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# Improving Security Council Practice in Mission Settings

by Adam Day



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### About the UN Transitions Project

UNDP, DPO and DPPA – supported by the Swedish International Development Agency and the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office – launched an innovative joint project in 2014 to improve the way in which UN transition processes are being planned and managed across the organization. Since its inception, the UN Transitions Project has contributed to a more timely, forward-looking and integrated approach to UN transitions that positions the UN to consolidate peacebuilding gains and sustaining peace after mission withdrawal by providing: (1) rapid and integrated country support, (2) policy development, knowledge management and technical guidance, (3) capacity development to UN Headquarters, UN mission and UN Country Team staff, and (4) strategic collaboration with Member States and other stakeholders that play a key role in sustaining peace and development beyond mission withdrawal.

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# Executive Summary

This policy paper was developed in partnership with the UN Joint Project on Transitions and supported by the Government of the United Kingdom. It covers the role of the Security Council in mandating and overseeing UN transitions, typically as peace operations are drawn down or significantly reconfigured. Based on an extensive literature review and interviews with UN experts and Council members, the paper explores the evolution of Council practice over the past thirty years. Drawing from this practice, it offers concrete recommendations how Council-led transitions processes can be planned and managed in a proactive, integrated and forward-looking manner, better positioning the UN to provide support to host countries in often fragile moments.

The paper is divided into four sections: (1) the evolution of Security Council practice on transitions from the early 1990s to present; (2) recurring challenges in transition processes in the Council, including financial cliffs, elections and risks of relapse; (3) a framework for mandating a transition process, drawing from past practice; and (4) conclusions about the future of UN transitions in the field.

In addition to more general lessons and considerations, it offers eleven concrete recommendations for the Security Council, as follows:

1. Build exit into the initial mandate
2. Engage national and regional actors from the outset
3. Balance “bottom up” approaches with clear guidance from New York
4. Demand early, dynamic and integrated planning from missions and UNCTs
5. Treat transitions as reconfigurations, not handovers
6. Consider the pros and cons of phased withdrawals
7. Demand independent strategic reviews focused on risk
8. Avoid “double transitions”
9. Offer clear achievable benchmarks, and necessary conditions for withdrawal
10. Treat economic recovery as crucial to prevent relapse
11. Look for leverage in transitions

Finally, the paper provides suggestions for improving the daily working methods of the Council, including around informal problem solving, finding unity within the E-10, the practice of joint penholders, greater contact with the field, and engagement with the broader UN family in country.

# Introduction

Over the past three decades, the UN Security Council has mandated and overseen a wide range of UN transitions, typically as peace operations are drawn down or significantly reconfigured alongside the changing role of the UN Country Team.<sup>1</sup> Over time, Council practice has evolved towards a more holistic understanding of the needs of a given country and the support necessary for a sustainable transition process. This shift is based on a recognition that the transition is not of the UN peace operation itself, but rather a reconfiguration of the UN presence in country, including of the UN Country Team and its partners, and of the broader UN engagement.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, the Security Council has not developed a consistent practice regarding transitions, often confronting recurrent challenges without a well-understood sense of what has worked well in the past. Significant differences within the Council as to how to balance competing priorities, address risks that may arise after a mission, or articulate how and when a mission will draw down, have contributed to an ad hoc approach to date. These differences are magnified in the current divisive climate within the Council. With several large peace operations undergoing or likely to start drawdown in the coming period, along with a range of special political missions that may also be reconfigured soon, there is an urgent need to understand better (1) how Security Council mandates and approaches to UN transitions have evolved over time, (2) what dynamics influence transitions mandates in the Council, and (3) how to improve Council practice on mandating transitions.

The following paper has been designed to address these questions, and to offer Security Council members in particular – but also UN staff, and mission leadership – a set of policy-level recommendations for developing and advocating more effective and sustainable transitions processes going forward. The paper is consonant with the Secretary-General’s policy on UN transitions, but is more focused on how Council members can design and support future processes, in particular on an understanding that a UN mission drawdown is only part of a broader configuration of the UN presence in country. It is based upon a comprehensive review of Security Council practice from 1990 to present, interviews with experts within the UN, and with current and former Council members. The paper explores how UN transitions can be planned and managed in a proactive, integrated and forward-looking manner, resulting in the UN being better positioned to provide efficient and effective support to host countries as they progress towards peace and sustainable development. It is divided into four sections: (1) the evolution of Security Council practice on transitions from the early 1990s to present; (2) recurring challenges in transition processes in the Council, including financial cliffs, elections and risks of relapse; (3) a framework for mandating a transition process, drawing from past practice; and (4) conclusions about the future of UN transitions.





# I. Evolution of Security Council Practice on UN Transitions

This section traces Security Council practice on UN transitions from the post-Cold War period to today, identifying some of the key trends and themes that mark transitions processes. It suggests that Council practice was shaped by both geopolitical shifts and changes in the character of armed conflict taking place over thirty years, requiring further evolution in mandating missions to meet emerging challenges.

## A. The 1990s – Expansion of Peacekeeping, Transition as Handover

The end of the Cold War was characterised by a significant improvement in relations amongst the Permanent Five (P-5) members of the Security

Council, allowing for a far more ambitious and expansive approach to threats to global peace and security.<sup>3</sup> Great powers and multilateral institutions, no longer stymied by Cold War rivalry, adopted more far-reaching approaches to conflict management, especially via UN peace operations.<sup>4</sup> In roughly two years, the Council had launched fifteen new peacekeeping operations and adopted nearly 200 resolutions, dramatically expanding the scope of what constituted a “threat to international peace and security” and the types of operations deployed.<sup>5</sup>

During this period, the size and shape of peacekeeping became more varied as the Council mandated several small missions (UNGOMAP in Afghanistan, MINURSO in Western Sahara and UNMOT in Tajikistan) along with much larger

missions than ever before (UNTAC in Cambodia, UNSOM II in Somalia and UNPROFOR II in the former Yugoslavia).<sup>6</sup> Importantly, the Council built a practice of mandating successor missions, several legally distinct operations in the same country: in Angola, UNAVEM I, II and III were deployed over several years; in Somalia UNSOM I and II were mandated in succession; and in Haiti UNMIH, UNSMIH, UNTMIH and MIPONUH were all separate operations that preceded the missions deployed in the 2000s.<sup>7</sup> These two trends – the rise of much more varied kinds of missions and the growth in successor missions – provide important context for the early development of mission transitions.

Three notable Council practices arose around the transitions of peace operations during this period, either as they closed down or were modified into different UN presences. Firstly, the Council mandated several missions to **transition from a peacekeeping operation (PKO) to a special political mission (SPM)**. For example, the PKO in El Salvador (UNOSAL) had been tasked by the Council in 1991 to oversee a peace process and national elections, but was reduced to an SPM (MINUSAL) in 1995 when the electoral process was complete.<sup>8</sup> After mandating a PKO to Angola (MONUA) in 1996, the Council subsequently oversaw a gradual downsizing of the mission and eventual transition into an SPM (UNOA).<sup>9</sup> The peacekeeping mission in Central African Republic (MINURCA) transitioned into an SPM (BONUCA) following the 1999 presidential elections (15 years later a successor SPM was subsumed into a new peacekeeping operation).<sup>10</sup> This form of transition from PKO to SPM reflected the relative success of the peacekeeping portions of some missions,<sup>11</sup> and the Council's recognition that small, political presences could address the remaining risks adequately. This practice was continued and modified in some of the larger, multi-dimensional missions considered in the next section.

However, not all transitions in this era took place on the basis of successful implementation of the missions' mandates, or indeed unity within the Security Council. In Somalia, the Council transitioned UNOSOM II from a PKO to an SPM in 1995 following brutal attacks on UN peacekeepers and a lack of progress on the main objectives of the mission.<sup>12</sup> In Rwanda, the Council called for the withdrawal of UNAMIR without any agreed follow-on peace operation.<sup>13</sup> And both UNAVEM II (Angola) and UNPROFOR II (Bosnia Herzegovina) shut down without achieving core aspects of their mandates.<sup>14</sup> In these settings, the Council was faced with UN transitions during conflicts with "no peace to keep," and without a clear way forward via traditional peace operations. In the cases of Rwanda and Bosnia Herzegovina, the Council innovated significantly by mandating international tribunals to address the large-scale human rights violations (the hybrid court for Cambodia also falls into this category). In other settings, such as Somalia, the creation of a follow-on SPM was eventually accompanied by an African Union-led peace support operation to address the continuing security threats in country.<sup>15</sup> Across these so-called "failed" missions, a common approach by the Council was increasingly to emphasize the need for **nationally- and regionally-led work beyond the life of the mission**.<sup>16</sup>

Taken together, the missions in the post-Cold War period offer important examples of the Council mandating transitions from PKOs to other UN configurations, including SPMs, international tribunals, or other entities. Typically, these transitions were time-bound, with dates for the mission drawdown clearly spelled out in the mandate, and little guidance regarding the conditions needed for a sustainable process. This practice evolved significantly with the rise of more complex missions, including those with an executive mandate and eventually the multidimensional missions of the 2000s.

## B. A brief experiment with transitional administrations – Timor-Leste and the Balkans

The UN's experiment with transitional administrations in Timor-Leste and the Balkans has been thoroughly researched and is widely considered to be a high watermark of UN intervention, unlikely to be repeated.<sup>17</sup> However, Council practice around their drawdown has created an important – and not entirely helpful – precedent for subsequent mission transitions. This section briefly touches on the advent of the Council's "handover to national authorities" mandates.

