Enhancing the Protection of Civilians through Conventional Arms Control

Challenges and Opportunities for United Nations Peace Operations

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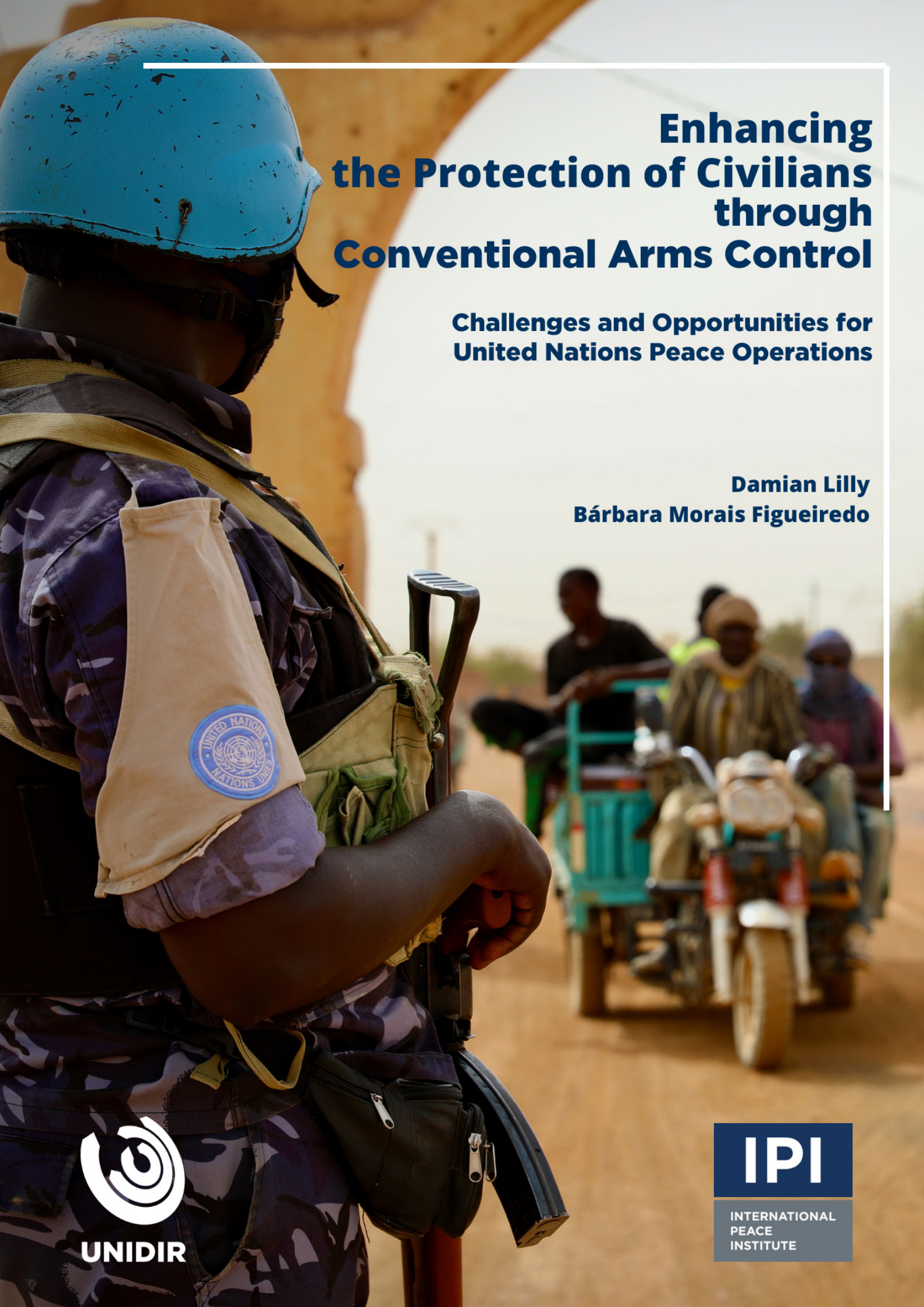

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

AEC	Arms Embargo Cell
AEWG	Arms Embargo Working Group
CAR	Central African Republic
CVR	Community violence reduction
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
DPPA	Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
DPO	Department of Peace Operations
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ERW	Explosive remnants of war
FARC-EP	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia–People's Army
HRDDP	Human Rights Due Diligence Policy on United Nations Support to Non-United Nations Security Forces
IDP	Internally displaced person
IED	Improvised explosive device
JMAC	Joint Mission Analysis Centre
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MINUSCA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic
MONUSCO	United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
POC	Protection of Civilians
SALW	Small arms and light weapons
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SPM	Special political mission
SSR	Security sector reform
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNAMID	United Nations–African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNITAMS	United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan
UNMAS	United Nations Mine Action Service
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNPOL	United Nations Police
UNSMIL	United Nations Support Mission in Libya
UNSOM	United Nations Operation in Somalia
WAM	Weapons and ammunition management

