



UN Day 2021 Issue Brief



## Measures to Ensure Successful Peacekeeping Missions

by Ana Camacho  
*ODU Model United Nations Society*

### Introduction

Peacekeeping missions are one of the most effective measures deployed by the United Nations to assist states navigating from conflict to peace, offering security and political support. Peacekeeping is guided by three principles: consent of parties, impartiality, and the non-use of force except in self-defense and or defense of the mandate. Today peacekeeping missions are deployed not just to maintain the peace and security, but to also make way for political processes, protect civilians, “assist in the

disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of former combatants”, support elections, uphold human rights, and restore the rule of law.<sup>1</sup>

Peacekeeping is the UN’s signature tool for conflict resolution, its greatest and most original contribution to international affairs. It also is its most expensive and dangerous activity, requiring the support of the Member States of the General Assembly—who fund it—and tricky mandates from the Security Council. They require troops to be sent from Member States, often exposed to great personal danger, where they must act with equally great self-restraint.



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<sup>1</sup> “What Is Peacekeeping.” *United Nations Peacekeeping*, United Nations.

The success of any peacekeeping operation (PKO) is not guaranteed. Indeed, mistakes can cause or contribute to the deaths of thousands, as they have in Rwanda, Bosnia and Haiti.

Peacekeeping missions are important and despite various opinions that hold that peacekeeping operations are not important and are ineffective, they, on the contrary, are very important and effective. Without a neutral force in a state ravaged by conflict there is no way forward to a solution to the conflict and no way forward to lasting peace. Over time with the development of weapons, peacekeeping missions have become more difficult to manage and more dangerous. In recent years, we have seen a sharp increase in deaths of peacekeeping troops by rebel forces with weaponry that peacekeeping forces cannot keep up with or defend themselves against.

Despite the tribulations seen by peacekeeping forces during their missions, it is vital for peacekeeping operations to be available to states enduring internal conflict and turmoil as all states should have the right to be at peace and for their citizens to be safe.

### History of Peacekeeping

Peacekeeping operations (PKOs) have evolved since their first use in the Middle East in 1948. In 1956, peacekeeping was formalized during the Suez Crisis, between the states of Egypt, Israel, France, and the United Kingdom. During this *first generation* of peacekeeping missions, peacekeeping involved maintaining the peace, involving military troops from various countries, and have the military troops serve under the orders of the UN Security Council.<sup>2</sup> PKOs were lightly armed, designed to force adversaries

apart, but to monitor the peace. They were armed only for self-defense, and not expected to do that often.



The 1956 Suez Crisis

After the end of the Cold War, peacekeeping entered its *second generation*. The second generation of peacekeeping saw not just missions to maintain peace between parties, but they were also deployed to achieve political and social objectives. These missions were much more ambitious, often involving complex conflict resolution, disarming combatants and restoring governments.

To achieve such objectives, these missions involved civilian experts and relief specialists and military troops. Peacekeeping missions expanded to include missions of peacemaking and peace building; this included overseeing elections, motivate peace negotiations, and distribute food in countries. Second generation peacekeeping missions also began to see military troops employing force other than for reasons of self-defense; this included using force to maintain the missions' objective like

<sup>2</sup> Fomerand, Jacques, Mingst, Karen and Lynch, Cecelia M. "United Nations". Encyclopedia Britannica, 21 Jan. 2020,

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/United-Nations> . Accessed 29 April 2021.



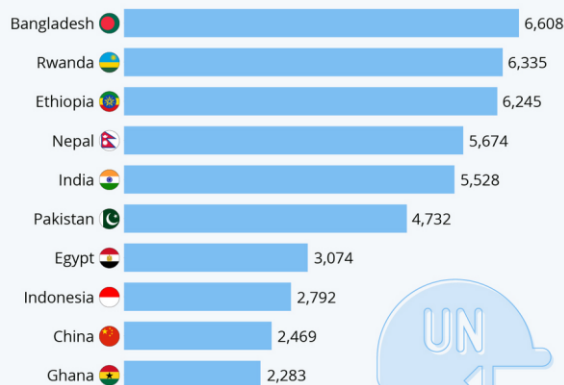
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protecting safe areas sanctioned by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

## The Biggest Contributors To UN Peacekeeping Operations

Main contributors of uniformed personnel to UN peacekeeping operations as of March 31, 2021\*



\* Uniformed personnel constitute mission experts, police units, staff officers and troops.

