an SHQ deserves reconsideration. The difference in the current era is there is potential to deliberately scope a standing UN force down to a headquarters element only, given the AU's increased capacity to deploy entire contingents on missions. This command element could greatly enable the efficacy of an AU mission under a Chapter VIII mandate. This more modest and pragmatic approach differs somewhat from recent efforts by the DPO to organize the UN Vanguard

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[51] Boutellis, Arthur and Williams, Paul D. "UN-AU Collaboration on Peace and Security." *Peace Operations, the African Union, and the United Nations: Toward More Effective Partnerships*, (International Peace Institute, 2013.), 4. http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep09590.6.

[52] United Nations, "HIPPO," para 185.

[53] United Nations, "SHIRBRIG Lessons Learned," 93.

[54] Spandler, Killian, "UNAMID and the Legitimation of Global-Regional Peacekeeping Cooperation: Partnership and Friction in UN-AU Relations," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 14, 2, (2020), 188. DOI: 10.1080/17502977.2020.1725729.

[55] Koops and Novosseloff, "From SHIRBRIG to UN Vanguard Force," 83.

[56] Tieku, Thomas Kwasi, and Tanzeel F. Hakak, "A Curious Case of Hybrid Paternalism: Conceptualizing the Relationship Between the UN and AU on Peace and Security," *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review* 4, no. 2 (2014), 129–56. https://doi.org/10.2979/africonfpeacrevi.4.2.129.

Capability which proposes "an integrated military force (up to brigade-size) that has a nucleus based upon a permanent core command element."[57] An SHQ element would need to address the main factors that undermined previous attempts to sustain UN standing forces.

Competition for scarce personnel resources with regional standby forces is the primary obstacle to even a modest UN Standing Headquarters. Such competition potentially diminishes both entities as member states have limited security resources. In both UN and AU standby arrangements, a gap exists between paper commitments of rapidly deployable troops and deeds.[58] Multiple nations have made impressive troop pledges in support of the UN Vanguard Capability.[59] Detailed Statements of Unit Requirements have been produced and promulgated. [60] Several nations have registered units at the RDL. These are all positive indicators of future commitments to peacekeeping. However, such promises have yet to be tested. Historically when crises have arisen, nations have failed to deliver on peacekeeping forces promised in standby commitments. The main obstacle to the continuation of SHIRBRIG was competition with the external NATO and EU standby commitments of its founding nations.[61] The UN Vanguard Capability will likely face a similar obstacle with competing priorities of African nations. Given the large and growing need for African contributions to modern peacekeeping and the concurrent building of the African Standby Force, there is no spare capacity for redundant standby arrangements.

The current security climate is an era of increased great power competition which aggravates this scarcity. Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and China's rapid rise in the Indo-Pacific demonstrate a return to a more polarized world order. If this period follows trends experienced during the Cold War, this will potentially lead to the deprioritization of human security issues and reduced peacekeeping commitments by the multipolar powers and their allies. Great power rivalry between the United States, Russia, and China and the refocus of the European Union on continental defence both threaten to undermine national commitments to a brigade-sized UN Vanguard Capability. This could also prove a severe limiting factor in the viability of an SHQ, as nations focus on rearming for collective defence and securitization of natural resources. However, the SHQ model could also offer a prudent means for wealthy nations to "show the flag" and gain international credibility by supporting peace support operations. This would allow middle powers in particular an avenue to advance human security agendas while balancing commitments to collective security. Middle power militaries are well suited to

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[57] United Nations, Department of Peace Operations, "UN Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System Rapid Deployment Level – Generic Statement of Unit Requirement for Infantry Battalion," *UN Guidelines*, (2017), 3. https://pcrs.un.org/Lists/Resources/01-%20Peacekeeping%20Capability%20Readiness%20System%20(PCRS)/Rapid%20Deployment%20Level%20(RDL)/RDL%20Statement%20of%20Units%20Requirement%20(SUR)/SUR_Infantry%20Battalion.pdf,

[58] Koops and Novosseloff, "Toward a global force on standby?," 423.

