

Forum:	Security Council (SC)
Issue:	Adapting International military and law enforcement missions to tackle the threat of COVID-19 transmission
Student Officer:	Joanna Mavromati
Position:	Deputy President

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates,

My name is Joanna Mavromati and I am currently a 10th Grade student at Platon School, in Athens. I am more than excited to serve as your Deputy President in this year's Security Council and I'm sure that we'll procure great work together.

Joining the Model United Nations world has been the best decision of my life as a student and I'm so grateful that I was given the opportunity to evolve and learn even more as a Student Officer. It provides students with an advanced forum in which they can unite and turn their disoriented ideas into a more specific direction in which they are given the opportunity to compose a fuller perspective of the world and comprehend the functions of modern-day institutions and politics. The MUN community is an inclusive environment, setting its principles in the basic ideas of diplomacy and respect therefore allowing students to voice their opinions without feeling disregarded or insignificant. Acknowledging the fact that younger generations tend to get undermined in decision-making contexts, it is of vital importance that we have managed to create a community by students for students, in which we obtain the role of the leader. MUN is, in my opinion, one of the purest forms of democracy which we must all treasure and fight to keep alive and active. Reenacting some of the UN's basic procedures and researching its way of operation allows us to familiarize ourselves with the extraordinary value of global unity; the main principle which led to its formal establishment in 1945.

The Security Council is characterized as the most powerful of the six main bodies of the UN, as it is the only one with the jurisdiction to impose measures and resolutions on all member states, a fact which greatly differentiates it from other committees. Thereby, it is understandable that the Security Council greatly impacts bilateral relations and the outcome of international disputes as its resolutions are not only ultimate but the result of delicate negotiations and diplomatic procedures. Its peculiar Rules of Procedure require a greater understanding of world affairs as the influence of the Great Powers, through the exercise of the veto power, upgrade the level of debate and add an essence of realism to the whole process, making it a rather valuable experience for anyone fond of complex political relations.

This year's Security Council agenda addresses some of the world's most critical and urgent issues that the international community is obliged to face and resolve. As far as my topic is concerned, it admittedly is an issue that has risen to prominence as one of the world's most crucial matters, as the COVID-19 pandemic and its global impact calls for reconsideration of some primary values and international security concerns.

I encourage you all to revise the study guides before the conference and conduct extensive research, especially on your country's policy, in order to be able to form innovative and realistic resolutions. We are all looking forward to our time together! Do not hesitate to contact me for any further clarifications concerning the topic at mavromati_jo@icloud.com

Kind regards,

Joanna Mavromati

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

As the physical, social, and economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic escalate and intensify, the United Nations Secretary General and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) have recognized the potential of the pandemic to create instability, undermine security and fuel conflict and violence throughout the world. Peacekeeping operations are now more indispensable than ever, as environments where peace is already fragile, are on the verge of collapse and politically, economically or socially unstable states have become areas in high-risk of violent conflict. The pandemic has highlighted social inequalities, escalated political disputes and multilateral relations, and impeded all efforts towards worldwide stability. The widespread economic recession has brought to surface newfound threats to international law and order as well as transnational organizations, such as the UN, which will play a huge role in the outcome of the crisis.

Under normal circumstances, the UN's response to the rise of violent conflict would be deploying large-scale peacekeeping operations in the area in need; however, with the global health crisis, this is no longer an option. The UN will have to reevaluate its methods of operation and set diplomacy as its main weapon against the escalation of violent conflict. Readjusting its peace enforcement structure, will certainly not be a simple task, especially if we take into consideration the renewed tensions between member states, however, it is important to acknowledge that the crisis at hand, gives the UN an opportunity to reconsider some of its fundamental operational routines and reform them in a more effective manner, so as to comply with modern day challenges and facilitate the management of future conflicts.

The risks of transmission of the disease to UN personnel in missions, especially UN peacekeepers, the transmission of the virus by UN personnel from their country of origin to the community in mission, and the transfer of the disease from the country of mission to their parent country, have all resulted in significant restrictions of movement and troop rotations and intensive hygiene protection measures. Despite the preventative measures taken, COVID-19 outbreaks have occurred among UN staff in missions, influencing the efficiency of said operations.

Having to adapt international military and law enforcement missions to effectively control the threat that is posed by the pandemic, while managing to efficiently perform their tasks of sustaining international peace and security without being affected by the virus, is a challenge that cannot be tackled without international cooperation, coordination and transparency. The Secretary General, António Guterres, addressing the General Assembly about the pandemic, stated that “In an interconnected world, it is time to recognize a simple truth: solidarity is self-interest. If we fail to grasp that fact, everyone loses.”¹ Political interests and financial benefits cannot stand in the way of a coordinated response to the global health crisis and we must realize that without cooperation and worldwide unity, this challenge will overrule all political constructs and leave no room for future reparation.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Law Enforcement

Law enforcement is the organized act of taking measures, such as investigating cases, making arrests or, when strictly necessary, using force so as to maintain security, protect public welfare and deter breaches of law by law enforcement officials. According to the Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials, adopted by the General Assembly in 1979, “the term law enforcement officials, includes all officers of the law, whether appointed or elected, who exercise police powers, especially the powers of arrest or detention.”²

¹“Secretary-General's Address to the Opening of the General Debate of the 75th Session of the General Assembly Secretary-General.” United Nations, United Nations, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2020-09-22/secretary-generals-address-the-opening-of-the-general-debate-of-the-75th-session-of-the-general-assembly>.

² “Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials.” OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/lawenforcementofficials.aspx>.

Insurgency

Insurgency could be described as an irregular act of warfare. It is not specifically organized and usually arises in more remote regions of a state not involving the nation's armed military forces and therefore, does not fall under the category of a revolution. That condition of revolt against the government, even though normally having the same goals as an organized revolution, lacks the proper logistics and coordination, limiting its results to corruption and containing damage, rather than the ultimate destruction of a political regime. Groups partaking in such actions are often recognized as guerillas and conduct a series of crimes such as bombings, kidnappings and hijacking aiming to cause damage and erode the efficiency of the regime.³

International Law Enforcement

International law enforcement can have two interpretations: either the act of enforcing international law or the enforcement of law conducted by international agencies. This study guide will mostly focus on the second term and more specifically on the enforcement of law by UN Peacekeeping Forces. However, it is important to be aware of other international law enforcement agencies as well, such as International Police (INTERPOL),⁴ UN Police (UNPOL),⁵ European Police (EUROPOL)⁶ etc.

