

Standing on Guard for Peace: Canada's Future Role in UN Operations

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CONTEXT

The nature and mandate of United Nations peace operations are such that their implementation and evolution often take place in dynamic and unstable security contexts. Peacekeepers are often deployed to areas on the verge of state failure, characterized by the capture of state institutions by the ruling elite, the repression of civilians, high levels of criminality, and increasingly, the rise of radicalization and extremist violence. These security challenges are compounded by both national and trans-national factors such as increased numbers of internally displaced persons and refugees. Furthermore, geo-physical constraints related to terrain and weather can also negatively impact access to certain communities, as well as the mobility of troops and equipment.

UN peace missions are dependent on the involvement and contributions of member states, and thus, UN forces must adapt to contexts with the limited means allocated to them. There are considerable gaps between the level of involvement and type of contributions from different member states; states that contribute financially and states that contribute troops; states that advocate for more robust missions and those paying the price of forceful strategies; and finally, between those that are the "penholders" – deciding upon mandates

and resolutions relative to the missions – and those that provide the operational means. The UN can address these gaps by adjusting its interventions to result in mandates that are more closely aligned with its means, and encourage a fairer sharing of the burden between member states. Finally, the UN should strive to reaffirm civilian leadership at the core of its missions, in order to maintain a clear distinction with more militarized NATO missions.



Multidimensional, integrated stabilization missions, akin to the one in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), must adapt to harsh conditions by focusing on logistical mobilization in collaboration with local stakeholders, and by assuming a militarily and politically robust posture. Investing in information units as core components of peace missions will

enhance the UN capacity to identify the most pressing crises and corresponding needs on the ground. This kind of information analysis maximizes the operational efficiency and responsiveness of missions. The collection and distribution of information within UN operations is highly integrated, emphasizing the importance of the flow of information between field offices and headquarters. The continuous analysis and distribution of key information has enabled UN responses to crises, both on the ground and in policy, to be more accountable, flexible, and straightforward.

NEEDS

Canada is well equipped to address the UN's most pressing needs in the context of peace support operations. The current gaps that have been identified by UN stakeholders are related to capabilities and personnel. In terms of capabilities, priority needs include helicopters, surveillance technology, intelligence collection technology, encryption devices, and communications technology. The CAF is in possession of these required technologies and has trained personnel who are capable of operating these technologies during missions abroad.

In terms of personnel requirements, Canada can increase its participation in UN missions by providing additional police, military, and civilian personnel. More specifically, there is a considerable gap in internal UN policing capabilities. Peace operations would therefore benefit from an increased military police (MP) presence, which Canada would be well suited to fill, given that CAF MPs have considerable experience both at home and in various deployments abroad – including in peacekeeping contexts, such as Haiti (MINUSTAH). The CAF is also well suited to support specific tasks such as night patrolling and civil military operations, both necessary in the context of peacekeeping missions' complex security settings. The CAF could also contribute to the efficiency of peace operations by devising mechanisms to enhance early warning assessments and the deployment of rapid first response capabilities.

In addition to providing equipment and military personnel, the CAF has the potential to become an international leader in peacekeeping training by providing specialized courses to military, civilian, and police personnel from other member states. Training is addressed separately in the following section.

Finally, the UN is dependent on its members for funding, equipment, and troops. Canada should initiate a diplomatic push to advocate for greater involvement in peacekeeping by other developed countries (read: wealthier countries). To be truly influential in this regard, Canada must increase its presence at higher levels of the UN (diplomats and military

advisors), but also lead by example by allocating more troops on the ground to peace missions.

TRAINING

After 9/11, Canada shifted its focus away from UN peacekeeping operations toward NATO operations. As Canada reengages at the UN, it will be necessary to reframe training and education opportunities for military and civilian personnel, to ensure that all personnel understand the paradigm shift toward UN objectives, practices, and professional culture. In addition, for the CAF to enhance its role in peacekeeping training, the following priorities should be integrated into existing training approaches:

- **Interoperability** between uniformed and ununiformed personnel, and between multinational contingents, is of the utmost importance. Military personnel deployed on operations must recognize that their activities are in support of their civilian partners and designed to fulfil humanitarian objectives first and foremost. Stronger partnerships with NGOs and community-based organizations should also be pursued. Moreover, troops must be trained to operate alongside, and in partnership with, contingents with various levels of preparedness, skills, and quality of equipment.