In Timor-Leste, Kosovo, and Eastern Slavonia, UN missions were mandated with executive authority, on an understanding that progressive withdrawal would be linked to the ability of the national authorities to assume responsibilities over time. For example, the UN mission in Timor-Leste (UNTAET) was mandated to "delegate progressively further authority" to local authorities until full transfer to the government allowed for the end of the mission.<sup>18</sup> Though less well-known, the UN transitional administration in Eastern Slavonia (UNTAES) was mandated with a transition based upon a "gradual devolution of executive responsibility ... commensurate with the demonstrated ability of Croatia to reassure the Serb population and successfully complete peaceful reintegration."<sup>19</sup> Here, the conditions for withdrawal were highly subjective, and predicated upon a progressive improvement in inter-ethnic relations (notably something well beyond the scope of the UN mission to deliver). The UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) maintains a similarly ambitious civilian executive mandate,<sup>20</sup> which has continued even after the 2008 declaration of independence by Kosovo itself.<sup>21</sup> Though UNMIK has not undergone a drawdown process, in interviews with experts

there was a clear understanding that such a transition would also depend upon increases in the capacity of national authorities to carry out executive responsibilities (as well as US-Russia dynamics over Kosovo, as they are not aligned in the Council).

Two significant aspects of Council practice can be drawn from the experiences in Timor-Leste and the Balkans. First, the executive authority granted to these missions created an **enormously ambitious scope of work for the UN**, and a very difficult process of envisaging an end state for the mission on the ground. Experts have criticised the Council for failing to plan realistically for the exit of these missions, for creating a scope of work that defies an exit strategy, and for fostering a "culture of dependency" between the local government on the UN.<sup>22</sup> As will be explored in the next section, there often appears to be an inverse relationship between the ambition of a mandate and the viability of a mission's exit strategy.

Secondly, the Council's approach to the drawdown of transitional administrations has been driven by a **linear understanding of progressive handover of responsibilities to the national authorities**. This may have been logical in a setting where the UN possessed full executive authority – and where the sovereignty of the state had been temporarily suspended by the Security Council – but it sets a poor precedent for subsequent missions. The notion that the UN would "hand over" security or rule of law responsibilities to the Congolese during the transition of MONUSCO, for example, appeared absurd to the Congolese authorities during the 2016 negotiations over an exit strategy; their view was that the government had never relinquished these roles during the tenure of the mission.<sup>23</sup> Similar discussions around the transfer of security responsibilities have taken place in the ongoing UNAMID transition in Darfur, where language of "handover" is jarring to a government that never felt it had relinquished primary responsibility for security. As will be detailed in subsequent sections,



the notion of handover, most prevalent in missions with executive authority, has unhelpfully crept into subsequent transitions.

## C. The 2000s to early 2010s – Benchmarking Multidimensional Peacekeeping

This section describes the conflict context for the rise of multidimensional missions, and the Council practice that emerged in response to it. It suggests that the growth of multidimensional peace operations was in part a reflection of conflict trends in the twenty-first century, as well as an increasing willingness of the Council to intervene in the internal matters of fragile states. The result was a range of peace operations with very complex mandates, ambitious end states, and often difficult transitions. These were deployed into settings with very low prospect of quick or sustained peace, meaning the need for peacekeeping was likely to persist. Council practice during this period evolved significantly, with continuing impacts to this day.

After declining for much of the 1990s, the number of major civil wars almost tripled between 2000 and 2015, including an upsurge in minor civil wars driven in part by the expansion of jihadist groups.<sup>24</sup> This trend contributed to a significant rise in battle-related deaths, with 2015 listed as the deadliest year since the Cold War, while rates of displacement due to conflict reached an all-time high.<sup>25</sup> The growth of intra-state wars also meant that so-called “rebels” were increasingly responsible for the majority of civilian deaths, making non-state actors more fundamental than ever for addressing conflict and post-conflict transitions.

Not only did conflict become more deadly and intractable, it became harder to resolve via traditional political settlements. Nearly 60 per cent of conflicts that had ended in the early 2000s relapsed within

five years, while many others persisted for years without a clear military victory.<sup>26</sup> Transnational organised crime emerged as a major factor in sustaining such conflicts, often undermining incentives for armed groups to enter into political settlements.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the internationalization of civil wars—i.e. increased involvement of regional and international actors in domestic conflicts—has tended to make civil wars deadlier and more protracted. The involvement of terrorist groups in many of today’s most prominent conflicts has complicated peace-making, fostering a securitized mentality among international actors and often limiting the scope for political engagement.<sup>28</sup> Taken together, these factors have tended to undermine state capacity and authority in areas of conflict, making state failure and/or extreme fragility a major factor in conflict management and resolution.

Responding to these trends, UN peace operations continued to grow and evolve during the first decade of the twenty-first century. In total, the UN deployed 21 new peacekeeping missions between 1999 and 2013, while the overall peacekeeping budget grew from \$1.3 billion to nearly \$8 billion.<sup>29</sup> The vast majority of the more than 100,000 peacekeepers deployed were based in Africa, a significant geographic shift from earlier practice. Similarly, while in 1993, there were only three field-based special political missions this number reached 12 in 2000, and 15 in 2013.<sup>30</sup> Crucially, twenty-first century peace operations became “multidimensional,” with mandates reaching far beyond traditional monitoring/support to peace processes to include tasks of extension of state authority, protection of civilians, gender, human rights, stabilisation, and rule of law support.<sup>31</sup> This was a direct response to the conflicts being addressed in places like: Afghanistan, DRC, Iraq, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d’Ivoire. Civil wars and political tensions had stripped the countries of governance capacities, leaving deeply divided societies in need of sustained peacebuilding support, while also continuing to pose large-scale and immediate risks to civilians. As mandates



UN Photo / Marco Dormino

expanded to address these risks, the transitional processes to shift and draw down missions became far more complex.

Of the major peacekeeping missions deployed during this period, nearly all underwent some form of transition. In Sierra Leone, the large PKO (UNAMSIL) transitioned to an SPM (UNIOSIL), with the Council calling for a joint transition plan that would reflect the peacebuilding needs of the country.<sup>32</sup> In 2008, the multidimensional operation in Haiti (MINUSTAH) was mandated to initiate its transition into a police-led mission, a process that was subsequently interrupted by the 2010 earthquake and 2011 cholera outbreak, but was completed in 2017.<sup>33</sup> Following a demand by the Chadian president for the mission's withdrawal in 2010, the Security Council mandated a rapid and total drawdown of the UN mission in Chad (MINURCAT).<sup>34</sup> In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the UN Mission (MONUC) underwent significant reconfigurations, becoming a stabilisation mission (MONUSCO) in 2010, acquiring an offensive military capability in 2013, and undergoing three Council-mandated exit strategy

discussions with the government in the years that followed.<sup>35</sup> In 2011, the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) initiated a complicated transition involving the drawdown of the mission headquartered in Khartoum and creation of two new missions in Abyei and South Sudan.<sup>36</sup> In 2016, both the missions in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and Liberia (UNMIL) began their drawdown processes, focusing on transitions to post-conflict peacebuilding.<sup>37</sup> In 2014, the missions in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) and Burundi (BNUB) closed down, while the second mission in Timor Leste (UNMIT) closed in 2012.

These transitions required far more onerous processes than previous missions, given the breadth of their mandates, the difficulty in identifying whether goals had been fully achieved, and the continuing risk of violence against the civilian populations.<sup>38</sup> In this context, the most important Council practice that emerged was that of **benchmarking**. In mandating the drawdown and exit of a mission, the Council demanded that the Secretary-General develop benchmarks to show progress towards the end state of the mission. Beginning with the mission in Liberia in 2006,<sup>39</sup>

the practice of Council requests for benchmarking expanded rapidly to include nearly every major mission, including in Darfur, Sudan, South Sudan, Côte d'Ivoire, Chad, Central African Republic, Afghanistan, Haiti, Burundi, Timor-Leste and Mali.<sup>40</sup>

While benchmarks differed according to the mandates of each mission, over time Council practice gravitated towards four main areas: (1) security, including the protection of civilians and reduction of overall instability; (2) political progress, often linked to elections; (3) human rights and rule of law; and (4) socio-economic recovery.<sup>41</sup> In some cases, humanitarian benchmarks were included (e.g. benchmarks linked to return of displaced persons in MINURCAT's mandate), and in others benchmarks were linked to specific provisions of peace agreements (e.g. wealth-sharing benchmarks from UNMIS drawn from the underlying peace agreement). Particularly given the growth of integrated missions (those where the leadership also coordinated the humanitarian and development work of the UN in country), benchmarks have over time become broader and less strictly peacekeeping focused.<sup>42</sup>

Benchmarks helpfully offer guideposts for evaluating whether a given setting is progressing in a positive direction, allowing the Council to make more informed assessments about the decision to draw down a mission. According to internal UN policy guidance, benchmarks are crucial for providing the Council with situational awareness, tools for accountability, prioritization, host government engagement, and mission management.<sup>43</sup> In interviews with Council Members, all were positive about the role of benchmarks in guiding transitions processes.

However, Council practice has not always been clear on the specific role of benchmarks: are they conditions that must be met prior to a mission's departure, or merely signposts to inform decision-making? And **how can the Council reconcile an end date with an end state, a mandate that includes both a fixed/final date for the mission,**

**and benchmarks which may or may not be met prior to that date?** In mandating the closure of the mission in Angola in 1996, for example, the Council indicated a firm final date, but later postponed the withdrawal due to lack of continued progress on the peace process.<sup>44</sup> In contrast, the benchmarks provided for MINURCAT's transition out of Chad referred to an aspirational commitment by the host government, and were quite clearly not meant to influence the final date of the mission (in fact, none of the benchmarks was fully met by the time of the mission's exit).<sup>45</sup>

Here, the Council has somewhat helpfully acknowledged the concept of **"core" versus "contextual" benchmarks**.<sup>46</sup> This distinction is based upon the recognition that Council mandates – particularly in multidimensional peacekeeping – often rely upon factors beyond the scope of the mission's direct influence. Resolutions may call upon the government, armed groups, or regional powers to take steps that might be facilitated by the UN, but which are difficult to describe as a mission deliverable.<sup>47</sup> A "core" benchmark would thus be one falling under the mission's purview, and necessary for implementation of the mandate. Importantly, **the Council has not explicitly required that all "core" benchmarks be met in order for a mission to transition out**, thus leaving significant grey areas when it comes to measuring whether enough progress has been made in complex settings.