Military mission/ operation

A military mission or operation could be defined as a campaign involving military personnel, carefully planned to fit and facilitate different circumstances. The UN, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union conduct three distinct types of military missions: observer, peacekeeping and peace enforcement missions.⁷ This study guide is going to focus on UN based military missions and their implications in the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic.

UN observer mission

A UN military observer mission is a law enforcement mission deployed by the UN so as to support a peacekeeping mission in place and is often described as the “eyes and ears” of the Security Council. UN military observers are mandated with the task to access post-conflict agreements and report activity within their assigned region rapidly, while abstaining completely from the use of force, as they are unarmed. Their

³ “Insurgency Definition & Meaning.” Merriam-Webster, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/insurgency>.

⁴ “The International Criminal Police Organization.” *INTERPOL*, <https://www.interpol.int/>.

⁵ “United Nations Police.” *United Nations*, United Nations, <https://police.un.org/en>.

⁶ “Home.” *Europol*, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/>.

⁷ Ministerie van Defensie. “Military Missions.” *Defensie.nl*, Ministerie Van Defensie, 10 Mar. 2017, <https://english.defensie.nl/topics/missions-abroad/military-missions>.

responsibilities mostly consist of ensuring that, in cases where a ceasefire has been signed, hostilities are not conducted as well as investigating possible violations to such ceasefire, patrolling disputed areas or demilitarized zones and evaluating the maintenance of buffer zones.⁸ The mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) is one example of a UN observer mission.

UN peacekeeping mission

Peacekeeping missions aim to temporarily constrain conflict between belligerent parties so as to win crucial time, as well as reach a basic level of stability in order to agree to a military or political solution. Peacekeepers cooperate with local authorities, as well as with humanitarian aid agents and, while maintaining absolute neutrality and restraining from the use of force, work to execute their mandate tasks. Military personnel, though armed, are instructed to only use force as an act of self-defense. Peacekeeping missions require consent from the involved local parties as well as from the permanent members of the Security Council. There have been cases where peacekeepers have been instructed to use force in response to unprecedented incidents, which can often cause confusion as the distinction between peacekeeping and peace enforcement becomes less clear, making peacekeepers primarily a law enforcement body which rapidly adapt to the circumstances and display the characteristics of a law enforcement body.

UN peace enforcement mission

In cases where the Security Council detects a major threat to security, an act of aggression or a breach of peace, it may choose to authorize a peace enforcement mission. Such missions are not considered long-term solutions to a conflict however, are often deemed necessary to bring an end to a violent conflict and re-establish peace and stability. Soldiers may take all necessary measures as long as it serves the goals of the mission and can therefore, exercise force and apply a range of coercive measures.⁹ Peacekeepers operating under peace enforcement mandates are considered primarily a military enforcement body in comparison to observers or, in most cases, peacekeeping forces.

⁸ “United Nations Military Observers (UNMOS).” *UNMEE*, 20 Mar. 2017, <https://unmee.unmissions.org/united-nations-military-observers-unmos>.

⁹ “Terminology Peacekeeping.” United Nations, United Nations, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/terminology>.

Pandemic

The World Health Organization (WHO) declares a disease as a pandemic once the rate of growth, meaning the number of daily cases, increases exponentially over a specific area, different states or populations. The severity of the virus or its virology does not affect the determination of a disease as a pandemic.¹⁰ COVID-19 was declared by the WHO as a pandemic on March 11th, 2020.¹¹

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

COVID-19 Pandemic

On December 31st 2019, Chinese authorities reported cases of pneumonia caused by an unknown disease in Wuhan City¹², to the World Health Organization (WHO). The virus was quickly identified and named SARS-Cov-2 (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) or COVID-19; a new type of coronavirus that can trigger a respiratory infection in the upper or lower respiratory tract.¹³ The international community started fearing a global pandemic as it seemed impossible to contain the virus in its place of origin. On the 23rd of January 2020, the city of Wuhan was put in the strictest lockdown the world has seen throughout the course of the pandemic, enforcing severe restrictions and sealing the city off from the rest of the country for approximately five months. Despite the strenuous efforts to limit COVID-19 transmission and contain it within the country's borders, the virus proceeded to spread across the globe, striking terror and leaving people shocked by the announcements of the very first reported cases. Two years later, COVID-19 has taken the lives of 5 million people and has had innumerable socio-economic implications internationally, leaving states, even the ones which are considered developed, vulnerable to its great impact.

COVID-19 has caused an unprecedented economic crisis that the international financial system has not experienced for at least a century. It was not a recession,

¹⁰ "Epidemic, Endemic, Pandemic: What Are the Differences?" *Search the Website*, 19 Feb. 2021, <https://www.publichealth.columbia.edu/public-health-now/news/epidemic-endemic-pandemic-what-are-differences>.

¹¹ "Who Director-General's Opening Remarks at the Media Briefing on COVID-19 - 11 March 2020." *World Health Organization*, World Health Organization, <https://www.who.int/director->

¹² Hubei Province, China

¹³ "Conducting Passages." *Conducting Passages | SEER Training*, <https://training.seer.cancer.gov/anatomy/respiratory/passages/>.

neither a decline of demand, it was a complete shutdown. The global economic system is not equipped with the experience, or with a specific model to cope with such extreme circumstances. The pandemic caused a sharp decline in Gross Domestic Product (GDP)¹⁴ internationally, an unprecedented upheaval in commercial logistic chains¹⁵ and the ultimate collapse of the stock market, which has yet to be normalized. Medical equipment, reformation or even establishment of new emergency treatment facilities, increased needs for medical and law enforcement personnel and investments in vaccines, now constitute some of the top priorities of national expenditure plans. Some companies, such as airline corporations, suddenly had absolutely no revenue. Due to the lockdown, unemployment had more than doubled worldwide, forcing governments to increase their fiscal budget deficits in order to grant companies and individuals. The aforementioned implications have forced states to reconsider the way they distribute and allocate their budget, as needs that were not present in the past, are now more urgent than ever. As far as the UN is concerned, some of its major contributors, such as the USA, are now facing enormous financial distress, raising serious questions concerning the money they will be able to allocate to new UN-based action plans even after the pandemic is contained. Extensive cuts in the UN's budget could mean limiting UN peacekeeping operations and deployed personnel and seriously restraining currently active missions.

