

# ESEMINAR SUMMARY

Centre for Security Governance

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*CSG eSeminars assemble leading experts and practitioners to discuss global security issues and challenges in an open and interactive virtual space.*

CONTEMPORARY DEBATES ON PEACEBUILDING AND STATEBUILDING: NEW CHALLENGES, SHARP DIVISIONS



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## The Future of Peacekeeping

On November 3, 2016, the Centre for Security Governance (CSG), in cooperation with the Balsillie School of International Affairs (BSIA) and Wilfrid Laurier University's (WLU's) Department of Global Studies, hosted the fifth in a series of eight online seminars focusing on the theme of "Contemporary Debates on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding."

The eSeminar brought together a group of experts — scholars, researchers and practitioners — to examine the current state of United Nations (UN) peacekeeping, the challenges affecting peacekeeping and the responses to these challenges.

Peacekeeping missions are one of the most visible and celebrated activities of the UN, with over 125,000 personnel currently serving in 16 missions across four continents. Since the inaugural UN Truce Supervision Organization mission was launched in 1948, the nature and scope of peacekeeping missions have evolved significantly over 71 missions. The collective budget for all peacekeeping operations for the 2016-2017 fiscal year is approximately US\$8 billion. Today's peacekeepers do far more than monitor ceasefires and separate



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warring parties; they are employed to manage conflicts within fragile and conflict-affected states and facilitate peacebuilding and development activities.

The peacekeeping landscape appears ripe for change. The UN's record in complex and multi-dimensional missions is mixed, as seen in Rwanda, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Recent scandals involving patterns of sexual abuse, the shifting internal politics regarding funding and troop contributions among states, and the escalation of asymmetrical warfare show the need for operational and structural adaptations. In this light, it is not surprising that innovation has become a buzzword around UN peacekeeping missions, exemplified by the use of new technologies, such as unmanned aerial vehicles, or the increased attention paid to gender issues, marked by the establishment of all-female peacekeeping units. The eSeminar examined these recent developments and explored what reforms might mean for the institution, which is poised to enter a new era of peacekeeping.

In his introductory remarks, panel chair Mark Sedra began by acknowledging the critical importance of peacekeeping to the maintenance of international peace and security; however, he also highlighted the panoply of challenges that it faces. These challenges must be addressed for future missions to be more effective and responsive to contemporary conditions. Such change could help to restore

## *About the eSeminar Series*

The Centre for Security Governance eSeminars are a series of virtual meetings that bring together experts and practitioners from around the world to discuss security sector reform (SSR) and related themes, issues, and case studies. The eSeminars are open to the public, and includes an eSeminar Summary report and eSeminar Videos. For information on upcoming eSeminars, please visit <http://www.secgovcentre.org/events>.

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## *About the CSG*

The Centre for Security Governance (CSG) is a non-profit, non-partisan think tank dedicated to the study of security and governance transitions in fragile, failed and conflict-affected states. Based in Canada, the CSG maintains a global, multi-disciplinary network of researchers, practitioners and academics engaged in the international peace and security field.

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the battered image and effectiveness of this indispensable tool for peace.

## Summary of Presentations

### *Speaker 1 – Dr. Jane Boulden*

Dr. Jane Boulden began the panel discussion by addressing three areas of contention that currently shape the way peacekeeping operations are conducted and how they can complicate and prolong conflicts. The mandate capacity gap, the use of force and the role of regional actors all present challenges that affect not only peacekeeping missions, but also the way in which member states contribute to these operations and interact with each other.

First, despite countries voluntarily supplying troops in support of a specific mission and its strategy, the burden of responsibility is not uniformly shared. Individual states attach caveats to their commitments that determine their troops' conduct, regardless of the mission's mandate. Moreover, not all states provide their troops with the capability to respond to the mission's demands. For example, even if a mandate provides for the use of force, not all troops will have been trained or instructed to use it as part of their own national strategy. This results in an unequal distribution of responsibilities and tasks among contributing nations.