It has been well agreed that for a peacekeeping mission to be successful, certain conditions need to be met. The four main conditions are both parties in a dispute agreeing to accept a cease fire, all parties consenting to the presence of the peacekeepers, all parties are willing to cooperate with the peacekeepers, and a clear physical separation of the parties in conflict. There are also three additional conditions needed for a successful peacekeeping mission: broad agreement in the Security Council, the peacekeepers need to be seen as impartial, and any use of force must be for self-defense.<sup>3</sup> If one or more of these conditions are not met or made apparent to the parties in conflict, it is possible that the overall conflict may worsen, and the peacekeeping mission will fail.

## Peacekeeping Accomplishments

Peacekeeping only happens in difficult situations, where the parties to conflict are unable to solve the dispute themselves. If the problem was straight-forward and easy to solve, the states parties would do it themselves. Peacekeeping happens when tempers are high, warfare is severe, and no side wants to be seen giving in. As a result, it is unlikely that any peacekeeping mission will be completely successful. But many peacekeeping missions genuine accomplishments.

Among the UN’s peacekeeping success stories was in Liberia. United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) was a peacekeeping mission conducted from October 2003 to March 2018. UNMIL had up to 15,000 military troops which included 250 military observers, 160 staff officers, 875 UN police officers, five armed units of 120 officers, and civilian support staff.

The state of Liberia had been in a civil war since 1989 which claimed the lives of almost 250,000 people, mostly civilians. Despite attempts at achieving peace through the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) which established an observer force, the Military Observer Group (ECOMOG), and the United Nations involvement in the conflict through the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) and the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Liberia (UNOL), the civil war resumed after a brief cease fire and escalated. Due to the rapid escalation of the conflict, the UNSC passed resolution 1487 in August of 2003 which authorized a

<sup>3</sup> “Classical Peacekeeping and Monitoring Missions: Character, Goals, Activities, Outcomes, Impact and Conditions for Success.” *Classical Peacekeeping and Monitoring Missions: Character, Goals, Activities, Outcomes, Impact and Conditions for Success* - Irénées,

Nov. 2007, [www.irenees.net/bdf\\_fiche-analyse-700\\_en.html#:~:text=But%20classical%20peacekeeping%20missions%20usually,agreements%20over%20demarcation%20of%20boundaries](http://www.irenees.net/bdf_fiche-analyse-700_en.html#:~:text=But%20classical%20peacekeeping%20missions%20usually,agreements%20over%20demarcation%20of%20boundaries) .



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peacekeeping mission in the state; military troops were deployed in October of 2003 and have resided until March 2018, at the conclusion of the mission.<sup>4</sup>

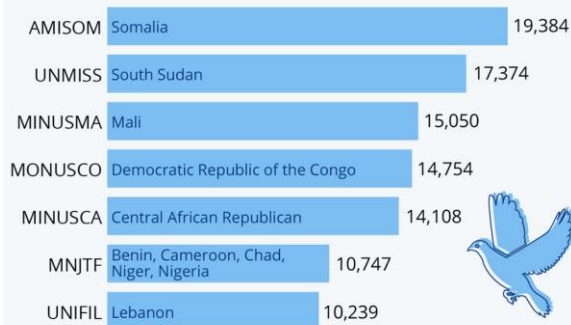
Since 2003, UN Peacekeepers assisted Liberia in moving from the path of conflict to the path of peace through the disarmament, demobilization, and the reintegration of thousands of soldiers, police reform, judicial reform, overseeing successful elections.<sup>5</sup> UNMIL has been noted as one of the most successful peacekeeping missions in UN history. Over the past 15 years, UNMIL deployed 15,000 military troops; having that many troops focused on one goal allowed for a sufficient amount of peace and security. Although having a specific goal and or mandate is extremely important, it is also important to have the goal and or mandate be achievable and to do that you need to be "...adequately resourced..."<sup>6</sup>

### Peacekeeping Frustrations

Although having notable success in some states, the UN Peacekeeping missions have had their fair share of frustration, where they were able to achieve some, but not all, or not their most important goals. One of the most extreme, outright failures came in Rwanda in 1994. The United Nations Assistance in the Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) was established by UNSC Resolution 872 in October 1993, as tension between ethnic sides rose dangerously.

### The Largest Peacekeeping Operations In 2021

Personnel involved in the largest active multilateral peacekeeping operations as of May 2021



Source: SIPRI Multilateral Peace Operations Database

The main mandate of this mission was to uphold the Arusha Accords, which was a ceasefire agreement meant to end the Rwandan Civil War. The main reason for this mission’s failure was its lack of support from on ground military troops, support from the United Nations, and its murky rules of peacekeeping engagement. All these areas of failing also led to the UN failing to prevent the Rwandan Genocide. The mission had been authorized for 2,500 peacekeeping personnel; however, it took five months into the mission for it to reach its personnel mandate. In April 1994, the UNSC voted to reduce the peacekeepers from 2,500 to 270, cutting it in almost 90% from its original mandate.

