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After the Brahimi Report: doctrinal culture, practical developments and the new and remaining challenges of UN peace operations

After the Brahimi Report: doctrinal culture, practical developments and the new and remaining challenges of UN peace operations

Depois do Relatório Brahimi: cultura doutrinária, desenvolvimentos práticos e os desafios novos e remanescentes das operações de paz da ONU

Después del Informe Brahimi: cultura doctrinal, desarrollos prácticos y los nuevos y restantes desafíos de las operaciones de paz de la ONU

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we analyse the new and remaining challenges in implementing the Brahimi Report's (2000) recommendations more than twenty years after its publication. The document is considered a milestone in consolidating a doctrinal culture of UN peace operations. However, we argue that this attempt to establish a doctrinal culture has been hampered by normative and practical controversies, which will be explored, methodologically, using documentary analysis.

Keywords: peace operations; Brahimi report; stabilization; doctrinal culture.

RESUMO

Neste artigo, analisamos os desafios, novos e remanescentes, na implementação das recomendações do Relatório Brahimi (2000), mais de vinte anos após sua publicação. O documento é considerado um marco na consolidação de uma cultura doutrinária das operações de paz da ONU. No entanto, argumentamos que essa tentativa de estabelecer uma cultura doutrinária tem sido dificultada por controvérsias normativas e práticas, que serão exploradas, metodologicamente, com base em análise documental.

Palavras-chave: operações de paz; Relatório Brahimi; estabilização; cultura doutrinária.

RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza los desafíos nuevos y pendientes en la aplicación de las recomendaciones del Informe (2000) más de veinte años después de su publicación. El documento es considerado un hito en la consolidación de una cultura doctrinal de las operaciones de paz de la ONU. Sin embargo, sostenemos que este intento de establecer una cultura doctrinal se ha visto obstaculizado por controversias normativas y prácticas, que se explorarán, metodológicamente, a partir del análisis documental.

Palavras clave: Operaciones de paz; Informe Brahimi; estabilización; cultura doctrinal.

Introduction

In this article, we take stock of the Brahimi Report (2000) to identify new and remaining challenges in the implementation of its recommendations. Published after failed attempts to keep and build peace in the 1990s, the Report sought to systematise a multidimensional approach to peace operations. It reaffirmed the UN's commitment to the core principles of consent, impartiality, and minimum use of force; pointed out the need for the authorisation of clear and feasible mandates; advocated for an increase in post-conflict peacebuilding policies, and called on states to provide appropriate resources and well-trained troops to ensure the effectiveness of peace operations on the ground. Considering the innovations proposed by the document, the Brahimi Report was a milestone in the consolidation of what the UN intended to be an actual "doctrinal culture" of peace operations (UN, 2000). It was particularly relevant in that context as the main challenge identified in the 1990s was that there was a mismatch between mandates and practical developments. The Brahimi Report took this lack of coherence seriously and sought to provide clear directions and tasks for UN personnel deployed in post-war zones. Years later, the idea of establishing a cultural doctrine was advanced with the release of the so-called "Capstone Doctrine" (2008), a document that grew out of the Brahimi reforms and intended to both confirm basic principles of UN Peacekeeping and define parameters of what constituted it (DE CONING; KARLSRUD; AOI, 2017).

However, we argue that this attempt to establish a doctrine has been weakened due to contradictions among later documents and multiple controversial practical developments, especially in active stabilisation peace operations in the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Mali. On the one hand, the Brahimi Report (2000) and the Capstone Doctrine (2008) seem to align in defence of a political, multidimensional approach. On the other hand, documents such as the HIPPO Report (2015), Cruz Report (2017), and Action4Peacekeeping (2019) have been, intentionally or not, inattentive to the practical developments such as that of 'stabilisation' that challenges the core principles defended in previous reports. Stabilisation peace operations have been authorised to take on stabilisation tasks aimed at supporting host governments with the provision of task forces to neutra-

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lise and defeat non-state armed groups. This has raised several questions regarding the legitimacy of the UN in taking a clear stance in contexts of ongoing wars (DE CONING, 2021; KARLSRUD, 2018; OSLAND; PETER, 2021; TULL, 2018).

We argue that there is still a mismatch between guidelines in core documents, such as the Brahimi Report, and the practices adopted in the context of stabilisation peace operations. We develop this argument based on a document analysis that shows that, as it did twenty years ago, the UN still faces a mismatch between doctrine and practice that makes it hard to maintain its credibility and achieve its far-reaching goals. In addition, we zoom in on documents and reports on active stabilisation peace operations in CAR, DRC, and Mali to discuss how this approach is at odds with the doctrinal culture established in the Brahimi Report. We mobilise both official and secondary data about stabilisation missions to demonstrate how they create new and accentuate remaining challenges for the construction of a cohesive doctrinal culture for peace operations.