Photo credit: UN Photo/Harandane Dicko

1 Introduction

Introduction

The widespread availability, uncontrolled proliferation and misuse of conventional arms exacerbates armed conflict and the violence caused to civilians, facilitating violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. Conventional arms control and disarmament efforts have historically been framed as a humanitarian cause to limit human suffering. However, activities with an arms control component have only featured to a limited extent within the protection of civilians (POC) mandates of United Nations peace operations. Both issues feature on the agenda of the United Nations Security Council, which mandates missions, but the interlinkages between the two have not been well explored at the policy, strategic or operational levels.

This Brief provides an analysis of the actual, and potential, contribution of conventional arms control and related activities to POC within the context of United Nations peace operations – both peacekeeping operations and special political missions (SPMs). Limited research has been conducted on this topic and it has been addressed in only a cursory manner in relevant policies, strategies and guidelines. The Brief therefore attempts to demonstrate the existing linkages between these two mandated tasks, as well as to pinpoint some of the barriers and challenges to why conventional arms control has not featured more fully within POC efforts. It then identifies the relevant entry points based on concrete examples of how arms control-related activities can be better leveraged to ensure a more effective protection of civilians.

Section 2 of the Brief describes the background and conceptual interlinkages between conventional arms control and POC. **Section 3** then identifies the intersection points of these two mandated tasks within United Nations peace operations, drawing on specific examples where they exist, **Section 4** outlines some of the barriers and challenges to advancing this agenda, while **Section 5** identifies the entry points where the collaboration between relevant mission personnel could be strengthened. The precise relationship will always be context-specific, and it is not possible to generalize, but the Brief sheds light on how this issue could be addressed more fully by United Nations peace operations in the future, on which the conclusion offers some thinking.

This Brief draws primarily on desk research and analysis of United Nations reports, research reports and academic papers. This was complemented by interviews with current and former United Nations personnel from headquarters and peace operations settings who work on either POC or arms-control related activities.

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2 The conceptual overlaps of POC and conventional arms control

2. The conceptual overlaps of POC and conventional arms control

Conventional arms control and the protection of civilians have both been longstanding priorities for the United Nations. They have gained in prominence since the 1990s when they were first included on the agenda of the Security Council. This section traces the recent trajectory of each issue and how they have been addressed within the context of the Security Council and the United Nations system more generally. In doing so, it highlights and explains the many conceptual overlaps.

2.1 Protection of civilians in United Nations peace operations

In 1999, the United Nations Security Council adopted its first ever thematic resolution on POC in recognition that the United Nations could no longer stand by in the face of attacks against civilians as had occurred in Rwanda, the Balkans and other contexts.[1] Over the last more than 20 years, the Security Council's normative approach to POC has evolved through the use of different tools to protect civilians in situations of armed conflict.[2] One of the main tools at its disposal is the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation with a POC mandate. The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) was, in 1999, the first United Nations peacekeeping operation mandated to protect civilians from the "imminent threat of physical violence".[3] This represented a paradigm shift in United Nations peacekeeping operations that since that time has progressively been institutionalized by the United Nations. In 2009, the Security Council made clear that POC should be a priority task of United Nations peacekeeping.[4] Today, the majority of peacekeepers operate under such a mandate. Missions are typically authorized to use all necessary means, including, where necessary, the use of force to protect civilians under threat of physical violence. Building on an operational concept developed in 2010, the then United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) adopted its first official policy on POC in 2015, which was updated by its successor, the Department of Peace Operations (DPO), in 2019. It includes the following definition of POC:

> without prejudice to the primary responsibility of the host state, integrated and coordinated activities by all civilian and uniformed mission components to prevent, deter or respond to threats of physical violence against civilians within the mission's capabilities and areas of deployment through the use of all necessary means, up to and including deadly force.[5]

1 Security Council, S/RES/1265, 1999, https://undocs.org/S/RES/1265(1999).

2 United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Building a Culture of Protection: 20 Years Engagement of the Security Council on the Protection of Civilians, May 2019, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Building a culture of protection.pdf.

3 Security Council, S/RES/1270, 1999, https://undocs.org/S/RES/1270(1999).

4 Security Council, S/RES/1894, 2009, https://undocs.org/S/RES/1894(2009).

5 United Nations, Department of Peace Operations, "Policy: The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping", 1 November 2019, https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/poc_policy_2019_.pdf, p. 6.