This decision was followed soon after by the Rwandan Genocide, the worst attacks on innocent civilians since Cambodia in the 1970s. After the killing of President Habyarimana of Rwanda and President Cyprien Ntaryamira of Burundi on April 6, 1994, conflict broke out and the Rwandan Genocide began. Due to unclear

<sup>4</sup> “Background.” *UNMIL*, United Nations Peacekeeping, 24 May 2017, [unmil.unmissions.org/background](http://unmil.unmissions.org/background) .

<sup>5</sup> Peacekeeping, UN. “The Success of Peacekeeping in Liberia.” *Medium*, Medium, 6 Dec. 2018, [medium.com/@UNPeacekeeping/the-success-of-peacekeeping-in-liberia-9efd440d19d](https://medium.com/@UNPeacekeeping/the-success-of-peacekeeping-in-liberia-9efd440d19d) .

<sup>6</sup> Roby, Christin. “UNMIL Provides Lessons on What Makes a Successful Peacekeeping Mission.” *Devex*, Devex, 5 Apr. 2018, [www.devex.com/news/unmil-provides-lessons-on-what-makes-a-successful-peacekeeping-mission-92477](http://www.devex.com/news/unmil-provides-lessons-on-what-makes-a-successful-peacekeeping-mission-92477).



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rules of engagement, ten Belgian peacekeepers and Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana were killed after surrendering their weapons. Written with conflicting interests and the caution of donor countries in mind, the Security Council's mandate for UNAMIR stopped peacekeepers from intervening militarily. In this situation, several peacekeepers were killed. The mission ceased and was not renewed.

As the genocide went on, states began to withdraw their peacekeeping troops and the UNSC refused to issue a new mandate to assist with the violence; it eventually postponed its withdrawal from the state, however many states did not agree with the decision. With no staff and no support from the UNSC, UNAMIR did its best to assist those in the conflict, but in the end the mission was deemed a massive failure with between 800,000 to 1,017,100 Tutsi and Hutu victims killed in over 100 days since the fighting broke out on April 6, 1994.<sup>7</sup>

There were various faults with the mission in Rwanda. From lack of support from the UNSC, to being understaffed, and lack of rules of engagement, the mission was a melting pot of missteps and failures which costed hundreds of innocent lives. As stated before, there are various conditions needed for a UN Peacekeeping mission to succeed. Some of those conditions were both parties needing to accept a ceasefire and a consensus in the UNSC about the mission; the UNAMIR did not have either of those conditions. Neither the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) nor the Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) would agree to a cease fire proposed by Commander Dallaire as both sides found it necessary to keep fighting. There also was not a consensus about the mission in the UNSC. Many states wished to withdraw from

the mission as their troops were being killed and there was no progress being made; Belgium began to withdraw after its ten troops were killed, the United States was keen to withdraw, and the United Kingdom was reluctant to postpone the withdrawal of the mission.<sup>8</sup> As we saw with the success in Liberia, one of the contributing factors to its success was its abundance of resources. Over the course of the mission, they had 15,000 peacekeepers, where the mission in Rwanda only had a maximum of 2,500 and later 5,500.

### Caught Without End: Example of Cyprus

The United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) is a peacekeeping mission set up by the Security Council in 1964 to prevent continuing conflict between the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot communities in Cyprus. For over 50 years, peacekeepers have remained to supervise the ceasefire lines, maintain the buffer zone, and encourage peace talks between the two rival sides, the Greek and Turkish halves of the island.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the presence of the peacekeepers and consistent encouragement from the United Nations and the Secretary General, peace talks and negotiations go nowhere. In recent months the two communities have been at a standstill since talks of a unified Cyprus or a two-state Cyprus failed. Tahsin Ertugruloglu, a Turkish Cypriot politician, states that the Greek Cypriots do not want to agree to a settlement of a federated solution because they "...enjoy the benefits of recognition by themselves...Why

<sup>7</sup> "United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 6 Apr. 2021, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_Nations\\_Assistance\\_Mission\\_for\\_Rwanda](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Assistance_Mission_for_Rwanda).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> "UNFICYP, Cyprus." *United Nations*, United Nations, [www.un.org/en/cco/unficy-cyprus](http://www.un.org/en/cco/unficy-cyprus).

should they...accept anything less...”<sup>10</sup> The Greek Cypriots seeks a return to the pre-war situation, a unified and independent island. Turkish Cypriots favor division and unification of their northern half with Turkey.