The article proceeds as follows. The upcoming section discusses the Brahimi Report and the Capstone Doctrine and frames these documents as landmark initiatives for the creation of a doctrinal culture for peace operations. The article moves on with a discussion of the HIPPO, Cruz, and A4P reports, and we show how these pose challenges to the maintenance of the core principles shared in the Brahimi Report and Capstone Doctrine. After discussing normative controversies, we zoom in on stabilisation peace operations in CAR, DRC, and Mali to demonstrate how the practical developments adopted in those contexts create new and accentuate remaining challenges for developing a cohesive doctrine for peace operations in the contemporary world. Finally, we provide an assessment of the UN peace operations doctrinal culture, practical developments, and challenges to be addressed in the future.

The Brahimi Report and the emergence of multidimensional peace operations

Issued in August 2000, the Brahimi Report[4] is a landmark study of the UN's engagement with peace operations. It has become known for establishing the guidelines of multidimensional peace operations. The document was the final report developed by the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, appointed by Secretary-General Kofi Annan as a response to intense criticism of how the organisation had been managing peacekeeping challenges since the end of the Cold War – and the dramatic failures it had experienced. The panel was composed of experts in conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding that sought to identify the shortcomings of the existing system. Together, they made specific recommendations for change so that the UN would be ready to face new increasing demand for peace operations and meet its critical challenges.

Based on an in-depth critique of the conduct of peace operations, the Brahimi Report was the beginning of an intense phase of reform, which included normative and operational changes aimed at maintaining credibility and favouring the achievement of far-reaching goals related to international peace and security. In general terms, it called the member states to renew their political commitment toward peace operations and highlighted the need for significant institutional change and increased financial support. According to the report, to be effective, peace operations would need bigger and more complete teams, suitable equipment and resources, and a 'new understanding' that included them in the list of core activities of the UN. In addition, robust rules of engagement would be established, and the Security Council (UNSC) should assume the responsibility for providing each operation with a "clear, credible and achievable mandate" (UN, 2000, p. 10).

Analysing the emergence of this 'new understanding' of peace operations proposed by the Brahimi Report provides us with a privileged viewpoint from which we can observe the transformation of the apparatus dedicated to promoting and maintaining international peace and security. Most importantly, the meticulous and well-documented discussion about the normative framework, institutional structure, operational guidelines, policies, and procedures regarding UN peace operations put forward a very particular view of what would be the foundations of peace and how international organisations could achieve it – one that informed the deployment of missions for at least one decade.

As argued by Bellamy and Williams (2010), the recommendations of the Brahimi Report can be grouped into four main areas. First, the need for improvement of the UN decision-making process by increasing the transmission of accurate and high-quality information about conflict zones where peace operations are deployed, stimulating dialogue between the UNSC and countries supplying troops, besides creating new mechanisms for coordination. Second, the mandates and resources of peace operations. The Brahimi Report stressed the mandates should be clear, precise, and achievable, based on a realistic view of the conflicts and after a careful analysis of what could be genuinely achieved by peacekeepers on the ground. Accordingly, the Report stressed that the UNSC should not deploy peace operations unless it guarantees that all necessary resources for effective implementation will be made available by UN member states. The third group of recommendations includes quick and effective deployment of blue helmets once a mission is authorised, which would be achieved through the development of the UN's own logistical and communications strategy. The last group of recommendations concerns the effectiveness of UN forces on the ground. In this regard, the Brahimi Report already leaned towards the authorisation of robust use of force to guarantee that peacekeepers would have normative support to defend themselves, confront violence, and protect civilians under imminent threat. To this end, it would be essential to renew the UN's commitment to providing high-level training to troops and civilians employed in peacekeeping operations to ensure the fulfilment of the tasks established in the mandates and preserve their legitimacy. Although the Report stressed that "the United Nations does not wage war" (UN, 2000, p. 10), it gave rise to a new kind of peace operations with mandates that combine authorisation to use force and a wide range of civilian tasks to support peace processes.

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5. The UN's definition of peacebuilding connects to Johan Galtung's work on positive peace, understood as something more than simply the absence of violence (KING; MATTHEWS, 2012). It appeared in 'An Agenda for Peace' (UN, 1992), defined as 'action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict' (para. 21). Later, the Brahimi Report reinforced this definition, stating that peacebuilding "involves activities undertaken on the far side of the conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war" (2000, p. 3) and put it at the centre of UN's efforts to maintain international peace and security.

According to the document, flawed attempts to keep and build peace in the 1990s were the result of a lack of substantive engagement from UN troops and civilian personnel. In this sense, it established a direct dialogue with the notion of positive peace.[5] Before Brahimi, peace operations' efforts emphasised ending direct violence and avoiding armed struggles, which marginalised and obliterated broader efforts for conflict resolution and post-conflict peace formation (KENKEL, 2013). Thus, one of its main contributions was to recognise the importance of investing in state reconstruction as a political process of state-building, national reconciliation, and promotion of economic development that would lead to the resolution of conflicts and not only the interruption of hostilities.

The perspective on positive peace is crucial in the reorientation of the UN's conduct laid out in the Brahimi Report. In defining the elements of peace operations, it conceptualised the term peacebuilding as activities conducted to restore the foundations of peace and provide tools to build "something that is more than just the absence of war" (UN, 2000, p. 3). In this sense, peacebuilding-related activities include diverse tasks such as the reintegration of ex-combatants into the civilian realm, the strengthening of the rule of law, the promotion of human rights, technical assistance for democratic development, the promotion of conflict resolution and reconciliation (UN, 2000).