The DPO's POC policy also elaborates on the three-tiered operational concept:

I. Protection through dialogue and engagement

II. Provision of physical protection

III. Establishment of a protective environment[6]

The introduction of this three-tiered approach provided the operational framework for how POC should be implemented within peacekeeping operations. While the use of force by the military component is the most well-known aspect of this framework, POC is a whole-of-mission responsibility that involves several different mission components. In particular, United Nations peacekeeping operations with POC mandates are required to develop a whole-of-mission POC strategy that outlines the mission's protection risk assessment and the integrated, comprehensive actions required of the military, police and civilian components to address the identified threats to civilians. A variety of guidelines, tools and training materials have been developed to assist peacekeeping missions in implementing this aspect of their mandates. For example, in 2020, the DPO launched its first-ever POC Handbook, which consolidated the collective learning and practical experience of peacekeeping missions in this area since the 1990s.[7]

The protection of civilians is also an important consideration in the context of special political missions. The United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) currently manages 24 SPMs in the field, many of which are also mandated by the Security Council. Currently, POC is only formally included in the mandate of two SPMs: the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS). DPPA has been concerned not to conflate the POC role of United Nations peacekeeping operations with the different protection role performed by SPMs, which are civilian and unarmed missions. In doing so, it has also sought to distance itself from the term POC with respect to SPMs, instead favouring the use of "protection". Nevertheless, SPMs do undertake several relevant tasks that contribute to the protection of civilians, including ceasefire monitoring, the promotion of human rights, conflict prevention and mediation, support to security institutions, support to the implementation of national POC plans, among other activities.[8] While there is no agreed-upon conceptual framework for the role of SPMs in relation to protection as there is for United Nations peacekeeping operations, this is an issue of growing importance given the high number of SPMs operating in contexts where civilians continue to face significant protection threats.[9] SPMs are often also expected to take over from peacekeeping missions with POC mandates, as illustrated by the drawdown of the United

6 Ibid., p. 9.

7 United Nations, Department of Peace Operations, The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping: Handbook, 2020, https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/dpo_poc_handbook_final_as_printed.pdf.

8 D. Druet, United Nations Special Political Missions and Protection: A Principled Approach for Research and Policymaking, International Peace Institute, July 2021, https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/UN-Special-Political-Missions.pdf.

9 Security Council, "Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict", Report of the Secretary-General, S/2020/366, 2020, https://undocs.org/S/2020/366, para. 49.

Nations–African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) at the end of 2020 and the subsequent establishment of UNITAMS. For these reasons, SPMs are included in the analysis in this Brief alongside United Nations peacekeeping operations. The term "peace operations" is used as an overarching concept to refer to both peacekeeping operations and SPMs.[10]

2.2 Conventional arms control as a POC issue

At the multilateral level, mitigating the humanitarian impact of the uncontrolled proliferation and misuse of conventional weapons has often served as the main driver of conventional arms control and disarmament efforts. The United Nations Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament, launched in 2018, makes clear that protecting civilians from the effects of armed conflict has been a central disarmament concern of the international community, and efforts to prohibit and restrict the use of specific weapons have typically been guided by humanitarian considerations, including the need to limit the human suffering that they cause.[11] This humanitarian impetus has been particularly visible in the normative frameworks and instruments for conventional arms control adopted over the past decades.[12] With differing legal statuses and scopes of application, these instruments typically share a broad and common objective of reducing the adverse humanitarian impact of conventional weapons in situations of armed conflict and violence, especially on the civilian population.[13]

Despite the progress achieved in terms of regulating and limiting the use of different categories of conventional arms over the past decades, these weapons continue to fuel and sustain armed conflicts, serving as the primary tool for violence against civilians. Across several contexts where United Nations peace operations are deployed, conventional weapons – particularly small arms and light weapons (SALW), heavy weapons and explosive munitions – represent the leading cause of civilian casualties, and facilitate the commission of serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law by a myriad of armed actors – State and non-State alike.[14] In line with these trends,

10 General Assembly and Security Council, "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, 2015, https://undocs.org/S/2015/446.

11 United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs, "Securing our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament", 2018, https://www.un.org/disarmament/sg-agenda/en/.

12 For instance, the 1981 Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) Convention and its protocols, the 1997 Anti-Personnel Mines (APM) Convention; the 2001 United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (POA) and its 2005 International Tracing Instrument (ITI); the 2001 Firearms Protocol; the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM); and, more recently, the 2013 Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

13 In its preamble, for instance, the APM Convention alludes to the suffering and casualties caused by APMs, especially to "innocent and defenceless civilians". Likewise, the preamble of the ATT emphasizes the significant humanitarian impact resulting from the illicit and unregulated trade in conventional arms, highlighting that civilians constitute the vast majority of victims of the armed conflict and violence enabled by the illicit flows of such weapons.

