

**UN Peacekeeping:
(Departments of Political and
Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace
Operations)
Background Guide**

**Cleveland Council on
WORLD AFFAIRS**



UN Peacekeeping: DPPA/DPO

Background Guide

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This committee is focused on UN Peacekeeping in general, with a specific look at the operations of the DPPA and DPO. This committee will operate as one “Peacekeeping” committee, drawing from the mandates and purview of both the DPPA and DPO for both topics. While the DPPA and DPO are conventionally not composed of representatives of countries, for the purposes of this Model UN Peacekeeping committee, delegates should research a country’s positions and apply them to the issues discussed in this background guide.

One of the UN’s critical functions is the prevention of conflict across the globe. In existing conflict zones, UN peacekeeping¹ is a resource meant to facilitate the transition of a country from conflict to peace. Peacekeeping responsibilities are mainly divided between two UN bodies: the Department of Political and Peacekeeping Affairs (DPPA) acts broadly to prevent conflict in high-risk areas, using a combination of political, economic, and military resources, while the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) maintains existing peacekeeping missions and is responsible for day-to-day operations. Since 2019, both organizations have jointly overseen eight regional divisions which split the world into areas to monitor for signs of developing crises².

I: Reconsidering “Appropriate Military Support” for Peacekeeping Missions

¹ “PEACEBUILDING.”

² “DEPARTMENTS of POLITICAL and PEACEBUILDING AFFAIRS and PEACE OPERATIONS.”

This section is drawn from the DPPA's purview and primarily introduces the topic as such. However, delegates are reminded that when debating and writing resolutions on both topics, they will utilize the mandates and purview of both the DPPA and DPO.

Statement of the Issue:

Today, the DPPA runs 22 missions, employing around 4,000 staff in total, in some of the world's more volatile regions³. DPPA's focus is on the prevention of conflict through vigilant monitoring of global events and its main strength is its ability to deploy peacekeepers and mediators (with the assent of a country) very quickly⁴. DPPA also works with other bodies, such as the Security Council, ASEAN, and the African Union, in order to promote shared goals, such as decolonization. In addition, the DPPA is also responsible for UN election assistance through its Electoral Assistance Division.

The DPPA has operated within great volatility in the 21st century with the growth of conflicts as being asymmetric, led by non-state actors or manifesting as internal civil wars. Notable DPPA missions include recent conflict zones such as Libya and longstanding disputed regions such as Western Sahara. Owing to its role as a UN body, Special Political Missions (SPMs) are seen as impartial brokers and are therefore essential for negotiating with states and NGOs to secure critical humanitarian aid in unstable areas.

History:

The DPPA was nominally established in 2019 as part of the effort to reform peacekeeping. The Department of Political Affairs (DPA) and the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO, which remains part of the DPPA today) merged during this time. Since the merger, it has been focused on many preventative measures to prevent conflict, maintaining a large network of officials across the globe.

The PBSO is the branch of the DPPA most focused on peacebuilding, being composed of three sub bodies⁵. These are the Peacebuilding Commission, which acts as an

³ "United Nations Peace Operations."

⁴ "About Us | Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs."

⁵ "PEACEBUILDING."

intergovernmental advisory body supporting peace efforts⁶, the Peacebuilding Fund, which provides funding to invest in peacebuilding⁷, and the Peacebuilding Strategies and Partnerships Branch, which brings together UN entities involved in peacekeeping such as the Sustainable Development Group⁸.

The PBSO maintains a presence in countries even after they no longer formally have a DPPA mission. For example, in 2023, the PBSO provided electoral support to facilitate Liberia's elections⁹. Under the Secretary-General's Peacekeeping Fund, the PBSO was also able to fund over \$40M USD in 2022 for national and regional partners and resolved 5,000 instances of conflict peacefully¹⁰. In addition, the DPPA provides large amounts of assistance in running free and fair elections, providing technical support and particularly encouraging the participation of women in the political process¹¹. By promoting democracy and warding off authoritarianism, this serves as preventative work to maintain stability. The DPPA's support in over 115 elections since 1991 and the increasing demand for their support suggests this is a major strength for the DPPA¹².