The report presented specific recommendations for the UN peacebuilding strategy and the peace operations doctrine of promoting and keeping negative peace. However, these distinct dimensions are regarded as inseparable since peacekeepers must create a relatively safe environment to enable the implementation of peacebuilding policies. Therefore, structural changes aimed at preventing the recurrence of conflict in the long term also depend on the ability of the UN's personnel to deter threats and respond to security incidents. In other words, "while the peacebuilders may not be able to function without the peacekeepers' support, the peacekeepers have no exit without the peacebuilders' work" (UN, 2000, p. 5).

Due to the complementarity between positive and negative peace, the Brahimi Report suggested that peacekeepers should be authorised to use force for self-defence and secure the implementation of mandate activities. In addition, it also proposed that peacekeepers should receive normative and operational support to protect civilians in conflict zones. The centrality attributed to civilians meant that peace operations should deploy a bigger, better-equipped, and trained contingent that could act as a deterrence force. As Kenkel (2013) states, it is because of this orientation toward civilian protection that peace operations quickly unfold into operations[6] anchored in Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which authorise the use of force as a strategy for promoting international peace and security.

Regarding peacebuilding policies, the Report recommended active, multidimensional engagement with local communities to improve welfare. This strategy goes hand in hand with a democratisation process that encompasses not only holding fair elections but also promoting a human rights culture. Additionally, the Brahimi Report discussed the role

6. The first peace operations deployed by the UN during the Cold War were characterised by mandates focused on monitoring activities, containing conflicts, and ensuring negative peace. This model was succeeded, in the early 1990s, by missions that incorporates civilian tasks to support the implementation of peace agreements. As Kenkel (2013) argues, these missions were based on Chapter VI of the Charter and had limited capacity concerning the use of force by peacekeepers.

of police reform, restoring the rule of law, strengthening institutions, and promoting human rights in the aftermath of wars as strategies to achieve long-term peace. Finally, it is asserted that the UN must include demobilisation and social reintegration programmes within the scope of multidimensional peace operations to accelerate these processes and prevent the resurgence of armed conflicts (UN, 2000).

Broadly speaking, the normative and operational transformations outlined in the Brahimi Report culminated in the publication of the Capstone Doctrine[7] in 2008. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, the UN Under-Secretary--General for Peacekeeping Operations at that time, described it as the result of an effort to systematise normative frameworks, principles, institutional resources, and experiences related to peace operations and translate them into clear directives, focal areas, guidelines, policies, and standard operating procedures (DPKO; DFS, 2008). According to the document, peace operations should be understood as broad political processes that require a multidimensional approach that demands an engagement with state and non-state actors to revamp local institutions and structures and eliminate current and potential causes of violent conflict. In the report, the multidimensionality of this approach is structured around three sequential and overlapping phases – stabilisation, peace consolidation, and long-term recovery and development. More importantly, the Capstone Doctrine organised tasks and actors in three focal areas – security, humanitarian assistance, and development – building a strong nexus between them. The expectation expressed by the UN was that a reconstruction process that effectively coordinated the work of international and local actors and combined actions of the focal areas would be able to transform states and societies, building the foundation of long-lasting peace.

In sum, the Brahimi report advanced in several aspects, reflecting on the necessary changes for peace operations to truly function as an instrument of peace promotion. However, some issues are not addressed in-depth, thereby leaving relevant gaps. One of these issues is the limited discussion on the relationship between the UN and regional organisations, especially after the emergence of hybrid peace operations. The document made a superficial analysis of command and control issues of missions, abstained from a debate on conflict prevention measures, and reflected little on civil-military interaction. Additionally, it has not discussed much on the relationship between the UN and local actors and left a resounding silence about gender issues. In any case, the report took an important step towards more effective missions, thus paving the way for fundamental reforms in the doctrine of peace operations, manifested later in the Capstone Doctrine, and preparing the UN for the challenges brought by contemporary armed conflicts (BELLAMY; WILLIAMS, 2010). Despite the differences between these documents, the principles, guidelines, and rules of engagement presented throughout the Brahimi Report and Capstone Doctrine indicate that both pointed in the same direction and sought to create a doctrinal culture based on a multidimensional approach to peace promotion.

7. Officially, 'United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines' (DPKO; DFS, 2008).

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'A House Divided Against Itself'? Peace operations doctrinal culture after the Brahimi Report

Recent reports released by the UN have posed challenges to the smooth implementation of the Brahimi Report and Capstone Doctrine, and have demonstrated that the UN seems now like a "House Divided Against Itself" (KARLSRUD, 2018, p. 97). The differences dividing the organisation concern, but are not limited to, the use of force and rules of engagement adopted in contemporary peace operations. In this section, we develop this argument by analysing three UN documents: the HIPPO Report, Cruz Report, and A4P. We then indicate that despite the evident inconsistencies among these recent normative outcomes, mandates of peace operations have been quite similar in stressing the need for stabilisation missions to ensure a safe environment for peacekeepers to operate and eventually build sustainable peace.