Aside from the economic impacts of the pandemic, world peace, stability and security are now considered ideals under threat. Research has shown that the pandemic has and is capable of intensifying already existing conflicts and drivers of violence. Anti-state conflict, also known as insurgencies, communal conflict, meaning the violence arising between different societal groups, as well as organized criminal conflict, specifically violence fueled by illicit actors such as gangs, drugs cartels etc., have all aggravated after the outbreak of the pandemic. There are three main actors that have seemed to augment conflict throughout the past few months: mistrusts towards governmental institutions and leaders, financial hardship which has also enhanced competition over resources, and eroding social inequalities and the general cohesion within communities or societal groups. All of the above have been reported in several countries around the globe, with some of the most obvious examples being Colombia, Nigeria and Afghanistan¹⁶. Even though it is not yet certain, it is logical to assume that

¹⁴ "GDP and Spending - Gross Domestic Product (GDP) - OECD Data." *The OECD*, <https://data.oecd.org/gdp/gross-domestic-product-gdp.htm>.

¹⁵ "Logistics Chain Definition • the Strategic CFO." *The Strategic CFO*, 13 Feb. 2019, <https://strategiccfo.com/logistics-chain/>.

¹⁶ "An in-Depth Look at How COVID-19 Intensifies Conflicts." *Mercy Corps*, 10 Nov. 2021, <https://www.mercycorps.org/blog/how-covid-19-intensifies-conflicts>.

the aftermath of the pandemic might be the root for further intensification of conflicts and might increase the need for large-scale peacekeeping missions. Nevertheless, it has already been proved that regions or states where peace is rather fragile could use aid from international organizations such as the UN, throughout the course of the pandemic.

Peacekeepers' course of action

Peacekeeping forces are one of the UN's most vital operational bodies, as their activities are necessary for covering central needs for security before other UN development programmes and action plans can be effectively implemented. Peacekeeping forces are usually deployed in dysfunctional, post-conflict and in general politically and socially fragile environments in order to restore, maintain or enforce peace and security. UN Peacekeeping forces could be considered as both a law enforcement and as a military enforcement body, according to the specific task they are executing, as the distinction between the two can often be a blurred line when analysing their system of operation. Their most common duties consist of the provision of humanitarian aid and supplies,¹⁷ effecting disarmament¹⁸ and facilitating the election process in conflict-prone regions.¹⁹ The fundamental strategies of the peacekeeping forces are summarized in the "United Nations Peacekeeping Operations Principles and Guidelines ("the Capstone Doctrine").²⁰

Peacekeeping forces have been built and operated under three fundamental principles: consent of the parties, impartiality and non-use of force except in self-defense and defense of the mandate.²¹ Firstly, once consent has been given by the main parties of the conflict, the UN has the liberty to operate freely, both politically and physically, in order to carry out its designated mandate. Such consent is vital for the peaceful operation of the task force as it does not put peacekeepers under the risk of becoming party to the violent conflict. Additionally, commitment to the political process by all actors is of outmost importance, as it enhances the efficiency of the

¹⁷ UNSC Resolution 776 (1992) (Para 2)- *Digitallibrary.un.org*.
<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/149953>.

¹⁸ "UNSC Resolution 1270 (1999) (Para 8b) /." *United Nations*, United Nations,
<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/287753>.

¹⁹ "Resolution 766 (1992) (Para 4) /." *United Nations*, United Nations,
<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/145833>.

²⁰ "United Nations Peacekeeping Operations Principles and Guidelines ('The Capstone Doctrine') - United Nations and the Rule of Law." *United Nations*, United Nations,
<https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/blog/document/united-nations-peacekeeping-operations-principles-and-guidelines-the-capstone-doctrine/>.

²¹ "Principles of Peacekeeping Peacekeeping." *United Nations*, United Nations,
<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/principles-of-peacekeeping>.

operation. Secondly, it is crucial to comprehend that the nature of peacekeepers is not to support one party of the conflict, rather than to ensure that peace and stability is achieved or maintained. Therefore, peacekeepers must at all times remain impartial to the conflict, while still being active and properly executing their tasks, so as to maintain their legitimacy and prevent being withdrawn from the region. Lastly, peacekeeping forces, operating under a peacekeeping and not a peace enforcement mandate, are instructed not to exercise force as they are not a military enforcement instrument however, there have been circumstances where the Security Council has given them the authorization to “use all necessary means” so as to protect the mandate and civilians from an imminent physical threat; hence why they cannot be defined as neither a law nor a military enforcement body.

The Security Council is one of the key driving forces behind peacekeeping operations, as it acts as the decision-making organ that determines the deployment of troops. According to the Security Council’s current system, there are four basic factors that are taken into account before considering the deployment of a large-scale peacekeeping operation: “Whether there is a ceasefire in place and the parties have committed themselves to a peace process intended to reach a political settlement; Whether a clear political goal exists, and whether it can be reflected in the mandate; Whether a precise mandate for a UN operation can be formulated; Whether the safety and security of UN personnel can be reasonably ensured, including in particular, whether reasonable guarantees can be obtained from the main parties or factions regarding the safety and security of UN personnel”.²² In the case of a global health crisis, it is imperative that we address the last criteria. In order for authorization to be given and for a peace operation to be established, the UN must create a functional emergency system that allows peacekeepers to operate effectively without risking their health or others’, while still exercising their mandates efficiently. If those criteria are met, the Security Council adopts a resolution which establishes the operation, explaining its principal mandate and size, monitors its efficiency and can extend, alternate, or terminate an operation when deemed necessary.

At this point, it is important to mention that peacekeepers and peace operations are rather familiar with crisis management. A number of its staff has experienced managing public health emergencies in the past, such as the 2014-2016 Ebola virus outbreak in Sierra Leone and Liberia, or in 2018-2019 in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Peacekeepers are also acutely aware of the profound threat of introducing the virus to the host community; a danger which was highlighted during the 2010 cholera outbreak in Haiti, making missions immensely careful about the threats they might

²² “Role of the Security Council Peacekeeping.” United Nations, United Nations, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/role-of-security-council>.

pose to host populations. Such experiences have been extremely valuable and have, to some extent, prepared the peacekeeping system to respond to public health crises however, the pace at which peace operations have had to alter their course of operations over the past months has been unprecedented.²³

In the past, structural problems and poor governance have not allowed peacekeeping forces to uphold the aforementioned principles and have been the cause of worldwide disapprobation and abhorrence towards UN's general stance. Specifically, one of the biggest failures of the UN, the Security Council and of the peacekeeping system as a whole was the Rwandan genocide of 1994. In 1993 the UN had deployed peacekeepers in Rwanda so as to maintain peace and prevent any further violence from arising; the goal of any UN-based operation. However, once the genocide broke out in 1994, peacekeepers were instructed to evacuate foreigners and not get involved in protecting the Tutsis, the second largest ethnic group in Rwanda which was being threatened by mass killings. Former Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, stated in 2014 "In Rwanda, troops were withdrawn when they were most needed", "But we could have done much more. We should have done much more."²⁴ The UN did not only fail to prevent the genocide, which killed more than one million people, but there were also reports of UN peacekeepers contributing to the atrocities being conducted in the region by sexually and physically assaulting civilians. It is certainly not the first time that incidents such as these have been reported, highlighting once and for all the urgent need for a major structural reform in UN peacekeepers' system.