UNMIL in Liberia was one of the first missions to explicitly define core benchmarks as "markers to measure progress in the achievement of the mandate and conditions needed to ensure a security 'steady-state'; security 'steady-state' is defined as the point at which the national security services and agencies are fully operational and primarily sustained with the Government of Liberia's own resources."<sup>48</sup> Here, indicators included the operational readiness of the Liberian security services to assume full duties across the country, and the mission was expected to contribute to their readiness. In contrast, UNMIL defined contextual

benchmarks as “conditions or factors that could potentially reignite violent conflict or interact with core benchmarks to undermine security,” including issues like economic revitalization, infrastructural development, and some areas of rule of law and human rights.<sup>49</sup> Other missions, such as UNAMA in Afghanistan, have also made distinctions between core and contextual benchmarks, sometimes identifying specific actors responsible for each benchmark.<sup>50</sup>

However, **multidimensional mandates in particular do not easily fall into clean categories of “core” and “contextual.”** Where missions are mandated to support or facilitate peace processes, implementation of the peace agreement is both a core element of the mandate and also significantly in the hands of non-UN actors. For example, UNOCI (Côte d’Ivoire) and UNMIS (Sudan) were both mandated to support peace accords, but the benchmarking process remained ambiguous as to how responsibility would be measured or assigned to the range of stakeholders. MINURSO’s mandate in Western Sahara requires the mission to deliver on a political process that is almost entirely beyond the UN’s influence. UNOCI’s mandate to assist the government with restoration of state authority contained indicators regarding deployment of police: would failure to deploy the police constitute a shortcoming of the mission, the government, or potential other actors involved in the peace process? Across a wide range of missions, similar kinds of support to government-led processes (particularly in areas of security sector reform and extension of state authority) create grey areas when it comes to the utility of benchmarking. One Council Member captured the ambiguity by noting, “In our view, all of the benchmarks are crucial for a successful exit of the mission, but we understand that missions can’t deliver them, and most of them will be unfinished when the mission leaves.”<sup>51</sup>

Ambiguity in benchmarking points both to broad conceptual issues around transitions, and also very practical ones. At the conceptual level, the difficulty in establishing clear benchmarks

and indicators to measure progress against them points to a fundamental question: **how transformative should a peace operation be?**<sup>52</sup> Often, missions are mandated to support broad national transformation, large-scale security sector reform, extension of state authority across enormous geographic areas. How much of this transformation needs to be completed in order for the mission to begin drawing down? In some cases, the indicator can be fairly clear – for example the Council noted that national elections be held in Sierra Leone had been a precursor to the decision to draw down the mission.<sup>53</sup> In others, the benchmark is open to wide interpretation. UNMISS’ benchmarks in South Sudan, for example, refer to the government’s “capacity to prevent, mitigate and resolve conflicts effectively.” While the indicators for this benchmark are not necessarily difficult to measure (e.g. a reduction in levels of large-scale violence) there is no clear sense of when the benchmark will be fully met. As one UN expert said, “At best, benchmarks can give a sense of progress, but they fundamentally cannot answer the key question of the Council: does the situation still require a peacekeeping operation?”

Ambiguity around the use of benchmarks has allowed for significant differences to develop over the drawdown of a mission, not only within the Council, but also amongst UN missions, the host government, and key bilateral actors. Especially where the Council has provided both an “end date” and an “end state” for a mission, the two may come into conflict. In 2017, the Security Council set a firm date for the transition of MINUSTAH from a PKO into a smaller justice-support mission, but this decision was largely driven by the political-level consensus amongst Security Council members on the need to reduce spending on Haiti, rather than any direct reference to the core benchmarks identified earlier.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, the 2016, Security Council discussions on UNMIL’s drawdown in Liberia demonstrated unanimity on the need to close the mission, but deep divisions over exactly when and how the transition would take place.<sup>55</sup> With the Liberian government requesting a one-



year final mandate, the US pushing for a longer extension of the mission, and France, Russia and the UK all determined to end the Chapter VII aspect of the mission as soon as possible, UNMIL's withdrawal process appeared far more driven by New York-based timelines than a real assessment of the benchmarks.<sup>56</sup> In fact, France, Russia and the UK all abstained from the December 2016 mandate renewal of UNMIL due to tensions over the timeline, an exceedingly rare phenomenon in the Council.<sup>57</sup> As one UN expert pointed out, "benchmarks mean different things to different actors; to some they are a way to make broad demands of the host government around human rights and political processes; to others they are just speed bumps on the way to exit."<sup>58</sup>

Over the past twenty years, the Council has developed some important practices and approaches in developing benchmarked transitions jointly with missions and key stakeholders. Firstly, the Council has increasingly asked for missions to develop **exit strategies** well before a transition is mandated. MONUSCO, for example, was requested to develop an exit strategy with the Congolese Government in 2015, well before any Council decisions about the potential drawdown of the mission.<sup>59</sup> The Council has similarly demanded the development of exit strategies by MINUSMA, MINUSCA and UNMISS, all well before the anticipated withdrawal of those missions. Early development of exit strategies has now

been incorporated into the UN's guidance on transitions and is increasingly contemplated as a process that should accompany the deployment and/or very early phases of a mission. As the former UK Permanent Representative stated in the Council, "we need a clear understanding from the outset of the outcome we seek from the peacekeeping operation."<sup>60</sup>

The development of exit strategies represents an important **shift of the centre of gravity from New York to the field**, with clear benefits and some risks. In MONUSCO, for example, the Council demanded in 2015 that the mission jointly develop an exit strategy with the host government.<sup>61</sup> In response, the mission leadership developed proposals that included the full range of mandated activities, a sequenced draw down plan based on gradual improvement in the security, political and human rights situation, and a set of final conditions that needed to be reached prior to full withdrawal. The government flatly refused, insisting that MONUSCO's full withdrawal could be predicated solely upon a reduction of the security threat posed by priority armed groups, without any reference to the political, humanitarian or human rights aspects of the mandate. This led to a complete failure to agree an exit strategy, despite the Council's call for one, and a significant reduction in trust between the government and the UN.<sup>62</sup> With little concrete guidance from the Council, there was little progress possible at that time.



UN Photo / Harandane Dicko



Secondly, the Council has gradually (and inconsistently) moved away from conceptualising transitions as a handover of responsibilities to the host government and other actors, instead framing transitions as a **reconfiguration of the UN presence towards peacebuilding in country**. In Liberia, for example, the Council requested the UN to develop a nationally-led peacebuilding plan to guide the transition, in which all UN agencies and the host government would agree on the priorities and responsibilities beyond the life of the mission.<sup>63</sup> In Haiti, the Council underlined the importance of locating MINUSTAH's transition plan within the broader Integrated Strategic Framework for the country, also demanding that the mission conclude a "transition compact" with the government to guide the process.<sup>64</sup> The growing importance of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), now seen as a crucial partner of the Council in guiding transitions, has greatly influenced the trend towards more holistic transition planning.<sup>65</sup> A recent Council session on mission transitions demonstrated an extraordinary unity around the need to have peacebuilding goals driving the process, and for the broader socio-economic needs of the country to be taken into account in UN planning.<sup>66</sup>

Taken together, the growth of multidimensional peacekeeping has prompted the most far-reaching innovations in UN transitions. Council practice in this period developed (1) the now ubiquitous use of benchmarks; (2) the concept of reconfigured UN presence rather than simple handover; (3) increased demands for nationally-owned exit strategies; and (4) broad, peacebuilding plans to guide transition processes. However, these practices are far from uniform. Council discussions around Darfur continue to refer to the "handover" of responsibilities to the national authorities, while confusion over the use of benchmarks as conditions for withdrawal remain a major sticking point in the Council today. Several experts referred to the lack of independent risk assessments in the context of this transition as well. Finally, the centrality of peacebuilding to the Council discussions has not necessarily led to increased donor engagement in

countries undergoing transitions. As the ongoing transitional processes in Haiti and Darfur highlight below, significant risks remain around Council approaches to mission transitions.

## D. Current transitions – Haiti, Darfur, Guinea-Bissau, and DRC

Two major UN transitions were ongoing at the time of writing this report and offer some important lessons regarding Council practice. While it is still early to draw definitive conclusions from the current transitions in Haiti and Darfur, some preliminary points can be offered. Additionally, the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) was also midway through a transition that began in mid-2019, and which offers some insights into the drawdown of an SPM. Finally, at the time of writing, the report of an independent strategic review on MONUSCO's transition out of DRC.