The DPPA's missions often are specialized envoys meant to deal with a specific regional issue¹³. For example, DPPA envoys in Yemen have been responsible for navigating the development of that conflict, from attempting to prevent the start of the civil war in 2014 to negotiating multiple ceasefires and the delivery of humanitarian aid¹⁴. In Yemen, the DPPA is notable for its Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement which protected one of the country's largest ports used for delivery of humanitarian aid from the impact of the conflict¹⁵.

DPPA can also act as an important voice in developed countries not considered combat zones as well. Through its collaborations with SPECPOL, DPPA is responsible for

⁶ "Peacebuilding Commission | PEACEBUILDING."

⁷ "Fund | UNITED NATIONS PEACEBUILDING."

⁸ "Policy Issues and Partnerships | PEACEBUILDING."

⁹ "PBSO Support to the 2023 Elections in Liberia | PEACEBUILDING."

¹⁰ "Secretary General's Peacekeeping Fund: Impact Brief."

¹¹ "Policy Principles and Types of UN Electoral Assistance POLICY on Principles and Types of UN Electoral Assistance."

¹² United Nations, "Elections | Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs."

¹³ "DPPA around the World | Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs."

¹⁴ United Nations, "Special Envoy Yemen | Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs."

¹⁵ "UNMHA, Hudaydah Agreement | Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs."

protecting the voice of the 17 UN-recognized Non-Self-Governing Territories¹⁶.

Coordinating efforts of UN organizations to continue work in these areas, DPPA links organizations such as the UNDP and WHO to provide important services, also supporting the mandate of the Special Committee on Decolonization (C-24)¹⁷.

Analysis:

DPPA faces the challenge of its operations, like most UN bodies, being primarily funded by Western, developed countries¹⁸. Since DPPA activities must be approved by the Security Council, its missions are often heavily influenced by the interests of great powers, which do not always align with those of the governments requesting support¹⁹.

This points at a broader challenge for the DPPA: relying heavily on military support to enforce peace can increase the difficulty in maintaining the perception of impartiality that is required for the Security Council to support a mission. In addition, attracting strong political support for peacebuilding missions can be difficult as some situations are linked Western intervention in the Global South. For example, the US-led War on Terror, lead to perceptions that peacekeeping operations are Western countries buying their way out of the consequences of their historical impact. Furthermore, domestic populations in host countries often criticize international peacekeeping about feeling disconnected from the operational management²⁰, which amplifies critique of mistakes made in missions.

The decade-long United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) illustrates the necessity of developing a strong political strategy and the challenges in creating one. After the 2012 Taureg rebellion in northern Mali resulted in a coup d'état, and eventual intervention by ECOWAS and France in the form of military forces to combat the insurgency. MINUSMA's deployment of 11,200 military personnel was approved by Security Council resolution 2100²¹ to take over peacekeeping from the

¹⁶ United Nations, "Non-Self-Governing Territories | the United Nations and Decolonization."

¹⁷ "What the UN Can Do to Assist Non-Self Governing Territories."

¹⁸ "Contributions | PEACEBUILDING."

¹⁹ Trahan, "Case Studies: Veto Use Related to the Situation in Syria and Veto Threats Related to the Situation in Darfur."

²⁰ Matamis, "Host-Country Consent in UN Peacekeeping • Stimson Center."

²¹ UN Security Council, "Resolution 2100 (2013) /: Adopted by the Security Council at Its 6952nd Meeting, on 25 April 2013."