Effects of COVID-19 on peace operations

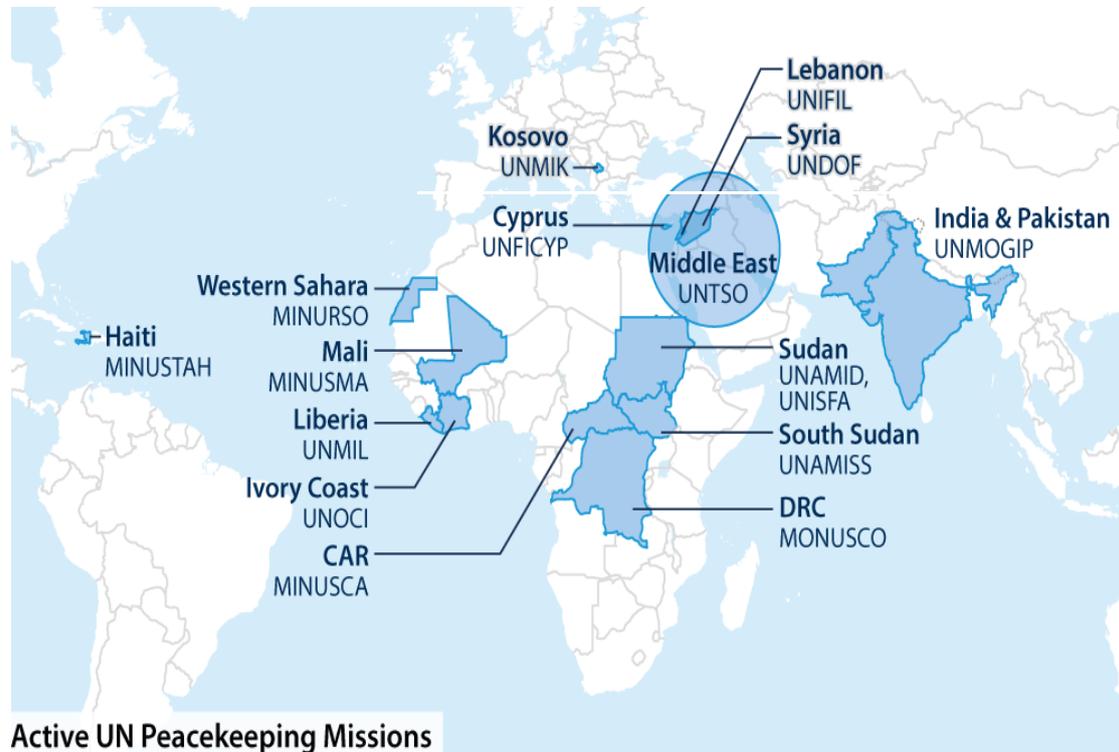
There are currently 12 active Peacekeeping operations led by the Department of Peace Operations. However, there are other UN-based operations established by other departments, such as the UN Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS), managed by the Department of Field Support. Even though, the UN has taken several measures to

²³ Coning, Cedric de, et al. "The Impact of Covid-19 on Peace Operations." *IPI Global Observatory*, 6 Apr. 2020, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2020/04/impact-covid-19-peace-operations/>.

²⁴ "Rwanda Genocide: Un Ashamed, Says Ban Ki-Moon." *BBC News*, BBC, 7 Apr. 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-26917419>.

prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the context of peace operations, it was inevitable that the pandemic would have implications on peace processes across the world.

More than 50 missions worldwide are now trying to adjust to the new circumstances and adapt their system of operation while ensuring the health and safety of roughly 160.000 military peacekeepers, police and civilians workers. The border restrictions



that have been imposed on almost all of the countries where these missions are deployed complicate matters. For instance, South Sudan, where the UN Mission (UNMISS) is currently in place, has requested that new troops are not rotated into their countries as states that are seen as high risk, such as China and Italy, may import new cases into their borders and aggravate the situation even more. Measures like that are constantly challenging the effectiveness of peace operations all around the world, impeding the peace process. As of March 2021, this peacekeeping mission consisted of a total of 19.075 deployed personnel, approximately 14.000 of which were troops, and the rest consisted of police personnel, civilians, UN volunteers, experts on mission and staff.²⁵ It goes without saying, that an outbreak among such a large number of troops could be deemed catastrophic as the virus would spread and transmit at such rates that it would be practically impossible to reverse the damage it would cause. The peace process would be impeded and conflict among the already unstable region would be fueled even further.

²⁵ "Facts and Figures." *UNMISS*, 23 Sept. 2021, <https://unmiss.unmissions.org/facts-and-figures>.

The observer mission in Cyprus (UNFICYP) has also had to adapt to the circumstances and has put a number of restrictions and measures in place in order to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 transmission. As the virus progressed on the island, additional measures had to be taken, so as to prevent spreading the virus both within the mission and externally. Over half of all the civilian staff are required to work from home as a precautionary measure, which is admittedly more easily implemented in an observer mission, rather than in a peacekeeping or enforcement mission, as interpersonal contact is not such an indispensable part of such operations. A quarantine of 14 days has been set for all incoming military contingents, both before and upon their arrival, while an intensive contact-tracing program has already been established. Additionally, UN medical personnel are responsible for the supervision of isolation facilities which have been placed and are being utilized properly. All uniformed personnel have been guided to minimize any physical contact with the regional population, especially when on patrols, as well as use all the necessary protection equipment (PPE: Personal Protective Equipment) as they have been instructed. In spite of all the protective and precautionary measures, UNFICYP as of the 9th December of 2020 had reported 2 positive cases of civilian personnel, 4 UN police officers as well as 18 military personnel. The mission continues to receive and follow the guidance provided by both the WHO and the Cypriot authorities in the fight against the pandemic.²⁶

Another example includes the African Union based peacekeeping operation in Somalia (AMISOM).²⁷ Movement of personnel has been severely restricted allowing only the deployment of service workers considered essential, civilian workers outside the borders of Somalia are now working from home, staff recognized as non-critical have been removed and rotations as well as new deployments have been ultimately suspended. All these measures and implications have left peace operations unable to operate in full capacity and exercise their mandates, unless their course of operation is altered to fit with the circumstances at hand. As of January 2022, Somalia has reported 24,261 COVID-19 cases in total, which in comparison to other states, is quite containable. However, it is important to note that in case that staff rotations had not been restricted, imported cases would have definitely aggravated the situation and if not contained could cause a general rise in infections, which considering the state of the nation and its inadequate healthcare system, would lead to a series of unprecedented circumstances such as large numbers of daily deaths and a wave of political frustrations and upheaval.