### Haiti—from police led mission to SPM

In Haiti, the transition from the justice-focused, police-led mission MINUJUSTH to an SPM – to be called BINUH – took place in October 2019.<sup>67</sup> Unfortunately, the transition took place at a time of renewed precariousness for the country. A political crisis has paralyzed the government, leading to violent riots and crippling the state's response to growing criminal and gang violence.<sup>68</sup> In fact, across the core security and rule of law benchmarks, the Secretary-General has recently reported limited progress and persistent challenges, though some progress has been made in building the police and judicial capacities of the state.<sup>69</sup> In interviews with experts on the Security Council, they frequently described the situation as trending poorly for a transition from a Chapter VII to a Chapter VI mission, and several suggested that the risk of relapse into

large-scale violence was quite high.<sup>70</sup> “We need a more risk-oriented approach to transitions,” one Council expert stated, underscoring that the reporting by the Secretariat was often driven by the need to paint a positive picture of the mission’s work rather than a realistic description of the trends in country. Several experts also suggested that the timeframe and mandate for the transition to BINUH was driven more by P-5 political concerns – the feeling that “we have spent enough on Haiti at this point” – rather than a serious examination of the needs and risks facing the country.<sup>71</sup>

Driven by concerns about the negative trends in Haiti, five of the elected members of the Council (calling themselves the “E-5 Group”<sup>72</sup>) collaborated to push for a broader mandate for BINUH. Specifically, they demanded that the mission be given a mandate to address human rights violations, improve prisons, and strengthen the justice sector. These mandate areas had been central to the mandate of MINUJUSTH, but had not initially been included in the draft mandate for BINUH. Some of the E-5 Group suggested that the MINUJUSTH leadership in Haiti had also wished to avoid a rule of law mandate for BINUH.<sup>73</sup> The combined weight of the E-5 Group appeared to gain a significant success, as the final mandate for BINUH does contain provisions in all three areas.<sup>74</sup> While E-5 Group members suggested this demonstrated good practice in terms of offsetting the often domineering approach by P-5 members in Council mandating, some experts within the Secretariat were concerned that the position ignored the assessment of the mission and had not sufficiently accounted for the Haitian government’s views.<sup>75</sup>

## Darfur – a pause amidst volatility

Darfur presents one of the most challenging transitions in peacekeeping settings, as UNAMID (a joint UN/African Union mission) is drawing down with the key provisions of its mandate as yet unfulfilled amidst an extremely volatile situation in broader Sudan. In Darfur, two million civilians

remain displaced from their homes; the political process meant to resolve the multiple rebellions in the region is far from complete; state security actors and their proxies continue to pose significant risks to civilians; and the socio-economic conditions for Darfurians are extraordinarily poor. Despite these challenges, a strategic review of the mission in 2018 found that UNAMID was not enabled to address the security challenges in the region, and it recommended that the mission drawdown with a final date of June 2020.

Taking note of the strategic review’s recommendation, and finding that the security situation no longer posed a threat to international peace and security, the Security Council issued a transitional mandate for UNAMID.<sup>76</sup> Within the same mandate, the Council stated that the drawdown would be based upon “progress against the indicators and benchmarks and the conditions on the ground, and implemented in a gradual, phased, flexible and reversible manner.”<sup>77</sup> Interestingly, a majority of experts interviewed were of the view that the Council had set a firm deadline of June 2020 for the transition, when in fact it had only *taken note* of the timeline proposed in the strategic review. In interviews with Council members, there were differences of views as to this deadline: some saw it as “set in stone” with no possibility of change, others pointed to the benchmarks set out in the resolution as conditions that should be met prior to the drawdown of the mission.<sup>78</sup> There was also a widespread view that the call for UNAMID’s exit was driven by budgetary concerns and a frustration with the mission, more than any consensus around the situation on the ground.<sup>79</sup>

In April 2019, a military coup in Khartoum upended the 30-year rule of former President Omar al-Bashir and cast the political trajectory of Sudan into doubt. Perhaps most troubling for UNAMID’s planned withdrawal, the temporary government that took over in Khartoum was led by the leader of a paramilitary group allegedly responsible for massive human rights violations in Darfur during the height of the conflict in the early 2000s. In response, the



Security Council and the African Union conducted a joint strategic assessment in Sudan, issuing a report that detailed many of the risks facing the country. The report concluded that no change in the June 2020 date was required, though it stressed the need for a gradual drawdown process.<sup>80</sup> Importantly, the report suggested that the benchmarks be streamlined to serve as long-term indicators beyond the lifespan of the mission, thus clearly proposing that the benchmarks should not serve as conditions for drawdown per se. On the basis of this report, and following a fairly contentious session in the Council around the deadline, a June 2019 resolution temporarily extended the military drawdown period for the mission, though without necessarily changing the final date of the mission.<sup>81</sup>

**This so-called “pause” offers a potential point of precedent for the Council.** It operates as a way around the problem of having both an “end date” and an “end state” for the mission. Without touching the transition mandate timeline per se, the pause allows for further analysis of the situation while keeping UNAMID’s troops on the ground for a longer period of time. While it remains to be seen whether the final date for UNAMID in fact slides, several Council experts suggested that the pause was an important compromise between those countries demanding adherence to the final date (Kuwait, the Russian Federation and China), those wishing to slow the process down given the risks across Sudan (Germany, the UK and France), and

those who were open to a brief extension (US). Other experts noted that the pause did nothing other than delay the inevitable divisions within the Council until a later date, possibly leaving less time for a change in course.

In October 2019, the new government in Sudan requested the Secretary-General for a 12-month extension of UNAMID’s mandate, to at least October 2020. This constituted a major shift in government policy towards UNAMID, as President Bashir had been adamantly opposed to the mission from the outset. The shift from Khartoum has appeared to generate a shift in the Council as well. As of the writing of this report, the Council had adopted a resolution extending UNAMID’s mandate with the pause in drawdown kept in place, and with a six-month review point where the Council would review progress on the peace process. The resolution also requests that the UN and the government present options for a follow-on presence in Sudan. This significant shift in Council posture – triggered in large part by the government’s request – may mean a much longer drawdown period of UNAMID than originally envisaged.

## Guinea-Bissau – from SPM to Country Team

In December 2018, an independent strategic review of UNIOGBIS was conducted, tasked by the Council

to identify options for a possible reconfiguration of the UN presence in country.<sup>82</sup> This was not the first reconfiguration in a country that has witnessed a series of coups and other destabilizing events in the past ten years. Originally established to support the peace process following the 1998-99 war, UNOGBIS was reconfigured into UNIOGBIS in 2009 following the assassination of the president and the military chief of staff. Three years later, a military coup triggered the Council to approve successive adjustments to the configuration and mandate of UNIOGBIS, basing its decisions on a 2013 technical assessment mission, a 2014 strategic assessment mission, and a 2016 strategic review mission.<sup>83</sup> The 2018 review differed in that the Council anticipated a shift from the peacebuilding SPM to a Country Team-led presence in the country, meaning the mission would draw down and exit, and the country would return to a traditional development setting with the remaining presence of a UN Country Team.

While the transition is ongoing at the time of writing, there are some early points that can be drawn in terms of Council practice. First, **the central importance of the independent strategic review to the mandate adopted by the Council**. In this case, the review (written by a well-respected former UN director, João Honwana) recommended a three-phase transition process calibrated against the electoral calendar for the country.<sup>84</sup> This recommendation, along with other key points suggested in the review around the “streamlined” nature of the mission, were adopted verbatim by the Council in its 2019 resolution.<sup>85</sup> Here, it appears that the unified position as between the independent reviewer and the Secretary-General was helpful in ensuring cohesion in the reporting to the Council.

Related to this was a clear message from the P-3 in particular that **the independent review should be as candid as possible**. According to the lead author of the review, the call by the Council (reinforced by the leadership in the Secretariat) that the report should offer unvarnished and impartial views of the needs of the country empowered him to write a far more direct report than otherwise would have been

possible. The fact that the Council took on large portions of the review verbatim is a good indicator that the review was well-received.

In terms of the Council’s approach, the issue of language around the elections is now proving complex, in part because the Council chose **ambiguous wording around conditionality**. In its resolution, the Council stressed that reconfiguration of UNIOGBIS “should take place after the completion of the electoral cycle in 2019,” which appears to condition the transition on the holding of elections.<sup>86</sup> This somewhat aligns with the strategic review, which suggested that a reconfiguration should be taken forward “assuming that legislative elections, although delayed, do take place.”<sup>87</sup> UN experts suggested that the Council’s mandate was intended to push the government to hold elections on time, but that there were some divisions about what should take place if there was a significant delay. Some Council members would see the transition process continuing even if elections did not take place, while others would push for a revision to the transition timeframe. The lack of clear wording in the mandate has allowed this uncertainty to continue.

The elections issue points to a broader issue facing the Council: **the lack of a stable government interlocutor** for agreeing a transition process with UNIOGBIS. As of the writing of this report, there were two individuals vying for the position of prime minister in country, with no certainty that the national elections would take place in late November 2019. Mandating a transition process necessarily requires a set of demands on the UN and the government (including the development of a new cooperation framework at the end of 2020), which is a moving target in this case.

One of the most innovative aspects of the Council mandate for UNIOGBIS is the request that **certain mission functions be transferred to the regional office, UNOWAS**.<sup>88</sup> UN experts pointed to the transition of the good offices lead function to UNOWAS, which would allow the UN to leverage



regional contacts and a history of effective interventions in country. More broadly, a range of experts stressed that the UN mission was less significant than regional players in Guinea-Bissau, and that the reconfiguration of the presence in country should be based on a recognition of the leading role played by ECOWAS in supporting peacebuilding in country.

## Congo – the beginning of a transition process

In March 2019, the Security Council renewed MONUSCO's mandate and called for an independent strategic review of the mission to make recommendations for a "phased, progressive, and comprehensive exit strategy."<sup>89</sup> This was not the first time the Council had requested the UN to develop an exit strategy. Since 2015, all of MONUSCO's mandate renewals have indicated the need for the mission to chart out its exit from the country.<sup>90</sup> In each case, the mission has entered into exit strategy discussions with the government, though a formal and comprehensive exit agreement has never been reached. The 2019 resolution specifically demanded that the review generate options for adapting MONUSCO's future configuration of its civilian, police and military components, including an eventual reduction of its force footprint. The resolution was thus framed as a progressive transfer of MONUSCO's tasks from the mission to the government and/or the UNCT.<sup>91</sup>

In fact, MONUSCO has been gradually drawing down its presence for years, reducing its static military footprint and closing bases in the kind of sequenced fashion suggested in the mandate. This approach in some sense mirrors other mission drawdowns (such as UNMIL in Liberia), which have viewed transitions as a sequence in which the security conditions are considered prior to other benchmarks, allowing for the force component to draw down first. There are **definitive benefits to this phased approach: the Council can test the situation for a period of time**, evaluating

whether the security situation will allow for a further drawdown, and keeping the option of a redeployment theoretically on the table.