ECOWAS and French forces. MINUSMA's mandate of protecting civilians appeared to be successful as it produced the Algiers Accords, an agreement between the Malian government and the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) that aimed to restore peace to Mali through decentralization and economic investment in the north²². However, the emergence of Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State led to the intensification of counterterrorism efforts. Counterterrorism operations often encountered civilians in danger, and MINUSMA was not equipped nor expected to perform counterterrorism operations, yet its failure to do so led to the collapse of its popularity. The continued chaos resulted in surveys showing that the Malian people had lost faith in MINUSMA's ability to protect civilians²³. Situations like this, and the subsequent worsening of the conflict in Mali, have made way for arguments for the militarization of peacekeeping missions. Arguing that if peacekeeping missions were more militarized, they will prove more successful in protecting civilians on the ground.

Building off this argument, UN peacekeepers continue to lose their lives every year. Particularly, missions in Mali and the Central African Republic were the deadliest missions in 2022²⁴. Furthering the question of militarizing peacekeeping could mean more safety for the population served, as well as UN personnel. Originally, peacekeeping's mandate meant that UN personnel would not be sent to a region until there was no active conflict there. However, with the development of Multi-dimensional Peacekeeping, this idea has transformed. Multi-dimensional Peacekeeping is a more holistic understanding of peacekeeping, wherein the UN works to intervene before conflict breaks out, helps ensure safety of civilians during conflict, assists in reaching resolution to conflict, and develops infrastructures to maintain peace. Each of these goals is difficult to apply to missions, and thus, more difficult to achieve. Moreover, the execution of these goals becomes more complicated when regions are engaged in asymmetric warfare against insurgent groups that resist peace negotiations.

²² Pellerin, "Mali's Algiers Peace Agreement, Five Years On: An Uneasy Calm."

²³ Baudais and Quist, "Local Perceptions of UN Peace - Keeping: A Look at the Data."

²⁴ "At Least 32 Peacekeeping, Associated Personnel Killed in Malicious Attacks during 2022, United Nations Staff Union President Says | UN Press."

Advocates for the accelerated militarization of UN peacekeeping missions point to the high number of fatalities that UN missions have sustained, particularly recently in conflict-torn areas. Additionally, due to the continued reliance on Western support, some have called for peacekeeping to be further given independence through the formation of a UN military²⁵. Creating a UN military may allow for greater action but lacks support from major powers that are likely to veto any such proposal.

Conclusion:

Peacekeeping is highly dependent financially on the contributions of general UN member states, and troop contributions have trended more towards coming from developing countries, often from the neighbors of the conflict zone²⁶.

The DPPA's broad mandate means that it could, in theory, respond to almost all global developments, even without the use of force, but is dependent on Security Council approval. However, the DPPA's focus continues to be supporting other UN bodies, NGOs, and international cooperation.

Delegates should consider a range of military and nonmilitary solutions and are encouraged to use all forementioned situations as case studies for exploring the extent of the appropriate use of military support in peacekeeping missions.

Questions to Consider:

1. When is military support necessary in a peacekeeping operation? Will limiting the use of military presence enforce the idea of the UN bringing peace to a region?
2. What can peacekeeping operations do to prevent the entrenchment of neocolonialism?
3. How should peacekeeping operations take care to work towards autonomy for non-self-governing territories?

²⁵ Johnstone, "Why We Need an International Standing Civilian Protection Service | the Fletcher School."

²⁶ United Nations, "Troop and Police Contributors."

II: The Future of Peacekeeping

This section is drawn from the DPO's purview and primarily introduces the topic as such. However, delegates are reminded that when debating and writing resolutions on both topics, they will utilize the mandates and purview of both the DPPA and DPO.

Statement of the Issue:

Today, the DPO runs 12 missions across the world in three continents and over a dozen countries²⁷. It is inevitable that the DPO will continue to face new challenges due to the constantly evolving nature of conflict. Streamlining peacekeeping operations is the task of this committee as it looks towards the future of peacekeeping. The DPO consists of three main offices²⁸. The Office of the Rule of Law and Security Institutions (OROLSI)²⁹ focuses on working with national authorities to reestablish the rule of law, the Office of Military Affairs (OMA) focuses on deployment of military capabilities³⁰, and the Policy, Evaluation and Training Division (DPET) works with various UN and external partners to create peacekeeping policy and doctrine.