Second, although the use of force has become

a mainstay in peacekeeping operations, it is a controversial element that has led to discord between participants. This is especially true when the use of force is applied to protect civilians, which risks unsettling the political environment surrounding a mission and undermining any consensus it may enjoy. When the use of force is applied, it is likely to exacerbate political tensions, particularly when invoked to protect a segment of the population party to the conflict. Under these conditions, the use of force risks jeopardizing the impartiality of the peacekeepers. Given that peacekeepers are often the face of the UN on the ground, even the appearance of peacekeeper impartiality could delegitimize the work of the entire organization.

Third, UN peacekeeping missions rely heavily on the contributions of first responders, typically regional actors. Since the end of the Cold War, regional actors hold increasingly prominent roles in serving as the first responders to conflict, often bearing the highest risks and costs in the process. Generally, this role is assumed by weaker states that rank low on the human development index. Given the intense socioeconomic and political demands of such engagements, coupled with the reality that many of these regional actors are encumbered by domestic political instability, the long-term viability of this approach should be questioned.

Ultimately, the success and failure of UN peacekeeping missions are contingent on multiple factors, many of which are context- and

region-specific. That is, missions “are not units that can be compared to a generic outcome standard, they can’t be compared to each other, and they don’t lend themselves well to following SOPs [standard operating procedures] or [to] automaticity.” Boulden is mindful of missions’ mutable nature, noting that “UN peacekeeping operations are, by definition, politically driven, reactive, [and] ad hoc.” While the UN has made efforts over the last two decades to begin to evaluate, identify and address many of the challenges to mission implementation, it is important to remember that each mission is distinct and shaped by its unique contextual conditions, which makes comparisons very difficult.

### *Speaker 2 – Arthur Boutellis*

Arthur Boutellis focused his remarks on the current peacekeeping reform process. In particular, Boutellis identified growing misgivings over the core assumptions and doctrinal foundations of UN peacekeeping as the overarching challenge facing the field.

There are three foundational principles integrated into UN peacekeeping missions:

- consent of the parties;
- impartiality; and
- the use of force only in self-defence and in defence of the mission mandate.

As peacekeeping evolved from deploying primarily into interstate conflicts to addressing in-

trastate conflicts, missions have become more intrusive and multidimensional, opening these core principles to criticism and challenges.

While peacekeeping remains an area that attracts criticism from different international stakeholders, it nevertheless remains the UN Security Council’s primary tool to address conflict and facilitate peacebuilding. With over 120,000 personnel deployed across the world, peacekeeping remains relatively cost-effective and encourages collaboration between states unwilling or unable to independently mitigate conflicts.

Regional organizations hold an increasingly larger role in peacekeeping missions. Since its creation in 2002, the African Union (AU) has asserted itself in areas of peace and security. While the AU collaborated with the UN on peacekeeping operations throughout Africa, such as in Somalia and Mali, this cooperation has not always been straightforward, nor without conflict. While the UN benefits from years of peacekeeping experience and a sizeable budget devoted to operations, the AU’s relatively new arrival to peacekeeping means that it lacks the same institutional knowledge and resources as its counterpart, and is forced to develop new capacities in the midst of ongoing crises throughout the continent. Moreover, both organizations have different approaches to peacekeeping and different institutional cultures, making their partnership an evolving work in progress.

In 2014, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon commissioned the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) to review the state of peacekeeping. This was the biggest appraisal conducted since the Brahimi Report in 2000, a review following the crises of Srebrenica and Rwanda that exposed the failures and shortcomings of peacekeeping orthodoxy. Although the HIPPO was only intended to give an overview of the current state of peacekeeping and suggest steps for future reform when initially commissioned, the panel took a more expansive look at peace operations, identifying four key areas for action:

- Primacy of politics (political strategies to guide peacekeeping operations). Often missions fail because there is no political strategy behind them.
- Examining the full spectrum of peacekeeping operation responses. This requires establishing multiple models of peacekeeping that are more context-specific rather than applying a standard template.
- Strengthening regional and global partnerships to carry out peacekeeping operations, particularly focusing on the UN's relationship with the AU.
- Field-focused and people-centric missions that would see the UN pay more attention to field missions and UN personnel to “resolve to serve and protect the people.”