The HIPPO Report, commissioned by the High-level Independent Panel, was put together by the former UN Secretary-General (UNSG) Ban Ki-moon. It focused on taking stock of past experiences to review peace operations and political missions and maintained the basilar principles of peace operations. The Panel sought to review bureaucratic, organisational, and tactical issues to ensure the effective deployment of peace operations and implementation of its political goals. The recommendations foreseen in the HIPPO Report sought to cover four broad areas. First, it has emphasised the priority of political processes over military onslaughts. Second, it framed peace operations as an adaptive mechanism that must be field-focused to tackle specific needs in different conflict zones. Third, it insisted on maintaining and strengthening partnerships with governmental and non-governmental organisations. Finally, it reaffirmed that the goal of peace operations must be saving civilians and improving their livelihoods in conflict-affected settings (UN, 2015; UNSC, 2016). This last point is of great relevance as the Report understands that UN peace operations have to be a "people-centred" (KARLSRUD, 2018, p. 23) mechanism for peace promotion.

Accordingly, like in the Brahimi Report, the HIPPO Report stresses the need for military contingents in peace operations to be trained and equipped to act in self-defence to tackle asymmetric threats. The use of force was put as essential to protect mandates of peace operations and the lives of innocent civilians, UN uniformed and civilian personnel. However, as expressed throughout the document, resorting to force does not imply involvement in counterterrorism operations (UN, 2015).[8] Indeed, it bluntly states that UN troops are bereft of adequate training to support such activities: "The Panel believes that United Nations peacekeeping missions, owing to their composition and character, are not suited to engage in military counter-terrorism operations. They lack the specific equipment, intelligence, logistics, capabilities and specialised military preparation required, among other aspects" (UN, 2015, p. 45).

Counterinsurgency focuses on neutralising non-state armed groups in a way to achieve military victory rather than political settlement. In theory, the argument in the HIPPO Report is that peace operations

should prioritise ending wars through negotiated agreements. In practice, however, military personnel within stabilisation peace operations are now taking on tasks to assist national governments or a coalition of states in their struggles against internal and/or transnational threats (CARVALHO DE OLIVEIRA, 2020; KARLSRUD, 2018; UN, 2015).

The imbalance between doctrine and practice, we argue, is due to the multiple normative controversies regarding the use of force and the role of military contingent deployed in conflict-affected zones. From the Brahimi to the HIPPO Report, the force would be used exclusively for self-defence and tactical purposes. More recently, however, the Cruz Report (2017) suggested an active posture to safeguard the demobilisation and elimination of non-state armed groups preventing UN officials from achieving their goals. As it has emerged within a context of increased military fatalities, the Cruz Report was mostly concerned with disclosing risks imposed on UN troops deployed in environments where there is no peace to keep. It suggested reforms in four main aspects to ensure the effective performance of military contingent within peace operations. First, it demanded a renewal in the mindset shared by UN Headquarters and member states, which were figuratively described as suffering from a "Chapter VI Syndrome" (UN, 2017, p. 11). According to the Cruz Report, the UN should tackle this syndrome of pursuing political settlements by adopting a proactive and military instance against asymmetric threats. Second, it also has drawn attention to the need for better training and cutting-edge equipment and resources. Third, the document advocated for a lighter footprint to avoid troops' exposure to risks (UN, 2017).

While previous reports were concerned with keeping the balance between the use of force and the principle of impartiality, the Cruz Report stressed that several missions already operate outside the core principles, championing an approach that clashes directly with the ideas of consent, impartiality, and minimal use of force. The report suggests a "proactive posture in self-defence" consisting of peacekeepers taking "the initiative to use force to eliminate threats and end impunity for attackers by quickly organising special operations. Bases must become a point of irradiating security. Overwhelming force is necessary to defeat and gain the respect of hostile actors" (UN, 2017, p. 10). This goes against the recommendations in the Brahimi Report that the use of force should be limited and used only for self-defence and defence of civilians. Thus, the propositions in the Cruz Report run the risk of undermining the effective implementation of the Brahimi Report.

Boutellis (2018) identifies two main risks in pursuing the strategy put together in the Cruz Report. First, the author argues that the document reduced the complexity of reforming peace operations proposing only military-related revisions. As a result, the solution put forward in the report sounds unrealistic because larger contingents have shown to be ineffective in avoiding fatalities and creating sustainable political arrangements. This also goes against the recommendations in the Brahimi Report that missions should be designed and deployed efficiently according to empirical evidence. Second, 'proactive self-defence' compromises the image of the UN as an impartial arbiter of conflicts, which is a core value

8. This aspect is particularly important because, as Peter (2015) states, stabilization operations conducted by the UN since 2010 seem to mirror the model of military intervention carried out by the USA and its allies in Afghanistan and Iraq in the context of the global war on terror. The reproduction of this model is based on the military engagement of UN peacekeepers in support of government forces fighting non-state armed groups which lack legitimacy and international support.

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9. Two underlying implications arise from this 'proactive approach'. One is that one-sided support makes the UN a biased actor, which could make peacekeepers lose their legal backing under international law. The other one is the possibility of compromising trust among the UN and non-state actors, undermining the ability of the UN to create sustainable political settlements (BOUTELLIS, 2018).

within UN peace operations. The proactive approach suggested in the Cruz Report, as Boutellis (2018) shows, directly benefits national governments in asserting their military victories over non-state armed groups[9].