²⁶ "Covid-19 Update Peacekeeping." *United Nations*, United Nations, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/covid-19-update>.

²⁷ Coning, Cedric de, et al. "The Impact of Covid-19 on Peace Operations." *IPI Global Observatory*, 6 Apr. 2020, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2020/04/impact-covid-19-peace-operations/>.

Peacekeeping response to COVID-19

In the face of the pandemic, the UN has had to readjust its ways of operation so as to limit the transmission of COVID-19 by peacekeepers and protect its personnel, while effectively managing to carry out its tasks. This has led to a series of short-term alterations in the peacekeeping system, aiming to maintain fragile peace and protect unstable environments in which UN peacekeepers operate without further aggravating the situation by adding to the already unprecedented rates of COVID-19 transmission. The UN immediately paused all troop rotations as a first response to the outbreak of the pandemic so as to ensure that UN personnel did not transmit the virus to other countries as well as enable the UN to organize its course of action before normally proceeding with its operations. Additionally, the UN sent out guidance and basic instructions, as far as precautionary measures are concerned, to personnel regularly, dealing with local populations in order to facilitate the containment of the virus while still conducting basic mandates already in place. Personnel has also been put under lockdown after having tested positive for COVID-19, primarily in the UNMISS mission in South Sudan. Along with peacekeepers the UN has also instructed UN police, UN's basic law enforcement body to constantly maintain two-meter distance with civilians while on patrol as well as to suspend all training programs between them and domestic partners that requires "physical contact and proximity".

Long-term peacekeeping mission reforms

Aside from the short-term alterations that were made in UN's peacekeeping system due to the pandemic, it has become evident that there is an imminent need for large-scale structural reforms. The global economic recession and political shocks rooted in the pandemic could gravely undermine the fragile peace in areas where the UN operates as well as fuel even greater instability in other conflict-prone countries. That could increase demands for peacekeeping operations as new internal conflicts arise at a time when UN members are already preoccupied with their own domestic affairs. Up to now, UN missions have managed to thwart the immediate pandemic-based disruption and consequences to the best of their abilities however, COVID-19 could have long-term implications on how the UN counters violent conflict, as it has created conditions that imply the necessity for peacekeeping missions increasing in the immediate future; a need that the UN might not be able to cover.

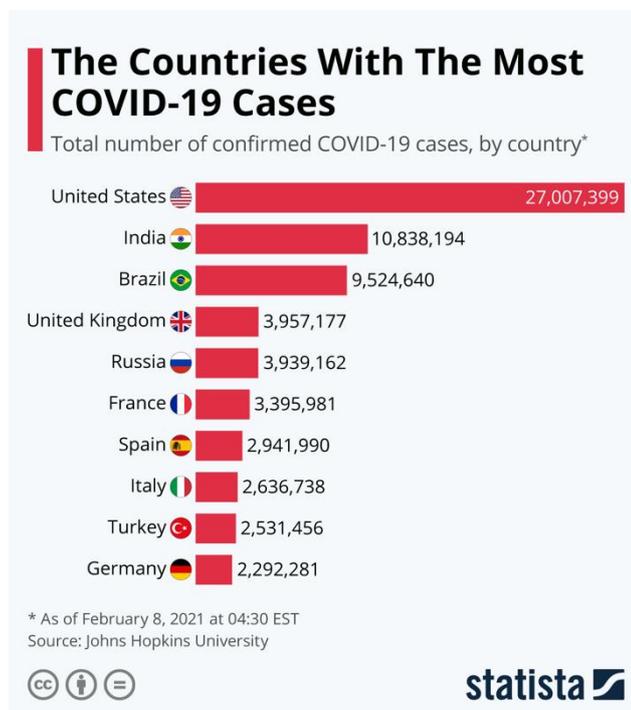
In order to respond to such needs, the UN will have to adapt its military/law enforcement missions to suit present-day circumstances as there are reasons to believe that large-scale peacekeeping operations will not be feasible in the future. UN member states are likely to search for further savings in the UN peacekeeping budget and reduce financing for broader conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts. The UN won't be able to support large-scale peace operations due to the budgetary cuts and will therefore have to make do with smaller and more targeted political missions. In addition, Nations' reluctance to expose their personnel to the risks of COVID-19 in

peacekeeping missions as well as the increased need of armed forces as part of their national response to the crisis do not facilitate their contribution to the organization and implementation of future operations. Lastly, increased tensions between China and the US over the origins of the virus, further complicate any decision that the Security Council shall make when proposing a new large-scale peacekeeping operation to be set in place. Even though the permanent members of the Security Council have generally tried to cooperate and collaborate on already existing peace operations, including extending mandates that are up for renewal, the decline of US-China relations does not facilitate a collective security response to COVID-19. Tensions do not allow the Security Council to agree on the terms for new operations or significant alterations and modifications on already existing mandates which may cause serious issues in the future. This increased need for peacekeeping operations alongside with UN's inability to cover such needs presents an opportunity for the UN to consider a broader range of peacekeeping operations than the massive multifunctional model now in use and readjust its conflict-response system. Future missions might focus on the underlying socioeconomic causes of today's conflicts and better utilize the UN's limited budget by working along with local actors.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

United States of America

The USA has been one of the countries most affected by COVID-19 as it has reported the largest number of infections and deaths internationally. USA-China relations have deteriorated severely during the COVID-19 pandemic, as controversy around the origin of the virus has caused some tension between the two states. Former US President, Donald Trump, on a very strongly worded speech at the UN General Assembly, demanded that the organization shall hold “the nation which unleashed this plague onto the world”²⁸ accountable. Recent tensions certainly do not



²⁸ “The Nation Which Unleashed This Plague’: Donald Trump Demands Un Hold China to Account for Coronavirus.” The Economic Times, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/the-nation-which-unleashed->

facilitate a proper response to the global health crisis and peacekeeping readjustments might fuel even more debate. The US, being a permanent member of the SC as well as the major funder and contributor of the Department of Peace Operations,²⁹ plays a vital role in the authorization and shaping of UN peace operations. Therefore, it is understandable that major budgetary cuts due to the global recession will further limit the efficiency and even the ability of large-scale peacekeeping missions to be conducted and authorized in the future.