[59] "China's pragmatic approach to UN Peacekeeping," Gowan, Richard, Brookings Institute, last modified September 14, 2020. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/chinas-pragmatic-approach-to-un-peacekeeping/

[60] United Nations, "Statement of Unit Requirement."

[61] Koops and Novosseloff, "Toward a global force on standby?," 435.

the task given the expertise and high level of training required for a capable and deployable UN SHQ.

This would also mitigate the widening gap between those who fund peacekeeping missions and those who execute them. Described by critics as "The Blue Helmet Caste System,"[62] peacekeeper contributions from the global north[63] have declined steeply in the past two decades. In 2020 for example, the number of Canadian military peacekeepers deployed hit a 60-year low of just 22 members.[64] This gap is demonstrating the trend of subcontracting peace security responsibility to poorer nations willing to assume greater risk. Relatively small personnel commitments to an SHQ would demonstrate resolve and solidarity from the global north, provide an outsized impact on mission effectiveness, and better integrate AU contingents into the UN command and support structure. This would also advance the stated commitment area in the Secretary-General's core agenda to strengthen and modernize peacekeeping operations, the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative. The UN committed "to enhance collaboration and planning between the UN and…regional and sub-regional organizations… including the AU…which [has] deployed several mandated operations in the past years."[65]

An SHQ would also need to build upon shortcomings that contributed to the disbandment of SHIRBRIG. Unnecessary friction existed between the Brigade and the DPO, the body charged with planning, preparing, managing, and directing UN peacekeeping operations. When SHIRBRIG shifted its focus to mission planning this was seen to encroach on the responsibilities of the DPO. This led to the exclusion of SHIRBRIG planners in the early phases of mission analysis and the disaggregated employment of HQ personnel.[66] Incorporating the SHQ into the command structure of the DPO would create a reinforcing effect rather than institutional rivalry. By integrating the rapidly deployable standing headquarters into the existing UN planning structure, scant planning expertise and resources would be maximized. Making the SHQ subordinate to the DPO would enable planning and early mission headquarters elements would be better prepared.

In further recognition of A4P's commitment to partnerships, an SHQ would require substantial inclusion of staff from main contributors in modern peacekeeping, especially from African regional organizations. In addition to increased participation

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[62] "The blue helmet caste system," Foreign Policy, last modified April 11, 2013. https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/04/11/the-blue-helmet-caste-system/.
[63] The Global North is understood to be wealthy and powerful industrialized nations, primarily in the Northern Hemisphere.
Lees, Nicholas. "The Brandt Line After Forty Years: The More North–South Relations Change, the More they Stay the Same?" Review of International Studies 47, no. 1 (2021), 85.
[64] Tracking the Promises: Canada's Contributions to UN Peacekeeping," Walter Dorn, last modified December 10, 2022. https://www.walterdorn.net/256.
[65] United Nations, "Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations," *Action for Peacekeeping*, (2021), Para 18. https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/a4p-declaration-en.pdf
[66] Saclag, Daryll Edisonn. "A Rapid Reaction Force for the United Nations: Middle Powers, Human Security, and the Multinational Standby High Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG)." *Malaysian Journal of International Relations* 9, no. 1 (2021), 171.

from the global north, the SHQ structure would need to reserve positions for nations such as Bangladesh, Nepal, India, and Pakistan to represent the largest TCC/PCC contributors. A criticism of SHIRBRIG from several developing nations was that it favoured developed nations.[67] Deliberately designing a more inclusive unit, reflective of modern peacekeeping realities would help to alleviate this divide and encourage more sustainable support from more member states. Robust African participation in SHQ senior leadership positions would also greatly enable AU capacity building and liaison with AU REC/RMs executing Chapter VII or Chapter VIII missions. This would make the SHQ a critical link between UN decision-makers, UN support networks, and the contingents conducting the mission.