Considering the concerns raised in the HIPPO and Cruz Report, the UNSG launched the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) (2019) to address contemporary challenges faced by peace operations. Endorsed by 154 member states, the A4P established 45 commitments around 8 priority areas – politics, women, peace and security, protection, safety and security, performance and accountability, peacebuilding and sustaining peace, partnerships, and conduct of peacekeepers and peace operations. Following the recommendations made in the HIPPO Report, it seeks to promote, maintain and advance political solutions as the best alternative for conflict resolution and peacebuilding. On the other hand, inspired by the Cruz Report, the document also took the promotion of the safety and security of peacekeepers deployed in conflict zones as a priority, although addressing this latter subject rather vaguely. Member states and the Secretariat ensured that they would bring to justice those perpetrating criminal acts against UN troops and civilian personnel and agreed on providing well-trained troops and full logistical support to UN personnel. Still, the A4P shies away from explaining how they would provide such training, what type of training they would provide, and, more importantly, for what purposes. In this sense, the document's lack of clarity highlights an existing and unresolved tension in the doctrinal culture: the provision of safety for civilian and uniformed personnel on the one hand, and the maintenance of impartiality for pursuing political solutions on the other.

Practical developments in stabilisation peace operations: creating new and accentuating remaining challenges?

Thus far, this article has demonstrated that the Brahimi Report's goal of creating a coherent doctrinal culture for peace operations has been weakened by several normative controversies in different UN documents. Thus, the DPO[10] today is a divided house that has been unable to produce a comprehensive doctrine after the publication of the Capstone Doctrine in 2008. While the *principles* around peace operations remain unclear, since 2010, the *practices* authorised in the context of stabilisation peace operations has made big strides towards its transformation into a military-centred, robust enterprise[11]. The aim of this section is thus to analyse the mismatch between norm and practice in stabilisation peace operations and how it might impact the UN's credibility and capacity to achieve the far-reaching goals presented in the Brahimi Report and Capstone Doctrine.

10. Following a resolution of the UNGA, the "Department of Peacekeeping Operations" (DPKO) became the "Department of Peace Operations" (DPO), and the "Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs" was created. These changes were part of a broader effort to restructure the peace and security pillar of the UN to prioritize prevention and sustaining peace, address fragmentation; enhance coordination; and enhance the effectiveness and coherence of peacekeeping operations and special political missions (UNGA, 2018).

11. Among these practical developments, it is relevant to mention the organisation's omission in the face of critical scenarios of armed conflict and the emergence of stabilisation as what seems to be a new framework of peace operations that has overshadowed multidimensionality.

If we compare the UN's actions in the face of critical scenarios of armed conflict in 2009, soon after the publication of the Capstone Doctrine, and in 2019, there is a noteworthy difference. According to information available from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP, 2021), in 2009, there were 29 states taken over by political violence. In the same year, the number of active UN peace operations was 19, which corresponds to

65,5%. In contrast, in 2019, the UCDP identified 31 states taken over by political violence, while the UN had only 13 active peace operations (UN PEACEKEEPING, 2019), corresponding to 41,9%.[12] This reduction in the number of missions seems to be associated with two aspects. First, a change in the strategy for promoting peace within the UNSC, which has preferred to deploy small political missions, restricted to monitoring and verification tasks, that require fewer resources from the budget earmarked for peace operations. An interesting fact is that no major operation has been authorised by the UNSC since 2014 (OSLAND; PETER, 2021). The second aspect is related to the financial budget of peace operations. Despite the success achieved by the Brahimi Report in creating an independent fund for peace operations which is based on countries' GDP, there are still many cases of debts in arrears. The United States under the Trump administration is an example. The government refused to pay off its contributions for both the peace operations and the UN budget, accumulating a total debt of US$2 billion at the end of 2020 (DE CONING, 2021). Furthermore, peace operations are expected to minimise expenses due to the context of the ongoing global recession caused by COVID-19, thereby making the authorisation of comprehensive missions less likely (DE CONING, 2021).

12. We have considered only the number of states taken by political violence, not the total number of active conflicts in the years under review.

Behind these numbers, the challenges to international peace and security that the UN had to face in the past decade included grave and systematic violations of human rights and international humanitarian law – and much disagreement over the costs and benefits of international response to protect populations and minorities (WELSH, 2016). Against this background, the consensus that seems to have existed around the need for multilateral and multidimensional action in face of violent conflict, expressed by the Brahimi Report, has shown signs of weakening.

In recent years, the UN has been widely criticised for not playing a more assertive role in critical situations such as political violence in Yemen, political instability in Burundi, ethnic cleansing in Myanmar, and the rise of violent extremism in various parts of the world – not to mention the crisis in Syria. As Welsh (2016) puts it, if the lessons drawn from Libya are all about the costs of actions, Syria tells us much about the costs of inaction in a situation where thousands of deaths and millions of refugees and displaced persons have met an embarrassingly timid international response.