China

China, despite its large and very dense population, managed to address the threat posed by the pandemic very effectively. Measures were imposed on citizens immediately and regulations to control the transmission of COVID-19 were very early introduced. China's stance towards UN peacekeeping has been fluctuating a lot over the past years however, they are now a part of the top ten UN personnel contributors³⁰ with Chinese President Xi Jinping pledging to expand his commitments even further. Western diplomats have often expressed their worries about China's stance, interpreting that increased interest as aiming to minimize missions' focus on human rights and democratic processes and consider it as an effort to gain greater political influence. Furthermore, China's unstable relations with the US complicate the Council's response to the pandemic. The rift between the two biggest funders of the UN poses a huge threat to the stability of the organization and if not addressed properly, it might cause tremendous issues in future UN operations and initiatives.

Mali

Mali is one of the states currently hosting an active peacekeeping operation (MINUSMA). The said operation was established in 2013, under UN Security Council Resolution 2100, after the 2012 Tuareg rebellion, as an effort to ensure stability and security in the region. More than 12,000 military UN personnel are currently deployed in Mali, posing a considerable threat to the containment of COVID-19. By May 2020, more than 70 UN members of the peacekeeping force had been infected by the virus and camps had to be fully contained so as to limit COVID-19 transmissions. As a response to the pandemic, MINUSMA established a COVID-19 Medical Center on May 22nd which operates compliant to the WHO as well as to the Malian infectious disease services' building standard. The facility can accommodate and hospitalize up to 65 patients.³¹

[this-plague-donald-trump-demands-un-hold-china-to-account-for-coronavirus/articleshow/78268242.cms?from=mdr](https://www.usip.org/publications/2021/02/how-biden-administration-can-revive-un-peacekeeping/).

²⁹ "How the Biden Administration Can Revive U.N. Peacekeeping." United States Institute of Peace, 13 Apr. 2021, https://www.usip.org/publications/2021/02/how-biden-administration-can-revive-un-peacekeeping.

³⁰ Gowan, Richard. "China's Pragmatic Approach to UN Peacekeeping." Brookings, Brookings, 17 Sept. 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/chinas-pragmatic-approach-to-un-peacekeeping/>.

³¹ "UN: 70 Covid-19 Cases within Peacekeeping Force in Mali." *Anadolu Ajansı*, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/un-70-covid-19-cases-within-peacekeeping-force-in-mali/1857446>.

India

India, as a Less Economically Developed Country and the second most populated country globally, underwent extreme hardships with the rise of the coronavirus. The Indian public health system ultimately collapsed from the profound number of infections and during May 2021 death rates skyrocketed, creating mass devastation. Law enforcement was not adequate to impose preventative measures and failed to enforce COVID-19 restrictions, further augmenting the situation. As the vast population has now been infected or vaccinated, the situation seems to be ameliorating however, the crisis has left the country in shambles and prolonged efforts towards economic and social stability.³² The UNMOGIP, established on the 24th of January, 1949 aiming to enforce and supervise the ceasefire between India and Pakistan in the State of Jammu and Kashmir, has been the center of some controversy. Allegations have been made that Pakistan has been sending covid-infected individuals in Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) and underplaying the number of cases in the country. The Inter-Service Public Relations of the Pakistan Armed Forces (ISPR) claimed that “Pakistan has always extended unhindered UNMOGIP access to ceasefire violation (CFV) sites. We will continue to do that most transparently.”³³

African Union (AU)

The African Union, officially launched in 2002, is an organization comprised by the 55 states of the African continent. The organization aims to promote advancement in the African continent, protect member states, promote stability and security and manage to build better relations between African states, based on unity and solidarity. The official aims of the AU are outlined in the Constitutive Act of the African Union³⁴ and the Protocol on Amendments to the Constitutive Act of the African Union³⁵. Article 9, clause 1 sub-clause (g) of the Constitutive Act, states that one of the functions of the Assembly is to “give directives to the Executive Council on the management of conflicts, war and other emergency situations and the restoration of peace”, establishing the legitimate right to intervene in the event of human rights violations, war crimes and civil wars. That being said, the AU respects and recognizes the value of peacekeeping, actively contributing in the peacekeeping and peace enforcement process. An example of an AU based operation is AMISOM, an active peacekeeping mission,

³² “How Did India Beat Covid-19?” *The Economist*, The Economist Newspaper, <https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2021/10/29/how-did-india-beat-covid-19>.

³³ Desk, Web. “‘Pakistan Pushing Covid-19 People into Pok’: Indian Army's Claim Angers Islamabad.” *The Week*, The Week, 15 Apr. 2020, <https://www.theweek.in/news/world/2020/04/15/pakistan-pushing-covid-19-people-into-pok-indian-army-claim-angers-islamabad.html>.

³⁴ *Constitutive Act of the African Union*. https://au.int/sites/default/files/pages/34873-file-constitutiveact_en.pdf.

³⁵ “OAU/AU Treaties, Conventions, Protocols & Charters.” *OAU/AU Treaties, Conventions, Protocols & Charters | African Union*, 20 Jan. 2022, <https://au.int/en/treaties>.

established under UN Security Council Resolution 1744³⁶ aiming to stabilize the Somalian state.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

NATO, a military alliance formed on the 4th of April 1949, is one of the strongest military alliances, internationally aiming to promote peace, ensure security, provide military support to its members when necessary, and protect them from any threat that might arise, including health crises. NATO has been involved in the fight against the pandemic since the very beginning and has provided support to all allies in need to tackle COVID-19 transmission as well as its effects. NATO has provided medical personnel, engaged in the construction of field hospitals, supported the scientific community, facilitated the transportation of medical supplies and equipment, has created a stockpile of supplies and established a trust fund. In comparison to UN peacekeeping missions, NATO military operations have proven to be way less cost-effective³⁷ making them a less feasible solution mid-pandemic as well as in the near future.

World Health Organization (WHO)

The WHO is the UN's main body focusing on promoting health, working towards universal health coverage and providing member states with scientific data to support their public health initiatives. Established on April 7th, 1948 under the WHO Constitution, it serves as the fundamental organization for worldwide health related information and guidance.³⁸ The WHO has played a vital role during the COVID-19 pandemic as it has provided states with the necessary knowledge, guidelines and research to support preventative measures and restrictions set internationally. WHO has also greatly supported peacekeeping missions by offering advice, broadcasting the measures that shall be taken by staff, so as to prevent the transmission of covid and instructing them on how to respond in case of infection.

³⁶ "Security Council Authorizes Six-Month African Union Mission in Somalia, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 1744 (2007) | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases." *United Nations*, United Nations, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2007/sc8960.doc.htm>.

³⁷ "How the Biden Administration Can Revive U.N. Peacekeeping." United States Institute of Peace, 13 Apr. 2021, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2021/02/how-biden-administration-can-revive-un-peacekeeping>.