Unlike SHIRBRIG, a modernized SHQ should allow for participation by UNSC Permanent Members. Deployments by the AU, EU Battlegroups, and NATO Standby Force have shown, "the viability of multilateral rapid response mechanisms goes hand in hand with the availability of, and support from, "framework" or "lead nations.""[68] The participation of UNSC members would increase the likelihood that deployments would have a strong champion to bolster political will and carry the main financial burdens of a mission. This would also enable a venue for collaboration between great power strategic competitors such as the US and China. The dominance of the SHQ by any great power would need to be carefully managed; however, the internal UN mechanisms to do this are beyond the scope of this paper. Past crises have shown, without such lead nations, rapid, successful deployments are unlikely to succeed.[69]

The UN acknowledges that "a standing reserve sounds logical, but it would be immensely costly to have a force of several thousand people on permanent standby."[70] The standby arrangements of the UN Vanguard Capability show the UN's acquiescence to the fiscal reality that peacekeeping operations face substantial financial challenges and shifting member-state dedication to peace. The dissolution of SHIRBRIG showed the reluctance of member states to prioritize a large, brigade-sized UN standing capability over national or alliance interests. Given the intermittent record of member states following through on rapid deployment pledges, a small standing capability could be the UN's hedge against inconstant member states when the next crisis arises. The PCRS calls for the permanent core command element of the UN Vanguard Capability to be able to deploy within 10 days of a UNSC Resolution. Without a standing, trained, integrated and ready SHQ, this goal will likely remain another unattainable ambition.

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[67] United Nations General Assembly, *Summary record of the 15th meeting: Special Political and Decolonisation Committee (4th Committee)*, held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, November 3, 1998, UN Doc. A/C.4/53/SR.15, 6. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1489976?ln=en
[68] Reykers and Karlsrud, "Multinational Rapid Response Mechanisms," 423.
[69] Reykers, and Karlsrud, "Multinational Rapid Response Mechanisms", 423.
[70] "Military," United Nations Peacekeeping, accessed 10 April, 2023, https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/military

CONCLUSION

Regardless of the evolving landscape of African peacekeeping, the UN Security Council is charged with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security as per Article 24 of the UN Charter. For most of its existence, the lack of a standing military capability has left the Security Council beholden to member states for the voluntary contribution of the physical means to discharge that responsibility. As Secretary Kofi-Annan once quipped, the UN is "the only fire brigade in the world that has to wait for the fire to break out before it can acquire a fire engine."[71] Previous response mechanisms such as UNSAS and SHIRBRIG attempted to improve UN responsiveness; however, they were ultimately undermined by internal and external resource competition, as well as waning member state political will. Notable successes were found in the deployment of a rapid reaction headquarters and capacity building within AU standby arrangements. These successes could be leveraged by the UN in its modernized PCRS and UN Vanguard Capability in the form of a Standing High Readiness Headquarters. Subordinating this unit to the DPO would enable early planning and ensure early mission leadership is prepared for specific theatres. Deploying an integrated and ready headquarters would greatly enhance AU integration into the UN support architecture while providing trained and cohesive leadership from a wide variety of member states. This could also serve to narrow the gap between UN financiers and mission executors.

Partnership operations in African peacekeeping will only increase as the capabilities of AU REC/RM Standby forces progress. The use of Chapter VIII missions will likely increase as the will and capacity of the AU rise. The UN should deliberately incorporate this dynamic into its rapid response model and avoid attempts to create parallel standby structures that failed to produce adequate responsiveness in the past. Instead, it should reinforce the momentum the AU has gained in taking more ownership of African security. Recent international troop pledges and validation of units at the RDL show promise to increase UN awareness and agility of available forces to respond to the next crisis. However, Africans cannot afford more failed paper promises, as in the past. The formation of a UN SHQ would demonstrate an international commitment to peace the people of Africa deserve.

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[71] United Nations Peacekeeping, "Military."

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