And even when the UN did respond by authorising the deployment of peace operations, their profile contrasts with the normative and operational framework outlined in the Brahimi Report and the Capstone Doctrine – and more recent documents have done little to change. The latest peace operations established by the UN seem more concerned with reducing direct violence than with promoting positive peace through multidimensional reconstruction processes. And this change did not happen without particularly damaging effects on the credibility of the Organisation and its role in maintaining international peace and security.

Especially since 2010 what has been observed is the emergence of stabilisation missions, understood by Tull (2018) as a new subcategory of peace operations that fuels the dilemma regarding the use of force. As he

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explains, stabilisation missions are sent to places where violence is widespread and employed by multiple actors. Furthermore, they are usually deployed in countries that lack a political process for pacification. This reality, observed in the cases of CAR, DR Congo, and Mali suggests that, in a continuum between robust peacekeeping[13] and peace-enforcement, peace operations would be approaching the latter and not the former. This tendency to deploy blue helmets to states where there is fragile or even non-existent peace to keep could be explained by the apparent inefficiency of peace operations attributed to the restricted use of force (TULL, 2018). Charles Hunt (2017) understands that this transformation, which considers stabilisation as a political strategy, has become an explicit objective and an implicit logic of mission design.

Thus, although stabilisation lacks a precise definition, it is clear that the profile of mandates has changed significantly[14]. On the one hand, one can observe the shrinkage in goals related to institutional reconstruction and humanitarian assistance, and an absence of development assistance plans and infrastructure reforms. On the other hand, missions have become more militarised and often include the use of robust force and high financial expenses. This emerging profile represents an important change if compared to some of the prominent examples of peace operations authorised between 2000 and 2009, such as East Timor, Haiti, and Liberia, in which the presence of reconstruction tasks informed by the nexus between security, development, and humanitarian assistance was noteworthy (see BLANCO, 2015; GUERRA; BLANCO, 2017; ESTEVES; CARVALHO, 2011; SOUZA; MENDES, 2020).

By analysing the components of the mandates of UN peace operations from 1948 to 2018, it is possible to identify at least four major moments (and models) of peace operations. In general terms, we can say that during the Cold War, disputes between the superpowers limited the number and scope of missions, so that between 1948 and 1989, most mandates were aimed at monitoring peace and ceasefire agreements, withdrawal of forces, borders, buffer and security zones in conflicts between states. In the post-Cold War period, the bet on peace operations as an instrument for the maintenance of international peace and security was renewed, and the missions authorised between 1990 and 1999 were aimed at containing intrastate conflicts. However, the difficulty of dealing with the complexity of these conflicts based on containment alone opened room for transformative proposals, such as those contained in the Brahimi Report and later unfolded in the Capstone Doctrine. Informed by the normative and operational guidelines set in these documents, peace operations deployed between 2000 and 2009 acquired a multidimensional character, with a considerable expansion of the components of the mandates. However, the normative thickening of peace operations has resulted in the UN becoming involved in complex, long-term, and costly peace processes, which soon met with multiple fronts of resistance. In addition, there was a rising concern about countering violent extremism, to which the organisation was being increasingly asked to respond. Thus, the political commitment to reconstruction operations as instruments for

maintaining international order seems to have waned and, since 2010, a new profile of missions, as described by Tull (2018), has emerged.

Two other aspects seem to have influenced the practical development of contemporary peace operations. First, and relatedly, the fear regarding peacekeeping casualties affects the development of the contemporary approach. For the first time since the 1990s, there has been a significant increase in the number of peacekeepers dying in the line of duty due to intentional attacks (UN, 2017; WILLIAMS, 2020). As evidenced in the Cruz Report, this problem shaped peacekeepers demands for robustness in the use of force as a form of preventive self-defence (UN, 2017). Second, in the first half of the past decade, some great powers within the UNSC understood that peace operations are a more legitimate, less contested approach to countering violent extremism. As Karlsrud (2018) states, the United States, France, and United Kingdom have played a vital role in trying to include their doctrine and military experiences in the UN framework for peace operations, mainly due to the interest in combating terrorism and violent extremism resorting to robust use of force. Indeed, they have taken responsibility for setting the guidelines of UNSC resolutions and served as penholders[15] of most mission mandates (WILLIAMS, 2020).

Components such as the protection of civilians, which had gained prominence in the context of multidimensional peace operations, remain important. However, the logic of stabilisation and the use of force to combat spoilers and warrant state authority has been guiding UN interventions in CAR, DR Congo, and Mali. In all three cases, the word 'stabilisation' is part of the name of the peace operation[16]. As Table 1 below shows, mission goals involve support for governments aiming at restoring state authority. In addition to being authorised under Chapter VII and having the authorisation to use force in self-defence and defence of the mandate, these missions have a very significant contingent and number of troops. Thus, it takes peace operations to a new level concerning the capacity to use substantive force.