³⁸ "About Who." *World Health Organization*, World Health Organization, <https://www.who.int/about>.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date of Event	Description of event
7 April 1948	Establishment of the WHO
24 January 1949	Establishment of UNMOGIP
4 April 1949	Establishment of NATO
1976	First recorded outbreak of the Ebola virus
17 December 1979	The GA adopts the “Code of Conduct for Law enforcement Officials”
21 July 1992	UNSC Resolution 766
1994	Rwandan genocide
22 October 1999	UNSC Resolution 1270
9 July 2002	Launch of the African Union
2010	Cholera outbreak in Haiti
25 April 2013	Establishment of MINUSMA
2014-2016	Ebola Outbreak in West Africa
19 September 2014	Establishment of UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER)
28 April 2015	UNSC Resolution 2151
March 2018	The UN launches the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P)
31 December 2019	First cases of COVID-19 reported in Wuhan
11 March 2020	The WHO declares COVID-19 a pandemic
17 April 2021	Global COVID-19 death toll surpasses 3 million
26 November 2021	The WHO expresses concern about the Omicron variant
21 December 2021	The Center for Disease Control reports that in just a week the Omicron variant has increase from 12% of reported cases to 73%. ³⁹

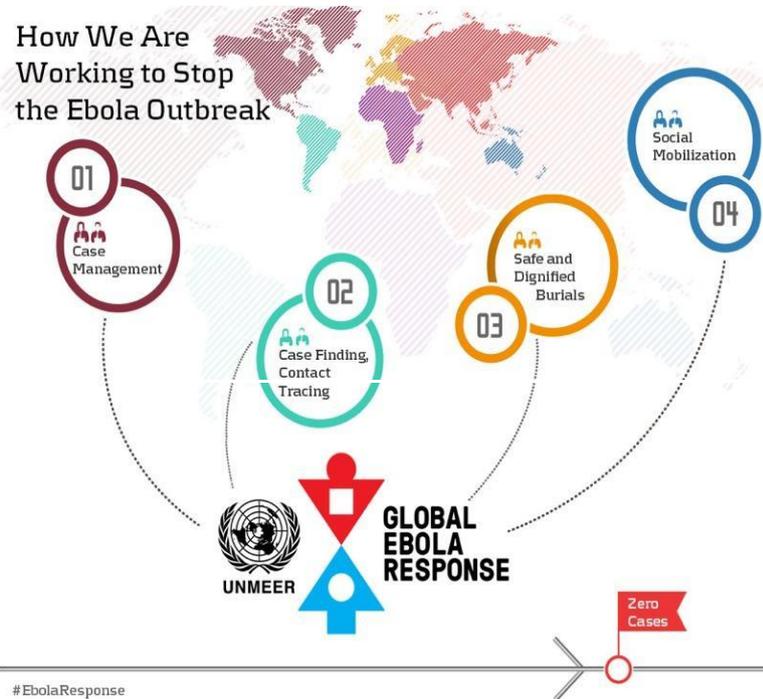
PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Ebola Virus

It is not the first time the UN was challenged to respond to a public health crisis. Peacekeeping forces were involved in managing Ebola outbreaks in Liberia and Sierra Leone in 2014 as well as in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2019. In 2014, there was an outbreak of the virus known as Ebola, or officially Zaire ebolavirus, in West Africa, the largest outbreak since the virus was first discovered in 1976. With fatality rates ranging from 25% to 90% in past outbreaks, it is evident that, if not contained,

³⁹ *These 5 Charts Show How Fast Omicron Is Spreading*, <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/these-5-charts-show-how-fast-omicron-is-spreading/ar-AAS2eO1>.

the virus could lead to widespread devastation.⁴⁰ The UN's course of action consisted primarily of establishing security councils partnered with community-based organizations as well as deploying peacekeeping forces to provide humanitarian aid, supplies etc. On the 19th of September 2014, the UN Mission for the Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) under General Assembly resolution 69/1⁴¹ and Security Council resolution 2177 (2014).⁴² The Mission facilitated the deployment of human, logistical as well as financial resources to Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea and focused in case management, contact tracing and case finding and ensuring safe and dignified burials for those who fell victims of the virus and mobilization of the community.⁴³ In the face of the outbreak, the UN had to deal with predatory and corrupt behaviors among



security forces, therefore compromising trust and transparency between the public and law enforcement officials, not facilitating its efforts. Despite the aforementioned obstacles this UN based operation deemed to be one of the most successful in containing the transmission of the virus.

Cholera outbreak in Haiti 2010

In 2010, Nepalese peacekeepers were deployed in Haiti so as to provide humanitarian aid after a devastating earthquake had struck the state. Scientific evidence supports that the deployed peacekeepers had been infected by cholera and they consequently imported the disease in the nation, causing more than 10.000 deaths. Furthermore,

⁴⁰ "Ebola Virus Disease." *World Health Organization*, World Health Organization, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ebola-virus-disease>.

⁴¹ "United Nations Official Document." United Nations, United Nations, https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A%2FRES%2F69%2F1.

⁴² "United Nations Official Document." United Nations, United Nations, https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S%2FRES%2F2177%282014%29.

⁴³ "UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) | Global Ebola Response." *United Nations*, United Nations, <https://ebolaresponse.un.org/un-mission-ebola-emergency-response-unmeer>.

poor sanitation in the camp where the Nepalese peacekeepers were staying, caused local waterways to be infected through sewage and therefore, transmitted the disease. The UN failed to screen the relocated personnel properly, avoided any legal responsibility and for six years denied all allegations of its staff having transmitted the disease. Former Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, filed a very carefully worded apology, aiming to avoid claiming legal responsibility for the outbreak by stating “We did not do enough with regard to the cholera outbreak and spread in Haiti.” The UN set up 400-million-dollar trust fund to provide material assistance to those affected by the outbreak and pledged to help eliminate cholera from Haiti however, cholera victims say that they are still waiting for the UN to live up to many of their commitments.⁴⁴ Philip Alston, an independent monitor who filed a letter to the current Secretary General, António Guterres, also claims that the UN’s mistakes were emphasized and highlighted by the COVID-19 outbreak as he stated that “The world is rightly focused on the horrors of Covid-19 and losing thousands of people. But 10,000 people died in Haiti and there was no response”.⁴⁵ UN special rapporteurs have intensely criticized its stance and firmly believe that UN’s efforts aiming to combat the crisis were plainly insufficient. The denial of all allegations and avoidance to take responsibility consist of UN’s major mistakes in the face of the cholera outbreak as such evasive acts did not allow them to respond effectively, rapidly and responsibly to the epidemic.