The Security Council would be delighted to bring the Cyprus mission to a close, but fears this would rapidly lead to renewed fighting. Instead, it continues to extend the PKO’s mandate. On 29 July 2021, the Security Council extended the UNFICYP mandated to 31 January 2022, in Resolution 2587. The Security Council urged both sides to adhere to the mandate and the safety of the peacekeeping personnel and actively engage in the community to ensure an atmosphere of negotiation to reach a settlement.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Psaropoulos, John, 2021. ‘Cyprus’ reunification: What next after failed talks?’, *Al Jazeera*, 7 June, 2021

<sup>11</sup> Xinhua, 2021. ‘Security Council extends mandate of peacekeeping force in Cyprus until Jan. 31’, *Xinhua*, 30 July 2021

<sup>12</sup> “Increased Security Crucial to Protect Peacekeepers Risking ‘Ultimate SACRIFICE’, United Nations Staff Union

Says, Citing 15 Killed by Deliberate Attacks in 2020 | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases.”

*United Nations*,

United Nations,  
[www.un.org/press/en/2021/org174.doc.htm#:~:text=Deliberate%20killings%20in%202020%20bring.%20C%20grnades%20suicide%20attacks%20C%20ta,rgeted](http://www.un.org/press/en/2021/org174.doc.htm#:~:text=Deliberate%20killings%20in%202020%20bring.%20C%20grnades%20suicide%20attacks%20C%20ta,rgeted) .

<sup>13</sup> Al Jazeera. “Four Peacekeepers Killed in Northern Mali Attack: Un.” *Al Jazeera*, 2 Apr. 2021,

## The Dangers of Peacekeeping Missions

In recent years, peacekeeping missions have become more dangerous. Over the past decade, 440 peacekeepers have been killed during peacekeeping missions with 12 of those deaths in 2021.<sup>121314</sup> The rise in fatalities of peacekeepers lies in the fact that there has been a rise in violence, particularly in the areas where the peacekeepers are stationed. New peacekeeping mandates are allowing the peacekeepers to be more assertive in protecting civilians; while this is generally a good thing, it also makes peacekeepers a target for rebel groups.<sup>15</sup>

The peacekeeping mission in Mali, also known as the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), has been one of the most dangerous and deadliest on-going peacekeeping missions with 190 peacekeepers dead since June 2021.<sup>16</sup> MINUSMA is the only peacekeeping mission that has authorized its troops to deter

[www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/2/four-peacekeepers-killed-in-northern-mali-attack-un](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/2/four-peacekeepers-killed-in-northern-mali-attack-un)

<sup>14</sup> Diallo, Tiemoko. “Thirteen Peacekeepers WOUNDED, Six Soldiers Killed in Mali Militant Attacks.” *Reuters*, Thomson Reuters, 25 June 2021, [www.reuters.com/world/africa/fifteen-un-peacekeepers-some-german-wounded-northern-mali-attack-2021-06-25/](http://www.reuters.com/world/africa/fifteen-un-peacekeepers-some-german-wounded-northern-mali-attack-2021-06-25/).

<sup>15</sup> Martin, Michel. “Why U.N. Peacekeepers' Job Has Become More Dangerous in the Past 5 Years.” *NPR*, 29 January 2018, [www.npr.org/2018/01/28/581456129/why-u-n-peacekeepers-job-has-become-more-dangerous-in-the-past-5-years](http://www.npr.org/2018/01/28/581456129/why-u-n-peacekeepers-job-has-become-more-dangerous-in-the-past-5-years)

<sup>16</sup> Al Jazeera. “Four Peacekeepers Killed in Northern Mali Attack: Un.” *Al Jazeera*, 2 April 2021, [www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/2/four-peacekeepers-killed-in-northern-mali-attack-un](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/2/four-peacekeepers-killed-in-northern-mali-attack-un)



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and counter “asymmetric threats” that could impede the mission or harm civilians.

The issue with this is that the mission does not have the supplies to fight back against terrorist groups like al-Qaeda. While having tanks and vehicles and patrol units may suppress violence from terrorist or rebel groups in other states, these tend to make the peacekeepers a target for attack. The peacekeeping troops have attempted to adapt to the situation in Mali by gaining intelligence by using surveillance drones and working in conjunction with European military troops in the area.<sup>17</sup>

PKOs also can endanger the civilians they seek to protect. The UN mission to Haiti in the 2010s caused the deaths of about 10,000 Haitians by spreading cholera, a deadly disease. This happened through negligence—poor planning and oversight—not malevolence, but the UN’s responsibility is not denied.