On the other hand, a phased approach that considers security first may allow government actors in particular to de-emphasize other crucial benchmarks necessary for a sustainable transition. In 2016, for example, the Congolese government refused to consider human rights or political conditions in the draft exit strategy, only accepting security conditions as the basis for the mission's drawdown.<sup>92</sup> A phased approach can have practical implications as well. In some areas where MONUSCO base closures have already taken place, armed groups activity has again risen, with direct threats to civilians. Considering the benefits and potential drawbacks of a phased approach to drawdown will be important for MONUSCO and other missions.

As of the writing of this report, the strategic review had been transmitted to the Council for its December deliberations on MONUSCO's mandate. The review offers a vision for MONUSCO's transition driven by the principle of national ownership, placing a significant emphasis on the ability of the Congolese government to deliver on an ambitious set of national reforms. It also includes a set of benchmarks, including some marked "contextual," "core" and "red lines." While it is too early to comment on the Council dynamics around this review, it is worth considering three points when comparing this review to the lessons drawn from Security Council practice above: (1) the concept of "transfer" of responsibilities, rather than the reconfiguration of the UN presence in country; (2) the emphasis on national ownership and national reform may be difficult to address within the three-year time-frame, and indeed may place too much emphasis on a quite fragile government; and (3) the proposed of different kinds of benchmarks with a clear sense of how they could be used could contributed to a confused Council deliberation process.





UN Photo / Eric Kanalstein

## II. Common Challenges

Across many of the transitions described above, recurrent challenges have arisen, often demanding new and innovative responses by the Council and other stakeholders. This section identifies three of the most crucial challenges that tend to confront today's UN transitions, along with analysis of Council responses.

### A. The “double cliff” of transitions

Mission closure often takes place at a moment when international attention is on the wane, where donors often have reached a high level of fatigue, or where the Council appears to see little value in continuing a UN operation.<sup>93</sup> Because donors operate on three-year budgets that span the closure of missions, there may not be an immediate decline in funding; however, the inflexibility of funding during this period often means that donor funds are poorly calibrated to the gaps emerging during transitions process.<sup>94</sup> The combination of waning donor interest, inflexible

funding instruments, and mission exit can mean a sharp “financial cliff” for countries emerging from serious conflict, often at a time when sustained donor support is most needed.<sup>95</sup> In Liberia, for example, the country received nearly \$10 billion in bilateral aid during the tenure of UNMIL, with assessed contributions totalling roughly \$7.5 billion.<sup>96</sup> Much of this support evaporated during UNMIL's drawdown, dropping major peacebuilding tasks on a significantly underfunded UN Country Team and a newly formed government.<sup>97</sup> Similarly, the more than \$700 million budget of UNAMID will disappear at the end of the transition period in 2020. The Sudanese Permanent Mission to the United Nations highlighted in a meeting in New York that the national development plan is set at more than \$4 billion, dramatically outstripping any of the currently projected donor and/or peacebuilding support through the transitional period.<sup>98</sup> According to a UN official involved in the transition planning, there is no possibility for this financial shortfall to be made up in the transition timeframe for UNAMID, meaning certain core tasks simply will not be maintained.<sup>99</sup>

The donor shortfall often becomes what one UN expert called a “double financial/political cliff.”<sup>100</sup> Peace operations offer early warning capacities, potential for political signalling and engagement in country. As the Secretary General’s Executive Committee highlighted in August 2018, the decrease in political engagement that accompanies a transition can be a major risk to the UN’s strategic goals in country.<sup>101</sup> The civil affairs alert network in MONUSCO, for example, uses hundreds of national and international personnel spread across eastern Congo to identify protection risks to civilians, engage with local actors, and elevate issues to the highest level where good offices are needed in the capital. As MONUSCO has begun to reduce its static footprint over recent years, the ability to sustain that early warning capacity has also diminished, leaving the mission with a reduced early warning and engagement capacity. The transition to a follow-on Country Team presence in Burundi in 2014 similarly left the mission with a reduced capacity for political engagement at an extremely fragile electoral moment for the country.<sup>102</sup> In Darfur, Council experts suggested that the imminent drawdown of police and human rights might strip the UN of a key capacity to prevent sexual violence in and around the Internally Displaced Persons camps, also leaving the UN with fewer eyes and ears to understand emerging threats.<sup>103</sup> In places like Darfur – where the Country Team has been intentionally weakened by Khartoum – the phase out of UNAMID will increase protection risks for many civilians, especially women.<sup>104</sup>

Security Council practice often exacerbates this lack of connectivity between the political and the developmental needs of the country. UN experts have noted the often “siloe” approach by Council members, whose messaging in the Council or the PBC does not align with the development messaging from capital. Indeed, in interviews with mission experts on the Council, many were unaware of the specific development policies or forward plans of their governments.

## B. Elections—the double transition

From the earliest peace operations in this study, elections have tended to be a key benchmark for the withdrawal of a mission. In some, national elections are the final indicator for a peace process, the step before the exit of the mission.<sup>105</sup> Elections are a natural transition point at the national level, a moment where the international community can recognize a new phase for the country and the end to a threat to peace and security. But elections also pose direct challenges to UN transitions. First, a newly-elected government may have little buy-in to a transition plan developed before its tenure, and may not feel beholden to implement it as planned prior to the election. In Côte d’Ivoire, for example, the 2015 election of President Ouattara was a landmark achievement for the UN, but the new government was resistant to the UN’s transition plan, prioritizing instead its economic development over any meaningful focus on human rights or justice. With little leverage over the new government, the UN acquiesced in reducing its human rights component at a crucial time, something the Secretary-General referred to as “premature” in his reporting to the Council.<sup>106</sup>

Secondly, elections introduce a significant operational burden on the UN, often increasing the mission’s logistical workload at the same moment it must plan its drawdown and exit. In Liberia, the national elections in 2017 took place mere months before the final drawdown date for UNMIL, meaning that the mission was actively involved in supporting a complex, national-level process even as it planned its own exit. One UN official referred to this as “making the UN ramp up and ramp down at the same time.”<sup>107</sup> In contrast, the UN oversaw a successful (and less logistically complicated) transition in Timor-Leste six months after a national election in 2012, where the elections proved to be a key moment in peace consolidation for the country.<sup>108</sup>

## C. Risks of relapse

Transition doctrine has largely been developed with successful missions in mind, based on a gradual shift from peacekeeping to peacebuilding. With the notable exceptions of MINURCAT in Chad, UNMEE in Ethiopia/Eritrea, and BNUB in Burundi, the missions that have completed transitions in the past ten years have done so with relatively successful reconfigurations towards peacebuilding. Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste all offer examples of missions shifting from peacekeeping to peacebuilding, drawing down the military components of missions while looking to advance and expand development-driven plans.

However, even relatively positive settings can relapse quickly, and transition processes must be sufficiently flexible to account for new risks as they emerge. The rapid and severe relapse into conflict in Timor-Leste in 2006 offers the most direct example of what can happen if a mission leaves before the key national transitions have been completed.<sup>109</sup> The earthquake and cholera outbreak in Haiti meant extreme interruptions to planned transitions. But the ongoing transition in Haiti (from a police-led mission to a SPM), the complex drawdown of UNAMID, and the likely exit of MONUSCO in the coming period all present much riskier landscapes for the UN, where relapse into large-scale conflict or other crises is quite likely. Indeed, in the DRC and Darfur the Secretary-General has repeatedly warned that state actors constitute a primary threat to civilians. How will the UN chart out viable transitions when the missions' exit will leave the government with sole responsibility for security and human rights protections in these settings?

Here, Security Council members and UN experts have stressed the need for realistic reporting on the trends in each country setting, **including independently-driven assessments of the risks of relapse**. Where a mission has been mandated to draw down by a specific date, or where it is engaged in exit strategy discussions with the government, it may feel compelled to report more positively

on progress than by its own internal assessments. Likewise, governments hoping to induce large donor support may minimise the risks in their countries, or look to obscure the role of state actors in human rights violations. "The Security Council needs independent and multiple sources of information to make its transition decisions," one E-10 member stated.<sup>110</sup> Other experts agreed and suggested that risk-driven assessments would be more useful tools for the Council than typical peacebuilding planning documents. This is particularly important in settings where some Member States may have limited presence within a country (for example, several E-10 members do not maintain embassies in Haiti and thus have no direct line of information for themselves).

Finally, there may be utility in considering a **broader range of follow-on configurations** than has been deployed typically. In Haiti, the deployment of a police-led mission to oversee rule of law work under a Chapter VII mandate was a significant innovation, as is the rule of law mandate for the upcoming SPM for BINUH. Some Council members suggested that the situation in Darfur would require a bespoke follow-on presence beyond UNAMID in order to maintain an early warning and human rights monitoring capacity. The possibility of again partnering with the African Union for the follow-on presence has been suggested, but thus far not clearly stated by the Council.<sup>111</sup>





## III. A Framework for UN Transitions

The previous sections traced the evolution of Council practice over the past thirty years, highlighting some of the most important approaches that have developed over time, and recurrent challenges facing the UN as it draws missions to a close. This section builds on that history and offers a framework for Council members to plan current and future transitions: identifying common challenges, overarching priorities, and good practice that can contribute to viable, sustainable transition processes. The purpose of this framework is to guide Council members in the development of viable and effective transitions mandates going forward.