While the HIPPO recommendations were well-received, Boutellis identified two specific

challenges that remain unaddressed. First, member-state divisions continue to exist. Not only are these divisions present within the Security Council, but they also extend to regional groups. These tensions affect the relationships between the Council members that mandate the operations, the contributing states that provide the personnel, and the states that finance the missions. Second, reform at the UN and in peace operations is a piecemeal process, which means that implementing reform is likely to be a long and gradual undertaking. Boutellis highlighted that the Brahimi Report took years to implement and that major reforms require three to five years to take root. Recommendations for reform must be realistic about the necessary time frame required for implementation.

### *Speaker 3 – Tatiana Carayannis*

The final speaker, Tatiana Carayannis, delved deeper into the key issues and challenges to be addressed by reform, with a focus on the peacekeeping experience in Africa. She argued that the manner in which conflicts are identified is critical. Specifically, efforts need to be made to “disaggregate conflict from violence.” While conflict may be endemic to a society, widespread grievances need not descend into the use of violence. What is witnessed today is a rise in violence manifested as either community self-defence groups, criminal syndicates, jihadists or state forces, among others. Carayannis emphasized that conflict is not itself

a sign of disarray, nor is it mutually exclusive from development. Disentangling conflict from violence requires looking more intently at the lived realities of the communities where interventions are taking place.

Carayannis suggested that rather than relying on preconceived ideas or templates of how states should work, peace operations should dedicate more attention to understanding the way non-state actors organize and implement local political order, and ultimately shape the governance functions typically ascribed to states. This understanding would provide a more contextually appropriate peacebuilding goal and locally attuned strategy for achieving it.

First, Carayannis highlighted that one of the main reasons violence flourishes at the local level is due to armed groups being embedded within national elite networks and having the greatest power — compared to the state — at the local level. This is further compounded by the fact that public authority in fragile and conflict-affected areas is exercised by a wide range of actors who cannot be easily defined using binary distinctions of public and private sectors. Understanding local power networks will reveal insight into national politics.

Secondly, the public goods of justice and security are vulnerable to being controlled by local actors in conflict-affected countries. Under these circumstances, a multi-layered justice

system forces many people to resort to shopping until they find an avenue that will afford them the “justice deal and security provision” that best suits their needs. Consequently, understanding the lived realities of local communities means identifying whom citizens turn to for justice and security instead of prescribing a desired set of outcomes that designate the state as the unitary form of authority and provider of public goods. Peacebuilders will have to ensure that they engage with a wide range of local actors, rather than solely like-minded stakeholders. Template-adhering peace operations can unwittingly strengthen one local actor among many, in what is already a competitive local political environment, compromising the success of peace agreements.

## Discussion Period and Key Themes

A question-and-answer period was held with the audience following the presentations. Three key themes framed the discussion: transparency and accountability in upholding operation mandates; the role of the private sector in peace operations; and Canada’s future role in peacekeeping. This section provides a summary of the main elements discussed, highlighting key questions and answers from the audience and panellists.

### *Theme 1 – Accountability*

The panellists were asked to share their thoughts on transparency and accountability in failures to uphold operation mandates. To whom are peacekeepers accountable, both in practice and in principle? The panel explained that, ultimately, the mechanisms for accountability lie with the national governments responsible for training and disciplining the troops deployed for operations. While the Security Council remains responsible for ensuring accountability for the mission, it often fails to give the political backing required for its implementation on the ground.