Table 1 – Stabilisation peace operations

Mission	Year	Main Mandate Goals	Contingent	Troops
UN Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO)	2010	Civilian protection	17,474	12,509
		Support for government in stabilisation and peacebuilding efforts		
UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)	2013	Stabilisation of the main population centres and support for the restoration of state authority	16,716	12,956
		Support the implementation of the transition plan		
		Protection of civilians and UN personnel		
UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in CAR (MINUSMA)	2014	Civilian protection	14,929	11,014
		Support for the implementation of the transition process, including efforts in favour of extending state authority and preserving the territorial integrity		
		Facilitate humanitarian assistance		

Source: By the authors, based on UN Peacekeeping (2020).

13. "Robust peacekeeping" is defined as: "a political and operational strategy to signal the intention of a UN mission to implement its mandate and to deter threats to an existing peace process in the face of resistance from spoilers (…) At the tactical level, a robust approach means that contingents may be required to use force in defence of the mandate" (DPKO/DFS, 2009, p.21).

14. Carvalho de Oliveira (2020) demonstrated how the development of ideas of 'stabilisation' in Western powers' military doctrines, with a particular emphasis on US military doctrine, has promoted the reorientation of UN peace operations towards stabilisation goals. These goals often demand troops employ more robust and strategic use force, which often serve the purpose of conducting counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations.

15. This term was employed by Williams (2020, p. 482) to refer to "the actor that leads in drafting Security Council resolutions".

16. MINUSTAH (The United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti), established on 1 June 2004, also had the word 'stabilisation' in its name. However, considering its mandate, MINUSTAH can be classified as a multidimensional operation.

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These peace operations do not prioritise the nexus between security, development, and humanitarian assistance that informed multidimensional peace operations. Instead, the mandates demonstrate that stabilisation missions focus on protecting civilians and supporting national authorities in transitional periods. Moreover, they authorise important exceptions that denote a more robust understanding of what the use of force means for contemporary missions. The authorisation of the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) in 2013 in the context of MONUSCO's mandate is an example of these new understandings. The brigade was deployed to neutralise non-state armed groups and reduce the threat they posed to both state authority and the security of the civilian population, paving the way for stabilisation activities. The Force was authorised to "carry out targeted offensive operations (...) either unilaterally or jointly with the FARDC [Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo], in a robust, highly mobile and versatile manner" (UNSC, 2013a, p. 7). As noted by Osland and Peter (2021), several UNSC resolutions and reports explicitly mention the names of non-state armed groups in Eastern DRC to be neutralised by FIB.

Another unusual scenario was observed in the establishment of MINUSCA, the UN's peace operation in the Central African Republic. The mission's mandate aims to protect civilians and strengthen state authority by supporting the transitional government and disarming militias that threaten the civilian population. However, there is another key exception: the deployment of the Sangaris operation, composed of French troops authorised to use all necessary measures to support MINUSCA's activities (UNSC, 2014).

A very similar situation is observed in the establishment of MINUSMA, which took place amidst active conflict involving armed and terrorist groups in Mali. The operation's mandate authorised a French contingent, the counter-terrorist operation Barkhane, "to use all necessary means [...] to intervene in support of elements of MINUSMA when under imminent and serious threat upon request of the Secretary-General" (UNSC, 2013b, p. 9). As Karlsrud (2018) explains, MINUSMA's mandate evidences a clear tension between a counter-insurgency operation and peacebuilding. While its stabilisation strategies envisaged peacebuilding, the mission engaged militarily in the conflict and disclosed information about the French counter-terrorism operation. The biased performance of peacekeepers in Mali affected the conflict dynamics on the ground. As MINUSMA has been implemented to support Malian authorities, it became the main target of non-state armed groups. Data presented in a UNSC report regarding the situation in Mali shows that between January and March of 2019, attacks by non-state armed groups resulted in the death of 66 blue helmets and other 49 injured (UNSC, 2019). In response to these hostilities, French troops from Operation Barkhane carried out several military onslaughts that caused the death of about 40 insurgents (DUARTE et al., 2019). This example, in particular, also illustrates the reactive dynamics that underpin the conduct of troops in stabilisation operations.

This affects the credibility of peace operations in several ways and undermines its core principles. First, stabilisation operations break with the principle of impartiality by granting exclusive support to local authorities and elites that, in most cases, are highly contested by their local population. This is clear in the activities of MINUSCA, MINUSMA, and MONUSCO, missions in which special forces were authorised to deter and neutralise non-state armed groups. Accordingly, the idea of limited and strategic use of force seems to lose ground within this contemporary approach to peace operations in which peacekeepers use overwhelming force proactively and reactively. Finally, the principle of consent today seems to be limited to the endorsement of the host state. Thus, in many cases, stabilisation missions operate in environments in which non-state armed groups have not agreed to their presence on the ground (DE CONING, 2021; PETER, 2019). As Peter (2019) puts it, over the years, peace operations have managed to adapt without losing sight of its basic principles that have been reaffirmed in the Brahimi Report and Capstone Doctrine. However, stabilisation operations are a contemporary challenge for keeping the core principles because the practical developments discussed in this article point to a rather different – and opposite – direction.