### 1 Build exit into the initial mandate

Security Council mandates for UN peace operations should contain the elements of their exit strategy from the outset, and be part of a “shared and

long-term political strategy.”<sup>112</sup> This requires that Council members have a clear understanding of the situation on the ground, the real potential for a peace operation to effectuate change, and the risks over the medium-term. In line with recommendations by previous reform initiatives,<sup>113</sup> the Council can gain a better understanding of these issues and develop more realistic mandates if it proceeds in a **two-step approach for mandating** – first, sending a mission with a limited scoping mandate, and then incorporating the analysis from this mission into the a subsequent mandate.<sup>114</sup> There is positive precedent here from the initial mission sent to Libya in 2011, which allowed the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General to meaningfully report on the conditions on the ground prior to the development of the final mandate by the Council. Designing mandates with the mission’s exit in mind, and based on a realistic analysis of what can be accomplished by a particular operation, is an essential element to successful transitions. It also offers a modality for

testing the political will of the parties to the conflict before deciding whether it is necessary and/or realistic to deploy a larger presence.

## 2 Engage the national and regional actors from the outset

Flowing directly from the first point is the need to engage national actors from the beginning of a mission, not only in the start-up of the UN presence, but also in creating a common vision for how it will exit the country. Too often, exit strategy negotiations take place towards the end of a mission's time in country, rather than at their inception.<sup>115</sup> Again, a two-step mandating process would allow for the political will of the host government and other key actors to be more accurately assessed from the outset, and for the Council's mandate to more realistically reflect the potential for transformation in country. More broadly, demanding an analysis of the underlying national grievances – from a broad audience beyond government actors in-country – could help build more realistic transitions mandates.

The engagement with host governments should include building partnerships with regional organizations and financial institutions that will be involved in the peacebuilding planning beyond the life of the mission. The partnership with ECOWAS and UNOWAS on the transitions in West Africa offers good practice. Indeed, the recent political engagement of UNOWAS in Liberia to help avert a potential crisis between the government and the opposition underscores the crucial role that regional actors can play in preventing relapse in countries that have recently undergone transitions.<sup>116</sup> More generally, it will be important for the Council to develop a regional approach that builds on the peacebuilding needs of the host country and directly engages the host government.

## 3 Balance “bottom up” approaches with clear guidance from New York

Over time, the Council has developed a useful practice of demanding that missions jointly develop exit strategies with the host government, and increasingly the UN is expected to build national-level peacebuilding strategies anchored in long-term development plans to guide the drawdown of missions. This helpfully encourages greater national ownership and planning based on those most directly involved on the ground.<sup>117</sup> But, as the difficult exit strategy discussions in DRC have demonstrated, a field-based set of plans will not always align with Council expectations, and may in fact leave the mission in the awkward position of having to negotiate its own demise. “In some cases, the Council just hangs missions out to dry with no real guidance on how to develop an exit strategy,” one mission expert stated. “It should be an iterative process, where the mandate clearly demands certain elements in an exit strategy, so we can start on the right footing with the government.”<sup>118</sup> Council members should take an active interest in the exit strategy discussions and be ready to intervene if a push from New York is required.

Additionally, the Council has taken an increasingly activist role in mandating transitions processes by requesting and shaping the terms of the strategic reviews of missions.<sup>119</sup> In some cases, the Council has specified the appropriate process for the transition, such as the detailed instructions for how the mission should consult with the UNCT in the Liberia transition,<sup>120</sup> or has requested the Secretariat employ a particular instrument, such as the demand for reporting on the basis of an integrated strategic framework in Haiti.<sup>121</sup> Council members should strike the right balance between demanding specific results and being seen as overly involved in the internal processes of the UN on the ground. Providing some flexibility to the missions and the Secretariat may allow them to deliver in rapidly changing circumstances.





UN Photo / Gema Cortes

## 4 Demand early, dynamic and integrated planning from UN field presences

A key lesson learned from past transitions is the need for early, flexible and integrated planning, driven by the Security Council.<sup>122</sup> Good practice here can be found in the Council's demand for early transition planning by MINUSCA, MONUSCO and MINUSMA. Offering general conditions to guide the development of an exit strategy – as the Council did for MONUSCO<sup>123</sup> – can helpfully shape transitions as well. Just as important as early planning is the need for the Council to adapt transitions processes in response to changing conditions on the ground. Demanding frequent updates, and designing mandates that can respond to changes on the ground, can help avoid contentious moments within the Council.<sup>124</sup> As one UN expert suggested, "[t]he Council should draw directly from as many actors on the ground as possible, demand up-to-date information so transitions don't become based on outdated or wishful thinking."<sup>125</sup>

## 5 Treat transitions as reconfigurations, not handovers

Over time, the Council has gradually – although not consistently – come to describe transitions in terms of a reconfiguration of the UN presence in country, rather than a handover of duties/responsibilities from a UN mission to other actors. It is not the mission that is transitioning, but the entire UN presence. This notion of reconfiguration is crucial for several reasons: (1) it demands a thorough assessment of the needs of the country, rather than analysis only of what the mission has to offer; (2) it more accurately reflects the legal and political realities about the primary responsibilities of the host government; and (3) it requires a joint UN effort in which all actors must identify their value added to a given situation. Worryingly, even in current UN transitions, some Council members continue to refer to a handover of responsibilities.<sup>126</sup> Including specific language on UN reconfiguration as a matter of course for transitions will avoid these pitfalls.

## 6 Consider the pros and cons of phased withdrawals

A phased withdrawal, in which military forces are first drawn and followed by civilians, has proven an important aspect of transitions in a range of settings.<sup>127</sup> The Council should carefully examine the pros and cons of such a phased approach, asking the Secretariat for tailored analysis of how a reduction in military presence might allow for a smoother and safer transition. In some cases, it will be important to consider whether an early focus on the military force aspects of a mission might drive other important benchmarks (e.g. human rights, political space, protections) into the background. Understanding how the sequencing of a transition will impact the broader set of goals in a country will be an important consideration for the Council.<sup>128</sup>

## 7 Demand independent strategic reviews, focused on risks

The Council has overseen several successful transitions, where peacebuilding support has taken over from peacekeeping without major relapse into violence. The growing centrality of peacebuilding has meant that transitions are increasingly couched in positive terms, driven by the socio-economic needs of the host country. This is a positive practice, and several member states that had undergone transitions underscored the national importance placed on the UN's support to development. At the same time, it is crucial that UN transitions are based upon a thorough and independent assessment of the risks that might follow a mission's reconfiguration or exit, one that is not susceptible to the pressures often placed on mission leadership on the ground or UN officials in New York. Such reviews should also take into account that the Council itself may have a waning interest in a country that is soon to move off its

agenda. A risk-focused report will send a clear signal that a situation could return to the Council if it is not addressed appropriately. The rise of independent strategic reviews in recent years offers a good opportunity for the Council to demand this unfettered perspective ahead of transitions. In all cases, Council mandates should include a request for an independent strategic review, focused on the risk landscape around the transition of the mission.

## 8 Avoid “double transitions”

Elections and other national-level processes can create important momentum for transitions processes and are often considered as key moments prior to a mission's departure. Moreover, elections can create leverage for the UN, which is often deeply involved in the logistical and political support to the process. But the experiences of Liberia and Guinea-Bissau demonstrate that the double transition of an election and a mission transition can be onerous on both the UN and the host country, at times creating unanticipated tensions with the incoming authorities and causing significant burdens on a mission working on its own exit. In this context, the Council should consider whether a **mission withdrawal should be “spaced out” from an elections process**, to allow newly elected governments greater time to recommit at the national level to a transition plan, and also to ease the burden on the UN. Mandates on transitions taking place in an electoral context could include a request that the newly elected government and the UN develop a joint exit strategy, building on existing plans.

## 9 Clear, achievable benchmarks, and necessary conditions for withdrawal

Across a range of UN transitions described above, major points of contention have arisen around the

end date of the mission. End dates create a set of perverse incentives for all actors: they encourage UN missions and the Secretariat to report in overly optimistic terms about progress; they allow potential spoilers on the ground to just “wait out” the mission; and they ignore changing circumstances on the ground. The frequent practice of the Council to set both end dates and conditions that should be reached prior to withdrawal tends to create confusion, especially when the conditions are extremely ambitious or fall well outside the control of the UN. Such a situation allows those wishing to push for a time-bound transition to insist upon the end date, while those who may wish to delay can point to absent or partial indicators of progress. At the same time, a lack of clear end date can be problematic for the mission, which needs to plan a large logistical shift of resources and personnel, and for a government expecting clarity on the future presence of the UN in country.

Here, greater clarity on the different kinds and uses of benchmarks would be useful. As described above, the Council has helpfully distinguished between “core” and “contextual” benchmarks, demonstrating an understanding that some of the most important transformations in a country are not within the UN’s purview. But this does not solve the more important question: **what are the minimum conditions that must be reached before the Council will accept the withdrawal of a mission from a country?** In some (typically earlier) cases, the Council has helpfully included a clear conditionality – e.g. that elections must take place prior to the withdrawal of the mission – but this is rare. More often, mandates have broad benchmarks that can be used to measure progress towards a positive end state, but which offer no clear sense of exactly how much progress is needed for a satisfactory transition moment. Nor have mandates been clear on what kind of events might trigger a suspension of a transition process. In Haiti, the unexpected earthquake and subsequent cholera outbreak cannot be considered a useful precedent, though

the more recent “pause” of the UNAMID transition in Darfur following a military coup and large scale civil unrest in Sudan could offer some guidance for future transitions. In this context, Council members developing a transition mandate could offer a **four-part set of conditions and benchmarks, as follows:**

- a. The anticipated end date of the mission;
- b. The core benchmarks to be used to evaluate progress towards a successful transition;
- c. Contextual benchmarks that can guide analysis of the broader trajectory of the country;
- d. Minimum conditions which must take place prior to the end date, without which the end date may be suspended or delayed.