Events in 2015 suggest a troubling institutional culture of inaction at the organizational level that raises serious questions over the UN Secretariat's capacity to ensure and enforce accountability during operations due to its distance from field operations. Anders Kompass, director of field operations at Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, was suspended in April 2015 after he forwarded an internal memo to the French government reporting on the sexual abuse of children by French troops during the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic operation after the UN failed to address the matter. Rather than addressing the substance of the memo, the UN accused Kompass of violating confidentiality agreements when the report was leaked and he is under investigation by the

UN Office of Internal Oversight Services.

This incident raises serious questions about the UN's ability to oversee the daily operations of these missions and blurs the lines of institutional accountability. While it is the French government's jurisdiction to discipline the French troops involved in this incident, it nonetheless raises troubling ethical and operational concerns for the UN leadership. The failure to confront this conduct once it was revealed and then disciplining the whistle-blower suggests that accountability mechanisms within the UN peacekeeping system are, at best, flawed.

### *Theme 2 – Private Sector*

The panel was then asked whether there is a role for the private sector in peacekeeping missions. The panel explained that the private sector remains an unknown quantity. However, the panellists did explain that over the years, peacekeeping missions have become a mix of military and commercial elements, with key equipment and services provided through international commercial contracts.

While there remain many unexplored avenues regarding the role the private sector can play in partnering in future peacekeeping missions, a 2008 study by the Humanitarian Policy Group showed that the UN has begun to turn to the private sector for assistance in operations where the human risks are high and there is low member-state interest, such as in Somalia

and Afghanistan. The study's findings were further buttressed by 2010 comments made by former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who explained that the UN would have to turn to the private sector to protect its personnel. As the UN prepared to expand operations in Afghanistan in 2010, it hired Nepalese Gurkhas to provide security, a noteworthy shift in policy that once saw the UN rely exclusively on governments to contribute peacekeepers for similar assignments.

### *Trend 3 – Canada's Role*

In 2016, reversing a long-standing decline in Canadian engagement with peacekeeping, the Liberal government of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau committed to providing \$450 million over three years and up to 600 troops and 150 police officers to missions overseas. Canada currently has 19 military personnel, 91 police and 11 military experts serving in UN missions.<sup>9</sup> A location for future Canadian peacekeeping efforts remains to be determined; however, a potential target for deployment is Mali. The security risks posed by contributing to multidimensional peace operations prompted the Canadian Senate to call for particular conditions to be met before Canadian peacekeepers are deployed: increased federal funding for the military; a clear time frame for Canada's engagement; and parliamentary approval before any deployment occurs. The Senate's apprehensions are rooted in the fear of mission creep, with the commitment snowballing into a

long-term quagmire with ill-defined conditions for success.

With the renewed interest of the Government of Canada in peacekeeping contributions, the panel was asked to discuss the domestic furor over contributing to a peace enforcement mission rather than a traditional peacekeeping mission, and the inherent dangers in doing so. In addressing this fear, the panel poignantly highlighted that being mired in discussions over safety and security distract from considering a political strategy and the political contributions to a peace operation, and moving forward with the possibility of reaching a peace agreement in the region. Indeed, the panel explained that Mali is a unique context because it is the only place where the UN is involved in a counterterrorism exercise. The desire to operate in complete safety in a high-conflict area with a "perfect" peacekeeping tool should not take away from developing a coherent political process to underlie the mission.

## Conclusion

The eSeminar examined the current state of UN peacekeeping: the challenges that exist; the initial steps taken to address these challenges; and potential future developments. The panellists showed how the politics surrounding peacekeeping can shape the dynamics driving operations. Whether it involves the use of force in peacekeeping mandates, the growing influence that regional organizations such as the AU are asserting in peacekeeping missions, or the brokering of deals with local elites in peacekeeping settings, addressing the politics of peace operations is crucial to their success.

Tackling these challenges will not be easy, nor will resolutions be swift. While the HIPPO is a key first step, many worrying trends remain. The creeping shift to peace enforcement operations, in the face of asymmetric conflict, requires peacekeeping missions to find new ways to mitigate violence and create order. These new methods must achieve their goals without ignoring the local political context or imposing Western security and governance templates. While the recommitment of Western states to peacekeeping may provide an infusion of personnel and the introduction of new technologies and capabilities, this should not distract from the need for fundamental operational and strategic reform in peacekeeping orthodoxy.