The DPO's main area of focus are regions that were formerly combat zones. Some of its missions have existed for many decades, for areas such as UNMOGIP (on the India-Pakistan border) and UNDOF (in the Golan Heights, disputed by Israel and Syria), only interrupted by occasional tensions that generally calm down. In contrast, the DPO also has many missions remaining from the tumult of the post-Cold War era, in volatile areas such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MINUSCA). In these areas, UN missions may enjoy less popularity as they have been present for extended periods with little reduction of conflict and are often seen as dysfunctional.

In 2018, the Secretary-General launched the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative³¹, meant to reform UN peacekeeping operations by attempting to secure mutual commitments from countries to agree on a set of principles that would mitigate poor

²⁷ "United Nations Peace Operations."

²⁸ United Nations Peacekeeping, "Department of Peace Operations."

²⁹ "Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions."

³⁰ United Nations, "Military."

³¹ "Action for Peacekeeping (A4P)."

coordination between host countries and donor countries, and ultimately standardize peacekeeping to the extent possible.

History:

Early conceptions of UN peacekeeping created the institution as an unarmed observer force meant to supplement ceasefire efforts throughout post-WWII conflicts³². For example, the first UN peacekeeping missions created were the UNTSO³³, created to supervise the ceasefire between Israel and its Arab neighbors after the Arab-Israeli War in 1948, and UNMOGIP in 1949³⁴, created to supervise the ceasefire between India and Pakistan. These missions continue to operate today and consist of several hundred unarmed personnel.

During the Cold War, tensions between the United States and Soviet Union had initially prevented the UN from being perceived as a truly neutral body in most conflicts³⁵, particularly the many proxy wars of the US and Soviet Union. One notable exception to this was the beginning of the UN Operation in the Congo (ONUC)³⁶, launched in 1960. However, after the end of the Cold War, countries began to utilize peacekeepers as a resource to a much greater extent.

In 1992, the UNDPD was created because of the rapidly growing demand for peacekeeping operations after the end of the Cold War. The Security Council began to send greater numbers of peacekeepers to disparate regions. For example, UNPROFOR in 1992, sent into former Yugoslavia³⁷, was an early test of UN peacekeeping after the Cold War. With an ethnically driven conflict, danger to civilians was high. UNPROFOR designated several cities as safe zones, where thousands of refugees fled to avoid the violence. In the city of Srebrenica, Bosnian Serb forces took 30 Dutch peacekeepers hostage. While being held hostage, the UN officials had their gear stolen and the Bosnian-Serb forces used this gear to gain the trust of civilians and commit a massacre that ended with over 8,000

³² United Nations Peacekeeping, "Our History."

³³ UN, "UNTSO."

³⁴ United Nations, "UNMOGIP."

³⁵ United Nations Peacekeeping, "Our History."

³⁶ "ONUC."

³⁷ "UNPROFOR."

civilian deaths³⁸. UN forces stationed in this area were unable to prevent the massacre as they were being held hostage and were without equipment.

In October 1993, Security Council resolution 872 created the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), meant to enforce the Arusha Accords that ended the Rwandan Civil War³⁹. UNAMIR was given a narrow mandate that limited its use of force to self-defense or to evacuate foreigners, with little mention of what should be done to protect civilians⁴⁰. This would prove to be disastrous after UNAMIR commander Romeo Dallaire learned the plans of the Rwandan government which were to slaughter Tutsis and some of the UN's Belgian peacekeepers⁴¹. After taking this information to the UN, he was told to take the matter up with the Rwandan government. In the meantime, Belgian peacekeepers were murdered and Belgium demanded the withdrawal of its peacekeepers⁴². After the withdrawal of Belgian peacekeepers, Hutu militias broke into the school where Tutsis were taking refuge, and massacred 2,000 Tutsis in the area⁴³. The ensuing genocide in Rwanda spiraling from these events is estimated to have killed over 800,000 people⁴⁴. UN forces were outnumbered and constrained by orders from the Security Council, whose priorities were on foreigners rather than the Tutsis.