Taken together, these conditions would provide the Council with a time-bound approach to transitions, but also a clearer modality for slowing down, recalibrating or even stopping transitions processes that might be proving too risky in changing circumstances.<sup>129</sup> However, it should be noted that the inclusion of an anticipated end date for the mission can easily take over the Council’s approach to a transition, becoming the overarching focus of the process rather than only one aspect of it. The Council could address this risk by explicitly stating that the end date is conditional on certain events taking place (e.g. elections), or indeed by stating that the end date provides a minimum amount of time for the transition (this was proposed by the MONUSCO strategic review). Another option would be to provide a phased approach, where only the initial stages had deadlines and the final drawdown is purely conditions based. In any case, the Council should be aware of the risks of including an end date that is not clearly linked with an equally weighted end state.

## 10 Treat economic recovery as crucial to prevent relapse

The most consistent message from interviews with host government actors was on the need to confront the financial cliff that appears during transitions, and also to look for more flexible funding instruments at times of significant uncertainty. Peace operations often have large budgets, upwards of \$1 billion per year, and there is a strong temptation to think of the operational budget as the reference point for post-mission planning. Again, conceptualising transitions as a “handover” contributes to this problematic viewpoint. Instead, it is crucial that the broader peacebuilding needs guide the transition process, that the activities of the mission are considered within the far broader range of support needed for the country. **The Security Council can and should consider the full range of peacebuilding resources available in a transition setting, and should encourage donors to identify more flexible funding instruments wherever possible.**<sup>130</sup> The growing importance and centrality of the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) and the reform of the UN Development System are both positive steps that will place peacebuilding and development more at the heart of UN engagement in post-mission settings. However, it is crucial that the Council understand the economic facets of the transition in terms of their responsibility to prevent recurrence and relapse.

## 11 Look for leverage in transitions

The departure of a UN mission from a country is typically described as a loss, a moment of decreased political and economic leverage over the key conflict actors. The Secretary-General has referred to these moments as “sudden drop-offs” where less attention is paid to precarious situations. But it is important for Council members to treat transitions moments also as **windows of opportunity to gain leverage** in key areas. UN missions are key conduits for international support, platforms for global messaging about countries’ needs, and political fulcrums where donors and regional actors often put their weight. Missions are also important eyes and ears for the international community, performing key early warning functions, and at times monitoring state actors’ human rights record. This point was clearly articulated in a recent Council discussion on UN transitions, where the UK spoke of broad partnerships as the basis for effective transitions.<sup>131</sup> The Security Council can gain leverage by conditioning the mission’s departure on tangible progress on human rights, demanding that credible elections take place, or encouraging meaningful political commitments as a precursor to exit. Looking for moments of leverage in transition, rather than assuming it is diminishing, may open important opportunities and help reduce risks.





## IV. The Future of UN Transitions in Mission Settings

The Security Council is as deeply divided today as it has ever been since the end of the Cold War. Worryingly, Council members have been unable to compartmentalise the divisions. Disagreements over Yemen, Venezuela, and Syria may infect other discussions, making unity on even relatively uncontentious files nearly impossible. Added to this, strong downward pressure on the budget of peace operations has meant that transitions discussions have often been politicised and driven by incentives other than the best interests of the countries emerging from conflict. These dynamics also tend to drive Council members away from strategic thinking and directly into negotiation over textual differences. As Security Council Report has astutely pointed out, strategy should precede language when it comes to mandating.<sup>132</sup> This

concluding section offers some of the key practices and suggestions that emerged from discussions with UN experts and Council members, focused on how to overcome the divisions and craft constructive transitions processes.

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### 1 Finding points of unity within the E-10

While it is often difficult to reach common positions across the entire elected members of the Council (especially on issues where the P-5 is divided), there has been some success in subgroups of the E-10. On Haiti, for example, a group calling itself the “E-5 Group” (composed of Peru, the Dominican



Republic, Poland, Germany and Belgium) came together to advocate for a strong rule of law mandate for BINUH. This constellation of actors was deemed necessary because of divisions within the Council, which had resulted in a “lowest common denominator” mandate for the mission.<sup>133</sup> Several experts pointed to the strength of E-10 groupings in these contexts, as evidenced by the continuation of the “E-5 Group” on issues related to UNAMID’s transition as well.

## 2 Informal problem solving

The toxic atmosphere in many Council sessions has a tendency to spill over, negatively infecting other files. In the case of Haiti, for example, highly contentious discussions on Venezuela in February 2019 created a difficult atmosphere for transition discussions.<sup>134</sup> Several Council Members pointed to the value of informal discussions in the margins of Council sessions. Working issues out verbally with the penholder, before mandate language begins to go into texts, was cited as a crucial and underutilized approach.

## 3 Contact with the field

While Council visits to countries can be logistically taxing and present risks of their own, experts within and outside the Council underscored the crucial role visits to the field can play in a mission transition context. Not only do Council visits dramatically increase understanding of the challenges facing mission countries, but they also send a clear signal to national and local counterparts about the importance given to a transition setting. There was also a sense among some Council members that the opportunities for unity tended to increase following visits.<sup>135</sup>

## 4 Joint pens

Within the Council, penholders have traditionally followed former colonial lines, with France and the UK dividing many of the major peace operations, and the US holding the pen for the others. The practice of joint penholders, however, has in fact been in place since at least 2006, and offers potentially useful ways to build consensus within the Council.<sup>136</sup> On Darfur, the joint UK/German penholder role has proven useful, not only allowing for some division of labour on the file, but also in including a major donor on a transition that has significant peacebuilding needs.

## 5 Mandating the full UN family

Increasingly, the Council has demanded that peace operations plan transitions jointly with the broader UNCT.<sup>137</sup> For example, a Council resolution on MINUSMA in Mali requested that the mission’s exit strategy identify tasks to be handed over to the UNCT, a mandate which implicitly tasks the UNCT to undertake planning activities.<sup>138</sup> In light of the growing recognition that transitions must be based on a cross-cutting plan across the UN and the government (i.e. UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks) the Council may need to consider the extent to which it could indirectly task UN agencies, funds, and programmes to undertake specific actions, in particular through the mission leadership in integrated settings.<sup>139</sup> This could be particularly important in high-risk environments where UNCT members may take on important protection tasks, and could helpfully promote greater joint thinking across the Security Council, ECOSOC, and the PBC.

By way of conclusion, it is worth noting that we may have entered an era of much-reduced emphasis on peacekeeping and a growing reliance on SPMs and UNCTs. Strong downward pressure on peacekeeping, combined with an effort to ensure politically-driven strategies guide the full spectrum of UN interventions, may well mean that the coming years witness a series of UN field presences reconfiguring from peacekeeping to political mission and/or to a Country Team-led UN presence. The recent reforms of the UN peace and security architecture should position the UN well in terms of facilitating these transitions in a coherent fashion. At the same time, the reform of the UN

Development System has been designed to make Country Teams more adept at conflict prevention, able to address the immediate risks of escalation, and hopefully less likely to require a PKO. A well-informed, prepared Security Council, guided by the lessons of the past, can take advantage of this to build effective, tailored transitions processes that contribute directly to sustainable outcomes and leverage the reform processes. Even absent the draw-down of a mission, developing mandates with the eventual exit of the operation in mind will allow the Council to contribute to better peace operations in the future.