### Recent UN Action

For a peacekeeping mission to come to life, it must be brought to the Security Council, voted on with every P5 nations voting in favor of the Resolution, and the Resolution written with clear mandates and goals of the mission. The United Nations will also meet, write, draft, and vote on resolutions to create and renew peacekeeping mandates and to create a budget for the active missions.

In late June, the United Nations passed Resolution A/75/936 that allocated \$6.37 billion for 12 peacekeeping missions;

...United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) and the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS).<sup>18</sup>

### Proposals for Action

- **Require clearer mandates**, establishing what peacekeepers are expected to do, when they must show restraint and when they are allowed or encouraged to use force. Mandates need standards from the General Assembly, guiding the Security Council in specific cases, establishing what each mission is supposed to accomplish. A General Assembly resolution on mandates would provide the general guidance the Security Council needs, to ensure missions are not complicit in disasters like Rwanda,

<sup>17</sup> “The World’s Deadliest U.N. Mission.” *The Washington Post*, WP Company, [www.washingtonpost.com/sf/world/2017/02/17/the-worlds-deadliest-u-n-peacekeeping-mission/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/world/2017/02/17/the-worlds-deadliest-u-n-peacekeeping-mission/)

<sup>18</sup> “General Assembly Adopts Resolution Calling for Stronger Action against New, Emerging Threats, as

Speakers Assess Progress in Advancing Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases.” *United Nations*, United Nations, [www.un.org/press/en/2021/ga12343.doc.htm](http://www.un.org/press/en/2021/ga12343.doc.htm)



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Bosnia or Haiti, or in enteral stalemates like Cyprus.

- **Ensure bigger budgets**, more adequate to fully support PKOs with the personnel, logistical assistance and technological support they need. We consistently see that peacekeeping missions struggle due to lack of funds which inhibit them from carrying out the mission's mandate. But assuring budgets means more than targets, it also means Member States must accept funding levels they previously resisted. In exchange, Member States may demand more control over PKO mandates. Or they may insist on savings from elsewhere in the UN budget.
- **Secure resources and supplies:** getting resources such as vehicles, weapons, troops, and care packages can be done with having more funds, but also with the assistance of other Member States.
- **Restrict missions to those with overwhelming support.** For a mission to be successful, it is vital that there is a general consensus of support and high morale for the mission to succeed; this includes from troops on the ground and from the Security Council. One way to do this would be to require unanimous votes of support from the fifteen members of the Security Council. Another would be to require unanimous support from the 193 Member States of the General Assembly.
- **Clear and achievable mandates.** While the end goal of a peacekeeping operation is peace, there are going to

have to be multiple steps from the start to finish line to ensure that success, so it is important that the initial mandate is achievable and clear so that the mission can succeed. The General Assembly can establish clear criteria for evaluating PKO success or failure, standards to be met, timelines for progress, and demand that missions be ended if they do not meet these criteria.

### Conclusion

UN Peacekeeping missions are important to help countries struggling to emerge from war and conflict to peace and stability. History shows peacekeeping can work or help, but it also can fail or stall, becoming part of the problems it was intended to solve. Reform is essential if this idea from the 1940s is to remain fully relevant in our own times.

Better missions need clearer mandates and more resources such as more troops and equipment and money. Member States are legally obligated to pay their share toward peacekeeping operations; a state's share is determined by their wealth. In 2020-2021, the top ten providers towards peacekeeping operations included the United States, China, Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, the Russian Federation, Canada, and the Republic of Korea.<sup>19</sup>

While states are legally obligated to pay their share, that does not mean that states pay on time. Member States making late payments or withholding their payments to the United Nations causes a huge issue for the organization when trying to fund peacekeeping operations.

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<sup>19</sup> "How We Are Funded Peacekeeping." *United Nations Peacekeeping*, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/how-we-are-funded>





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Without proper funding, the UNSC cannot guarantee the mission to be effective since they will not be able to obtain the proper resources for the mission.<sup>20</sup> Having an adequate number

of peacekeepers in a peacekeeping mission is imperative when attempting to achieve a successful mandate in a state.

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<sup>20</sup> Mir, Wasim. *Financing UN Peacekeeping: Avoiding Another Crisis*, International Peace Institute, 2019, [www.ipinst.org/wp-](http://www.ipinst.org/wp-)

[content/uploads/2019/04/1904\\_Financing-UN-Peacekeeping.pdf](http://content/uploads/2019/04/1904_Financing-UN-Peacekeeping.pdf) .



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