UN peacekeeping operations remain a core

element of the international peace and security architecture, and addressing these present-day challenges will be key to ensuring their continued relevance and effectiveness in the years ahead. Only through systemic transformation will the heralded peacekeeping renaissance become a reality.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> United Nations. “Financing Peacekeeping.” Available online at: [www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/financing.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/financing.shtml).

<sup>2</sup> For more information on how the UN has begun to analyze peacekeeping missions, see: UN General Assembly (1992), *An Agenda for Peace: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, A/RES/47/120B*, October 8; UN General Assembly (2000), *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, A/55/305-S/2000/809*, August 21; and UN General Assembly (2015), *Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on uniting our strengths for peace: politics, partnership and people, A/70/95-S/2015/446*, June 17.

<sup>3</sup> Paul D. Williams and Arthur Boutellis (2014). “Partnership Peacekeeping: Challenges and Opportunities in the United Nations-African Union Relationship.” *African Affairs* 113, no. 451: 254–278.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations (2015). “Information note on High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations.” New York, NY: United Nations. Available online at: [www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/documents/High-Level-Independent-Panel.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/documents/High-Level-Independent-Panel.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Sandra Laville (2015). “UN aid worker suspended for leaking report on child abuse by French troops.” *The Guardian*, April 29. Available online at: [www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/29/un-aid-worker-suspended-leaking-report-child-abuse-french-troops-car](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/29/un-aid-worker-suspended-leaking-report-child-abuse-french-troops-car).

<sup>6</sup> Abby Stoddard, Adele Harmer and Victoria DiDoménico (2008). *The Use of Private Security Providers and Services in Humanitarian Operations*. Humanitarian Policy Group Paper 27. London, UK: Overseas Development Institute.

<sup>7</sup> Colum Lynch (2010). “U.N. embraces private military contractors.” *Foreign Policy*, January 17. Available online at: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2010/01/17/u-n-embraces-private-military-contractors/>.

<sup>8</sup> Murray Brewster (2016). “Liberals commit \$450M, up to 600 troops to UN peacekeeping missions.” *CBC*, August 26. Available online at: [www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-peacekeeping-announcement-1.3736593](http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-peacekeeping-announcement-1.3736593).

<sup>9</sup> United Nations (2017). “Troop and police contributors.” Available online at: <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors.shtml>.

<sup>10</sup> Murray Brewster (2016). “Senators issue warning over potential Mali peacekeeping mission.” *CBC*, November 28. Available online at: [www.cbc.ca/news/politics/senate-un-peacekeeping-1.3870950](http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/senate-un-peacekeeping-1.3870950).

## About the Presenters

**Dr. Mark Sedra** is the executive director of the Centre for Security Governance and the moderator of the eSeminar series. Prior to joining the Centre for Security Governance, he was a senior fellow at the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) and the leader of CIGI's Security Sector Governance project.

**Dr. Jane Boulden** is a professor at the Royal Military College of Canada and a research fellow at the Centre for National and Defence Policy at Queen's University. She writes extensively on UN peace-related issues.

**Arthur Boutellis** is the director of the Brian Urquhart Center for Peace Operations at the International Peace Institute, where he focuses on a variety of policy matters related to UN peace operations.

**Dr. Tatiana Carayannis** is the deputy director of the Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum, a research director of the justice and security research program at the London School of Economics and also convenes the Democratic Republic of Congo Affinity Group.

## Event Organizers

**The Centre for Security Governance (CSG)** is a non-profit, non-partisan think tank dedicated to the study of security and governance transitions in fragile, failed and conflict-affected states.

**The Balsillie School of International Affairs (BSIA)** is an institute for advanced research, education, and outreach in the fields of global governance and international public policy. Founded in 2007 by philanthropist Jim Balsillie, BSIA is an equal collaboration among the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI), the University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University.

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