The international community often perceives these examples, and others, as failures of peacekeeping missions themselves. However, they demonstrate the external factors that impede peacekeeper's ability to take action, as well as bureaucratic or political issues of the UN. However, in response, UN doctrine adopted the principle of the "responsibility to protect," where UN peacekeeping would always seek to prevent the most egregious atrocities no matter the circumstances⁴⁵. Formally adopting the principle in 2005, peacekeeping has primarily changed to be focused on preserving the welfare of the population within the region being served. This idea was first tested after the outbreak of

³⁸ Smith, "Srebrenica Massacre | Facts, History, & Photos."

³⁹ United Nations, "UNAMIR."

⁴⁰ Lakin, "Lessons from the UN Peacekeeping Mission in Rwanda, 25 Years after the Genocide It Failed to Stop."

⁴¹ Winfield, "UN Failed Rwanda."

⁴² "When the Massacres Started, UN Troops Saved White People."

⁴³ McGreal, "What's the Point of Peacekeepers When They Don't Keep the Peace?"

⁴⁴ BBC, "Rwanda Genocide: 100 Days of Slaughter."

⁴⁵ United Nations, "United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect."

the Libyan Civil War in 2011, when the Security Council voted to enforce a no-fly zone in Libya under the “responsibility to protect” doctrine, aiming to protect civilians from airstrikes⁴⁶.

UN peacekeeping has also had notable successes since then. In Liberia, the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) was created by Security Council resolution 1509 (2003), positioned to protect the peace agreement that ended the Liberian Civil War⁴⁷. From 2003 until their withdrawal in 2018, UNMIL disarmed over 100,000 combatants, secured over 21,000 weapons, enabled a million refugees to return home, and presided over three successful election cycles, including Liberia’s first democratic transition of power in over 70 years⁴⁸. UNMIL’s success is often credited to the strong and unwavering international support it received to maintain peace in Liberia, and it was a very popular mission among the public when it left⁴⁹.

Analysis:

There are a variety of factors that lead into the failure of a peacekeeping operation, and minimizing indecision while keeping safeguards to prevent peacekeeping operations from spiraling out of control is a delicate balance that each mission must uphold.

The topic of where peacekeepers should come from remains a heated debate⁵⁰. Currently, the countries who do not provide peacekeepers generally provide a large portion of the funding. For example, the United States does not provide peacekeepers but contributes 25% of the budget⁵¹. Peacekeepers often, by contrast, come from countries that are unable to donate large sums of money and whose militaries are seeking any amount of training they can get⁵². This disconnect can create difficulties in ensuring that peacekeepers are equipped to meet the challenges that they face, which is particularly problematic as they have been increasingly deployed to areas where active combat is still common.

⁴⁶ Council on Foreign Relations, “The Rise and Fall of the Responsibility to Protect.”

⁴⁷ “UNMIL.”

⁴⁸ “UNMIL Facts.”

⁴⁹ Ighobor, “Mission Accomplished: 15 Years of Peacekeeping Success in Liberia | Africa Renewal.”

⁵⁰ O’Hanlon, “Time for American GIs to Become U.N. Peacekeepers.”

⁵¹ “United Nations Issues: U.S. Funding of U.N. Peacekeeping.”

⁵² “Why States Contribute United Nations Peacekeepers.”

The conduct of peacekeepers in their host countries can sometimes be problematic as well. For example, after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, UN peacekeepers working under MINUSTAH (who had been there since the 2003 coup d'état) were found to have improperly disposed of sewage⁵³. This eventually led to a massive cholera outbreak that Haiti continues to grapple with to this day, leading to 820,000 infections and 9,792 deaths from 2010 to 2019⁵⁴. The incident continues to damage perceptions of UN peacekeeping, compounded by the UN not acknowledging their role in the disease's spread for years afterward⁵⁵. Delegates should work to build relationships between host countries' civilian populations and peacekeepers.