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- **Networked training resources** should be established to facilitate the identification and development of best practices, and to promote a higher level of standardized training between Canada and other troop contributing states. States that have developed and invested in peace operations training for many years should be sources of knowledge and instruction for Canada as it furthers its commitment to peace operations. This would generate important opportunities to initiate collaboration and closer partnerships with centres such as NODEFIC.
- **Gender and cultural awareness** should be at the forefront of training during all phases of peace operations. Peace operations are facing two main gender issues: the underrepresentation of women in missions, and instances of sexual exploitation and abuse perpetrated by peacekeepers toward the population and amongst interveners. Since gender and cultural understanding go hand in hand, training should be tailored to local contexts and support the development of evidence-based course material. With regards to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, more specifically, it is recommended that the Canadian government, alongside DND and the CAF:
 - Set targets for women's representation as part of deployments
 - Prioritize WPS in training and capacity building
 - Enforce zero tolerance towards sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA)

multilateral commitments and the government's policy objectives". To this end, our framework operationalizes these priorities and identifies the trade-offs associated with pursuing multinational operations under UN auspices in a matter that is consistent with the national interest.

FACTORS	PROS	CONS
National Interests	Threat-based assessments as rationale for involvement	Indirect causal link, difficult to communicate to publics
Partners/ Allies	Reinforcing alliance networks	Unequal burden-sharing and partnerships
Appropriateness of training and expertise	Leveraging existing skills for new missions	Lack of adaptability to UN paradigm
Pressing Needs	Potential short-term positive outcomes	Typically entails high risks
Potential Impact (stabilization, etc.)	Success is more visible	More upfront costs
Comparative advantages (linguistic, gender, and cultural awareness)	Tailored engagement with local stakeholders	Higher expectations of efficiency

IMPACT

To inform the debate on how Canada should proceed with an increased role in peace support operations, we have identified five main criteria that could form the basis for choosing a mission that would be well-suited for the CAF. In devising this framework, we took note of the Minister of Foreign Affairs' Mandate letter which reconciles the need to "to increase Canada's support for United Nations peace operations and its mediation, conflict-prevention, and post-conflict reconstruction efforts" while making sure that a deployment "aligns with Canada's national interest, our

In 2016, two cases seemed to be front runners for Canadian intervention: the MINUSMA and the MINUSCA. To assess the engagement of Canadian troops in UN multidimensional integrated stabilization missions, we drew from the above framework to compare the missions in Mali and the Central African Republic.

In the context of Canada's commitment to fight terrorism, the engagement of Canadian troops in Mali would be in tune with the national interest of assuring the safety of Canadians at home and abroad. Although fighting terrorism is not part

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of MINUSMA's mandate, tackling asymmetric threats remains a priority task for the mission. By engaging its troops in this context,

Canada could contribute to stabilization efforts for a country where terrorist activities, with global ramifications, are being promoted. Thus, Canada would be supporting partners and allies in their efforts to counter transnational terrorism in the region. In addition, the activities of Canada in Mali would resemble those undertaken in Afghanistan, requiring similar training, mobilizing similar equipment, facing similar threats, and seeking similar outcomes. Canada would thus engage in a mission to protect civilians from insurgent threats, prevent recruitment in radical and criminal networks, abate radicalization, and counter transnational terrorism. Moreover, the CAF could capitalize on the linguistic capabilities of its bilingual troops, thereby enhancing communication with the population and between intervening contingents, and boosting the overall effectiveness of the mission.

We should also consider that sending troops to Mali could lead to Canada being targeted by radical groups, and increasing the probability of casualties amongst CAF personnel. Moreover, the involvement of the CAF in a context similar to the Afghan experience could blur the lines between UN operations and NATO-like missions, both in the eyes of the soldiers and the general public.

In CAR, the Canadian national interest is less salient, as it remains a conflict contained within the country's borders, with few transnational radicalizing elements. The contained nature of the conflict would be an argument in favor of Canadian involvement in the MINUSCA, as there would be a greater opportunity for the CAF to make a significant impact on the stabilization of the country. CAF troops, that would draw from linguistic, cultural, and gender-based skills, could engage constructively with local stakeholders. In the wake of the infamous SEA scandal in the context of MINUSCA, the norms upheld by the CAF would be invaluable. At the same time, greater expectations would be placed on the CAF, raising the cost of failure or mission creep.

If the CAF were to be involved in the MINUSCA, it would also entail a shift in the training paradigm of the troops towards a better and more comprehensive understanding of UN missions and corresponding professional culture. This would require adapting relevant expertise and redesigning courses to be more compatible with UN needs and interoperability requirements. Further training along with civilians and police forces would also be needed. This would provide greater incentive for closer collaboration with international peacekeeping centres, notably the Norwegian International Defense Center.

In view of these criteria and assets, on balance, the MINUSCA represents the most appropriate choice for a reengagement of Canadian troops in UN peacekeeping missions.

¹ The authors received a grant from the Department of National Defence's Defence Engagement Program to host a workshop at the Peace Support Training Centre entitled *Peace First: Canada's Role in Peace Operations* (Kingston, October 20-21, 2017).