Action for Peacekeeping (A4P)

The A4P is an ongoing UN based program aimed to renew, readjust and ameliorate peacekeeping operations on all levels. It was first introduced in 2018 by Secretary General, António Guterres, alongside with the Declaration of Shared Commitments; a document containing 24 Articles aiming to strengthen peacekeeping forces. The Declaration encompasses seven main scopes with the most vital ones being: advance political solutions to conflict and enhance political impact of peacekeeping, improve the safety and security of peacekeepers, support effective accountability and performance by all peacekeeping components. The Declaration further analyzes each scope and divides it into separate but co-working goals aiming to facilitate their proper implementation.

⁴⁴ Moloney, Anastasia. “A Decade after U.n.-Linked Cholera Outbreak, Haitians Demand Justice.” *Reuters*, Thomson Reuters, 22 Oct. 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-haiti-cholera-un-feature-trfn-idUSKBN2772RM>.

⁴⁵ “Un Response to Haiti Cholera Epidemic Lambasted by Its Own Rights Monitors.” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 4 May 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/04/united-nations-un-haiti-cholera-letter-rights-monitors>.

The now renewed action plan, A4P+,⁴⁶ aims to further progress its main seven commitment areas by the year 2023 and continue to advance the effectiveness of peacekeeping forces. The priorities of the new plan were determined based on consultations and recent reviews so as to facilitate and endorse their implementation yet remain quite similar to the A4P plan⁴⁷. Accountability of and to peacekeepers, collective coherence behind political strategies and cooperation with host countries are only four of the commitments that must be achieved by the year 2023.

UN Medical Evacuation (MEDEVAC)

Under-Secretary-General Atul Khare, introduced and established MEDEVAC that is responsible for Operational Support aiming to provide high-quality medical care to all UN personnel. MEDEVAC is a unique task force ensuring that UN personnel deployed in Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs) where healthcare is inadequate, including regions in Asia, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East, would have access to medical care if infected by COVID-19 and therefore, enable them to continue delivering their services.⁴⁸ MEDEVAC covers a basic need of peacekeeping forces and supports efforts to effectively sustain peacekeeping operations during the pandemic as it grants peacekeepers with the option of emergency medical evacuation even during times when border restrictions and limited medical personnel have acutely complicated any evacuation protocol.⁴⁹ It has also established evacuation protocols and built facilities all around the globe so as to transfer patients and hospitalize them once it is deemed clinically necessary. The above have proved to be incredibly important since they have allowed the UN to maintain already deployed personnel in areas where it's needed while ensuring their health and safety.

⁴⁶ A4P Key Messages (General) - United Nations Peacekeeping.

https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/0_general_key_messages_on_a4p.pdf.

⁴⁷ "Secretary-General's Initiative on Action for Peacekeeping." *United Nations*, United Nations,

<https://www.un.org/en/A4P/>.

⁴⁸ "Covid-19 Medevac." *United Nations*, United Nations, <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/covid-19-medevac>.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Integrating Medical Experts in Peacekeeping missions

Acknowledging the threats posed by the pandemic, it is of vital importance to ensure that infected UN personnel receives the medical care needed immediately and efficiently. In order to prevent peacekeepers' health from deteriorating during operations, especially in times when public health is facing a worldwide crisis, medical experts must be an indispensable tool of every UN based operation. The UN must readjust to the new circumstances and take measures to ensure the well-being of its personnel beyond the lines of emergency treatment, such as the support provided by MEDEVAC. More Economically Developed Countries (MEDCs) should take the lead in contributing in such efforts either through providing financial aid or through enhancing the working dynamic by encouraging educated medical personnel to participate in such programs.

Promoting smaller-scale operations

The pandemic has highlighted some major structural issues that the peacekeeping sector is facing. The COVID-19 crisis should be viewed as a chance for the UN to rethink its approach towards peacekeeping. It should focus more on the social and economic drivers of conflict and set more realistic expectations concerning the use of force. UN member states, struggling from the economic recession rooted in the pandemic, will not be able to invest in large scale peacekeeping operations in the future, which evidently, due to the increased instability, might be more needed than ever. The UN must turn to more small-scale operations and propose a new model, able to respond to violent conflict, by collaborating with local actors and launching political missions aimed to address and resolve the socio-economic causes of disputes and conflicts.

Establishment of better monitoring mechanisms

In order to ensure that UN based law and/or military missions are executed properly and follow all the necessary guidelines as well as prevent peacekeepers from getting actively involved in armed conflict, the UN should focus on enhancing its monitoring mechanisms. Such mechanisms will cooperate with domestic forces and will monitor, review and evaluate the extent to which missions are successful and effective. Through the implementation of such programmes, violations of human rights, suppression of citizens and excessive use of force by law and military enforcement officials will be recorded and dealt with appropriately, safeguarding the welfare of citizen.

Medical Evacuation

The possibility of large-scale need of medical evacuation has deeply impeded the peace operation process amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the biggest global UN service centers, in Brindisi in Italy as well as the regional service center in Entebbe,

⁵⁰have been severely affected by travel bans, social distancing policies and border closures. Already existing facilities, mostly those provided for larger peace operations, are neither designed nor equipped properly to respond to a health emergency of such substantial dimensions. Such facilities could be very easily overwhelmed by a large influx of patients and will therefore be deemed inadequate. The majority of missions do not have the necessary equipment such as ventilators, test kits or even hygiene products to cover the needs of large numbers of infected staff. Therefore, in order to protect operation staff, it is of extreme importance to address a few questions: where will the staff be evacuated, how will we ensure that treatment facilities are adequately equipped and what will be the system that should be followed in case of large-scale evacuation needs?

Commit to already established advancement programs

The UN has detected the administrative and structural issues of the peacekeeping system, both in practice and in theory, and has made several efforts to establish programs aiming to ameliorate the structure and level of effectiveness of peacekeeping forces; one of those programs being the A4P program. However, in order to properly implement the suggestions proposed in such programs, the UN must commit to their goals while setting realistic priorities. In order to facilitate progress, it is important to utilize already existing programs and plans while, when necessary, establish new ones, potentially founded on the same core. The A4P and the A4P+ could constitute the base for further improvements and advancement in the peacekeeping sector by expanding the range of its goals and the extent of its application. The Declaration of Shared Commitments pinpoints some of the most critical alterations that must be made in the peacekeeping system and could therefore, be the key reference point for any upcoming proposals.

⁵⁰ Coning, Cedric de, et al. "The Impact of Covid-19 on Peace Operations." *IPI Global Observatory*, 6 Apr. 2020, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2020/04/impact-covid-19-peace-operations/>.

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