Additionally, UN peacekeeping missions have run into problems of loyalty. Because they are composed of forces from various national militaries, some peacekeepers may be more loyal to their home governments than the peacekeeping mission assigned by the UN⁵⁶. For example, in 2012, the UN mission in the DRC was led by an Indian general who ignored UN orders to defend the city of Goma, instead delaying action and allowing the seizure of the city by rebels⁵⁷. This delay in communication undercuts DPO's mandate to act as a rapid response force to threats. This is compounded by the controversial nature of some of the forces that countries choose to send as UN peacekeepers. For example, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have notably sent officers implicated in torture and killings, and the lacking UN response is a byproduct of DPO's heavy dependence on states' contributions⁵⁸. Former UN officials have noted that countries routinely threaten to withdraw their troops entirely if concerns were raised about some of them; this makes DPO's operations in its current structure quite difficult to change.

Beyond concerns that peacekeepers from authoritarian countries may not necessarily share beliefs in democracy and human rights, inflexibility in composition of peacekeeper missions also contributes to their persistent problem of sexual misconduct

⁵³ "Cholera in the Time of MINUSTAH"

⁵⁴ Human Rights Watch, "Haiti: Urgently Address Cholera Outbreak."

⁵⁵ Katz, "U.N. Admits Role in Cholera Epidemic in Haiti."

⁵⁶ McGreat, "Sierra Leone Peace Force Accused of Sabotage."

⁵⁷ Smith, "Goma Trembles before Congo Rebel Advance UN Seems Powerless to Stop."

⁵⁸ Conrad, Islam, and Schülke, "Torturers Deployed as UN Peacekeepers - DW - 05/21/2024."

from peacekeepers⁵⁹. Under the current system, the only action the UN can take when discovering misconduct is to send the peacekeeper responsible home, but they are unable to prosecute them. This issue has been seen across several UN missions, such as in Haiti, the Central African Republic, and the DRC⁶⁰.

Conclusion:

Delegates should consider the myriad of issues surrounding peacekeeping. Conflict continues to take on new forms, and the UN will consistently have to adapt to the new nature of conflicts, governments, and military assistance. The DPO is under particularly strong pressure in central Africa, where a spate of coups through the Sahel region has overthrown government after government. As the region continues to show signs of crisis, the existing MINUSCA mission in the Central African Republic is particularly endangered. The DPO's dependence on host government cooperation⁶¹ means it may have limited tools to continue operations if it does not build sufficient relationships with populations and achieve greater success in its goals of protecting civilians.

Furthermore, UN experts project a wide range of possible scenarios for the future viability of peacekeeping⁶². Tensions between the US and China could lead to a struggle to fund and adequately support peacekeeping. On the other hand, detaching from the militaries and funding of states may open opportunities with cooperations with the private sector. Delegates should aim to construct models of peacekeeping adjustable on a case-by-case basis, accounting for past mistakes of peacekeeping missions, while considering the effects.

Questions to Consider:

1. How can UN peacekeeping better serve communities directly affected? What types of community outreach can it focus on to avoid damaging the local population and infrastructure?

⁵⁹ "Addressing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse."

⁶⁰ Wheeler, "UN Peacekeeping Has a Sexual Abuse Problem."

⁶¹ Hairsine, "Russia and France Bicker as UN Keeps Blue Helmets in CAR - DW - 11/16/2018."

⁶² "Future of Peacekeeping."

2. Where can the UN find resources to make peacekeeping more practical? How can it alleviate funding disparities from mission to mission?
3. How should the UN calibrate its forces to the threat levels in an area? Who should be giving judgment on what the rules of engagement are?

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