# References

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4. Karen Guttieri and J. Piombo (eds.), *Interim Governments – Institutional Bridges to Peace and Democracy?* (United States Institute of Peace: Washington DC, 2007).
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6. Joachim Koops et al, *The Oxford Handbook of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2014), p. 262.
7. Ibid.
8. United Nations Security Council Resolutions S/RES/961 (1994); S/RES/991 (1995).
9. United Nations Security Council Resolutions S/RES/1075 (1996); S/RES/1127 (1997); S/RES/1164 (1998); S/RES/1229 and 1268 (1999).
10. United Nations Security Council Resolutions S/RES/1201 (1999); S/RES/2149 (2014).
11. According to a range of experts, the following missions were considered largely successful in fully implementing their mandates: UNPREDEP (Macedonia), UNAVEM I (Angola), UNOCA (Central America), UNMOP (Croatia), along with the larger missions in Namibia, El Salvador, Mozambique, Eastern Slavonia, and Cambodia. See Joachim Koops et al, *The Oxford Handbook of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2014), Chapters 21, 23, 41, and 44.
12. United Nations Security Council Resolutions S/RES/814 (1993); Statement by the President of the United Nations Security Council S/PRST/1995/15 (1995).
13. United Nations Security Council Resolutions S/RES/1050 (1996).
14. Joachim Koops et al, *The Oxford Handbook of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2014), p. 266.
15. Statement by the President of the United Nations Security Council S/PRST/1995/15 (1995).
16. In Somalia, for example, the Council called for close cooperation by the UN with the Organisation for African Unity (OAU), the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) and neighbouring countries during the transition to an SPM.
17. Simon Chesterman, *You, the People: the United Nations, Transitional Administration, and State-Building* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2004). See also, Dominik Zaum, "International Transitional Administrations and the Politics of Authority Building," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* (Taylor & Francis: London, 2017). Vol 11:4, p 409-428; Richard Caplan, *Exit Strategies and Statebuilding* (Oxford University Press: New York, 2013).
18. United Nations Security Council Resolutions S/RES/1338 (2001), para 3.
19. United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/1120 (1997), para 11. See also, Richard Gowan, "UNTAES and UNPSG", ed. Joachim Koops et al, *The Oxford Handbook of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2014).
20. United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/1244 (1999).
21. For a description of the roles of EULEX and OSCE, see a recent Secretary-General report on UNMIK, S/2018/918 (2018).
22. Simon Chesterman, *You, the People: the United Nations, Transitional Administration, and State-Building* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2004); see also, Adam Day, "No Exit Without Judiciary: Learning a Lesson from UNMIK's Transitional Administration in Kosovo", *Wisconsin Journal of International Law* (University of Wisconsin-Madison: Madison, 2005).
23. The author of this report was the Senior Political Advisor to MONUSCO in 2016 and actively participated in the exit strategy negotiations.
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27. James Cockayne, "Chasing Shadows: Strategic Responses to Organised Crime in Conflict-Affected Situations," *RUSI Journal* (Taylor & Francis: London, 2013). Vol 158, No 2; Michael Ross, "Oil, Drugs, and Diamonds: The Varying Roles of Natural Resources in Civil War," *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict: Beyond Greed and Grievance*, eds. Karen Ballentine and Jake Sherman (Lynne Rienner: Boulder, 2003), p. 47 – 73.
28. See, Seth Jones, "A Persistent Threat: The Evolution of al Qa'ida and Other Salafi Jihadists" (RAND: Washington DC, 2014); see also, International Crisis Group, "Exploiting Disorder: Al Qaeda and the Islamic State: Special Report" (International Crisis Group: Brussels, 2016).
29. Joachim Koops et al, *The Oxford Handbook of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2014), p. 607.
30. United Nations General Assembly, Overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions: report of the Secretary-General (resolution 67/123), A/68/223 (2013).
31. Thosten Benner, Stephan Mergenthaler and Philipp Rotmann, *The New World of UN Peace Operations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
32. United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/1610(2005).
33. United Nations Security Council Resolutions S/RES/1840 (2008); S/RES/2313 (2016); S/RES/2350 (2017). For a good background on the Haiti transitions, see di Razza, Namie, "Mission in Transition: Planning for the End of UN Peacekeeping in Haiti," *International Peace Institute*, December 2018.
34. United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/1923 (2010).
35. United Nations Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2078 (2012); S/RES/2211 (2015); S/RES/2293 (2016); S/RES/2348 (2017).
36. United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/1997 (2011)
37. United Nations Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2333 (2016); S/RES/2260 (2016).
38. As the 2008 Capstone Doctrine notes, "Determining whether a multidimensional UN peacekeeping operation deployed in the aftermath of a violent internal conflict has successfully completed its mandate is far more challenging given the number of complex variables involved." Section 10.2.
39. Benchmarking had begun well before 2007, including in 2002 with UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone, but these were not specifically requested by the Council.
40. See, e.g., United Nations Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2164 (2014) (Mali); S/RES/1968 (2011) (Timor-Leste); S/RES/2460 (2019) (Afghanistan); S/RES/2062 (2012) (Côte d'Ivoire); S/RES/2459 (2019), para 19 (South Sudan).
41. See, e.g., S/RES/1780 (2007) (laying out MINUSTAH's benchmarks); S/RES/1802 (2009) (UNMIT's four-part benchmarks for Timor-Leste).
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43. United Nations Department for Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Field Support, "Concept Note: Security Council benchmarks in the context of UN mission transitions" (DPO: New York, 2014).
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55. See Daniel Forti and Lesley Connolly, "The Mission Is Gone, But the UN Is Staying: Liberia's Peacekeeping Transition" (International Peace Institute: New York, 2019).
56. Daniel Forti and Lesley Connolly, "The Mission Is Gone, But the UN Is Staying: Liberia's Peacekeeping Transition" (International Peace Institute: New York, 2019). Interviews with UN experts confirm this dynamic.
57. Thanks to Victor Casanova of Security Council Report for this insight.
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60. United Nations Security Council, "Session on Transition and Exit Strategies". S/PV.6270 (12 February 2010). p. 15.
61. United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/2211 (2015).
62. The author was the Senior Political Advisor to MONUSCO during this period and participated in the exit strategy negotiations.
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65. In the July 2019 Council discussion on peace operations transitions, several Council members, including the UK, stressed the importance of the PBC in supporting mission transitions.
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68. United Nations Security Council, United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti Report of the Secretary-General S/2019/563 (9 July 2019)
69. Ibid. paras 29-48.
70. Interviews, New York, July and August 2019.
71. Interviews, New York, July and August 2019.
72. The "E-5" is composed of Poland, The Dominican Republic, Belgium, Germany and Peru.
73. Interviews, New York, July and August 2019.
74. United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/2476 (2019), para (a), subsection (iv), (v) and (vi).
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91. Ibid. para 44.
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93. The Secretary-General emphasized this point in his remarks to the Council in July 2019. António Guterres, "Secretary-General's remarks at Security Council Briefing on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace: Strengthening Partnerships for Successful Nationally-owned Transitions [as delivered]" (18 July 2019). Available at <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2019-07-18/secretary-generals-remarks-security-council-briefing-peacebuilding-and-sustaining-peace-strengthening-partnerships-for-successful-nationally-owned-transitions-delivered>.
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96. Forti, Daniel and Lesley Connolly, "The Mission is Gone, but the UN is Staying: Liberia's Peacekeeping Transition," (International Peace Institute: New York, 2018).
97. See, The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Financing UN Peacekeeping Transitions: Liberia Case Study" (OECD INCAF Financing for Stability: Paris, 2019).
98. Closed meeting with Council Members and the Sudanese Permanent Mission (notes on file with author).
99. Interview with UN official, December 2018.
100. Interview, New York, July 2019.
101. Secretary General's Executive Committee Update Paper, "Mission Transitions, recurring challenges and opportunities," 28 August 2018. [CONFIDENTIAL, on file with author]
102. Gustavo de Carvalho and Liezelle Kumalo, "The uncertain future of peacebuilding in Burundi" (Institute for Security Studies: Nairobi, 2014). Available at: <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/the-uncertain-future-of-peacebuilding-in-burundi>.
103. See, United Nations, Security Council "Special report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the strategic review of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur". S/2018/530, para 29 (1 June 2018). Finding that the closure of 11 team sites reduced the UN's capacity to monitor the situation). Interviews in New York, July 2019
104. In 2008, during the start-up transition of UNAMID, the mission put in place a police patrolling scheme around the IDP camps, protecting women as they collected firewood for cooking. This led to an immediate reduction in rates of sexual violence.
105. Also in UNMIS' transition in Sudan, the national referendum was seen as the culmination of the peace process, after which the mission began its exit in earnest.
106. United Nations Security Council, "Special Report of the Secretary-General on the Role of UNOCI" S/2018/958. 29 October 2018, para. 80. See, Alexandra Novoselloff, "The UN's Transition in Côte d'Ivoire" (International Peace Institute: New York, 2018).
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114. See, Adam Day, "To Build Consent in Peace Operations: Turn Mandates Upside Down" (United Nations University: Tokyo, 2017).
115. E.g. MONUSCO's exit strategy negotiations with the government were mandated more than ten years after the mission had been initially deployed.
116. Interview with UNOWAS, September 2019. See also, Ruth Maclean and Tecsee Boley, "Protests in Liberia over George Weah's Failure to Tackle Corruption", The Guardian, 7 June 2019. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jun/07/thousands-protest-in-liberia-against-failure-to-tackle-corruption>.
117. See, Daniel Forti and Leslie Connolly, "Pivoting from Crisis to Development: Preparing for the Next Wave of Peacekeeping Transitions" (International Peace Institute: New York, 2019), calling for field-led planning for transitions.

118. Interview, July 2019.
119. E.g. the Council issued detailed mandates for the strategic reviews of UNAMID, MINUJUSTH and MONUSCO.
120. United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/2333 (2016) para. 13.
121. United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/2476 (2019), para 7.
122. The Secretary-General's Executive Committee decision of 28 August 2018 stressed the importance of early planning for transitions. [confidential, on file with author]
123. United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/2147 (2014) para 3(a).
124. See the Council discussions ahead of: United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/2446 (2018) which extended the mandate of MINUSCA by only one month given Council differences. The rushed process to develop an exit strategy agreed between MONUSCO and the Congolese government in the spring of 2016 is an example where earlier guidance from the Council could have supported a better outcome.
125. Interview, New York, July 2019.
126. The author was present at several of the Council member-led discussions on UNAMID's transition, which took place during the spring and summer of 2019.
127. See, Daniel Forti and Lesley Connolly, "The Mission Is Gone, But the UN Is Staying: Liberia's Peacekeeping Transition" (International Peace Institute: New York, 2019).
128. NB: The Department of Peace Operations is currently developing a report on sequencing and prioritization of UN Security Council mandates. While the focus of the DPO study will not be on transitions, there may be important insights and guidance to be included alongside this report.
129. United Nations Security Council, "United Nations Focusing More Strongly on Managing Peacekeeping Operation Drawdowns to Retain Security, Development Gains, Secretary-General Tells Security Council". SC/13888 (17 July 2019)
130. The Council does not directly mandate UN agencies, thus this would require a broad, consultative process. Though as the recommendations suggest below, more tasking of the UN family by the Council might be of use, given the peacebuilding prerogatives of mission transitions. On flexible funding arrangements, see Rachel Scott and Lydia Poole, "Financing for Stability: Guidance for Practitioners" (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development: Paris, 2018).
131. Amb. Jonathan Allen, "Statement by the UK Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN at the Security Council briefing on Peacebuilding and sustaining peace: partnerships for national-owned transitions" (30 July 2019). Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-importance-of-effective-transitions>.
132. Security Council Report, "Is Christmas Really Over? Improving the Mandating of Peace Operations," (Security Council Report: New York, 2019). Available at: <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/research-reports/is-christmas-really-over-improving-the-mandating-of-peace-operations.php>
133. Interview, New York, July 2019.
134. Interview, New York, August 2019.
135. Interviews, New York, July and August 2019.
136. Interview, New York, July, 2019. Noting that the first case was Spain and the UK on the WPS agenda item.
137. This aligns with internal UN policies, including the Policy on Integrated Assessments and Planning (2014), the UN Transitions Policy (2014), and the Secretary-General's Directive on Transition Planning (2019).
138. United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/2480 (2019). See also the discussion of UNAMID above.
139. The Council does not directly task the Agencies, Funds and Programmes, which report to ECOSOC, but can direct a UN mission to work with them in a variety of ways.



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