In addition to the challenges discussed thus far, it is also appalling that, despite this drive to engage militarily in armed conflicts, peacekeepers do not receive adequate training to perform robust tasks effectively. This evidences the continuity of the problem of training, which was crucial in the reform proposed by the Brahimi Report. As discussed thoroughly in the Cruz Report, "many military contingents arrive in missions lacking needed individual and collective skills, equipment and proper mindset. [...] many TCCs [Troop Contributing Countries] deploy units unprepared to implement mandated tasks in hostile operational environments" (UN, 2017, p. 22). Thus, in addition to being unable to build positive peace, stabilisation operations lack the necessary resources and training to tackle challenges existing in volatile conflict zones. Though the dilemma regarding the unpreparedness of troops remains, it does so in a refashioned way since the current need is to provide extremely robust training to conduct military operations against insurgent groups. When we consider the changing profile of the main contributing states, which has been observable since the beginning of the 21st century, this issue draws even more attention. While in the 1990s the leading roles belonged to developed countries, currently the 5 major suppliers of troops to UN peace operations are developing countries, such as Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Ethiopia, and Rwanda (UN PEACEKEEPING, 2021). As Karlsrud (2018) states, this is a relevant aspect regarding stabilisation missions, since the major African contributors favour robust mandates and partnerships with regional organisations, while the main Asian troop suppliers are more reticent in this respect.

In any case, the unpreparedness of UN troops raises serious questions about the UN's capacity in achieving the controversial goals of stabilisation peace operations. As noted by De Coning (2021), after years since the deployment of operations in the CAR, DR Congo, and Mali, such missions have been unable to halt the widespread direct violence in these countries. Unsurprisingly, stabilisation operations have also demonstrated an inability to create long-term sustainable peace. Even though sta-

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bilisation mandates are disengaged with the peacebuilding agenda (OSLAND; PETER, 2021), it seems to ignore that "many of the armed groups against which the new UN peacekeeping mandates are directed often enjoy widespread local popular support" (DE CONING, 2021, p. 202). Therefore, it seems unlikely that the UN will be able to build positive peace while seeking to eliminate these groups.

Stabilisation missions show a significant increase in the willingness of the UNSC to authorise the use of robust force in peace operations. Nevertheless, it is important to notice that this operational shift has not been accompanied by changes in terms of the agreed doctrines and principles. This mismatch between norm and practice suggests that it was the challenges faced by missions in the field – often inspired by the interests of major powers in countering violent extremism – that have informed most transformations in peace operations over the past decade (KARLSRUD, 2018). These practical developments, however, can lead to unexpected and unintended consequences for both the effectiveness and credibility of peace operations. Twenty years after Brahimi, it seems that a considerable share of the challenges the Report tried to address remain – and might be pushing the UN away from promoting long-term peace.

Conclusions

In this paper, we have shown that the Brahimi Report (2000) was intended to put peace operations back on track after the great challenges and failures that threatened its credibility in the 1990s and can be considered a milestone in the emergence of multidimensional operations. Against a backdrop in which doctrine seemed insufficient to face problems in the field, the Brahimi Report reaffirmed the core principles of peace operations as a basis from which a broad process of normative and operational transformation was envisaged. However, twenty years after Brahimi, the UN is once again facing a mismatch between its doctrinal culture and practical developments, characterised by the reaffirmation of core principles on the one hand and the intervention of peacekeepers in support of host governments on the other. As we have shown, recent operations have moved away from post-conflict peacebuilding tasks and approached a stabilisation strand, reframing the traditional conflict management tool instead of promoting effective conflict resolution. These operations do not seek the consent of armed groups or to be seen by them as impartial, besides using excessive force to deter such groups, thereby resulting in a misalignment with the core principles. If the UN does not wage war, stabilisation missions might be crossing the limit of robust peace operations, taking on stabilisation tasks to support host governments and neutralise armed opposition.

The doctrinal culture is now under challenge due to the many *practical developments* discussed thoroughly in this article. The engagement of the USA, UK, and France seems to have played a critical role, as these countries have introduced their stabilisation cultures within the scope of peace operations without an agreed doctrine about it. Their interest in demobilising groups portrayed as terrorists is also relevant because

implies the authorisation of missions to contexts where there is no peace to keep. For this reason, mandates, especially stabilisation ones, have become more reactive and attributed to intervention brigades the right to use excessive force against non-state armed groups.

Accordingly, we showed that some challenges raised in the Brahimi Report remain, while other contemporary problems result from stabilisation missions. Defaults and difficulties in securing financing for peace operations are challenges that remain – and the current context of global recession amidst the COVID-19 pandemic points to gloomy scenarios in this regard. Moreover, the UN struggles to deploy troops with adequate qualifications and training, an aspect already widely criticised in the Brahimi Report. We also identified three central challenges related to stabilisation missions. The first is the increase in fatalities caused by violent acts, evidencing that local belligerent parties perceive the UN as a partial actor in where it intervenes. The second challenge is the prolongation of civil wars in the CAR, DR Congo, and Mali, which suggests the inability of stabilisation in ending civil strife. Finally, the normalisation of the use of force is a practical development that contrasts with peace operations identity and might undermine the possibilities of constructing long-term positive peace. Due to the remaining and contemporary challenges raised in this article, it seems urgent to re-discuss the reform of peace operations if they are to remain an instrument for building the positive peace they once envisioned.

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