14 As demonstrated by United Nations data, conventional arms – particularly SALW, heavy weapons and explosive munitions – have been responsible for the vast majority of civilian deaths and injuries resulting from armed conflict in 2020. See United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division, "SDG Goals: 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions", https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2021/goal-16/. For the detailed statistics, see also: https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/report/2021/secretary-general-sdg-report-2021--Statistical-Annex.pdf, p. 188

the significant human cost of conventional weapons on civilians has become a common feature of the Secretary-General's annual reports on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict since the first was produced, in 1999.[15] It has also been increasingly acknowledged by the Security Council in several thematic and country-specific resolutions.[16] Indeed, recent reports submitted to the Security Council, including on SALW, regularly emphasize the role of conventional weapons as key enablers of armed conflict and civilian harm. These draw attention to the importance for POC of effectively implementing normative frameworks and instruments in the field of conventional arms control, such as the 2001 United Nations Programme of Action on SALW (POA) and the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).[17]

Over the years, the work of the United Nations in this area has evolved from merely acknowledging the humanitarian impact of conventional weapons and reiterating the importance of implementing existing multilateral arms control instruments to setting concrete courses of action.[18] Noting the destabilizing and harmful impact of conventional weapons and particularly SALW in many contexts where United Nations peace operations are deployed, the Security Council has mandated missions to undertake a range of tasks to address the problem, including through arms control-related activities such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), community violence reduction (CVR), security sector reform (SSR), weapons and ammunition management (WAM), support to arms embargoes, and mine action.[19] The precise role of United Nations peace operations in these areas, however, has varied significantly from one context to the next. A lack of consistent and clear mandates on these tasks and political sensitivities surrounding them has led to challenges in their implementation by many United Nations peace operations.[20]

While arms control-related activities and POC usually appear in separate sections of the resolutions providing the mandates of each mission, there are clearly linkages between the two issues. For example, the DPO's POC Policy notes under tier III of the operational concept – the establishment of a protective environment – that POC includes activities

15 Security Council, "Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict", S/1999/957, 1999, https://undocs.org/S/1999/957.

16 United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Building a Culture of Protection: 20 Years Engagement of the Security Council on the Protection of Civilians, May 2019, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Building a culture of protection.pdf. See also United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Protection of Civilians Aide Memoire", https://poc-aide-memoire.unocha.org/.

17 See, for instance, "Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on small arms and light weapons", S/2017/1025, 2017, https://undocs.org/S/2017/1025: "The effective implementation of instruments such as the Arms Trade Treaty and the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects can greatly contribute to protecting civilians"; and"Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on small arms and light weapons", S/2019/1011, 2019, https://undocs.org/en/S/2019/1011

18 United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Building a Culture of Protection: 20 Years Engagement of the Security Council on the Protection of Civilians, May 2019, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Building a culture of protection.pdf.

19 Ibid.

20 See, for example, S. Yazgi, H. Giezendanner and H. Shiotani, Addressing Conventional Arms Risks and Impacts to Prevent Conflict and Build Peace: What More Should the United Nations Do?, UNIDIR, 2020, https://unidir.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/Community of Practitioners - Workshop report.pdf; and A. Day et al., The Political Practice of Peacekeeing: How Strategies for Peace Operations are Developed and Implemented, United Nations University, 2020, https://collections.unu.edu/eserv/UNU:7791/FullReport-PoliticalPracticeof-Peacekeeping.pdf.

conducted in support of host State authorities and their responsibility to protect civilians, such as SSR and capacity building in areas like WAM, as well as "the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants . . . the survey and clearance of explosive ordnance [and] the prevention of illicit proliferation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons".[21]

These normative developments have not yet translated to changes at the strategic and operational levels of missions. The operationalization of the linkages and potential synergies between conventional arms control and POC still falls short in many contexts. While the DPO's POC Handbook refers to the POC role of different mission components, including those related to conventional arms control, it contains only limited guidance on the linkages between the two mandated tasks.[22] As the research for this Brief has shown, the issue has not been addressed to a significant extent within the institutionalization of POC in United Nations peacekeeping in recent years, including as part of the various policies, guidelines and training materials that have been developed. As United Nations peace operations deploy in increasingly complex operational environments – with multiple armed actors and high levels of arms, ammunition and explosives in circulation – efforts to better account for arms-related risks and their impacts on civilians in POC strategies and operational plans and to leverage arms control-related activities in the implementation of POC mandates become more important.

21 United Nations, Department of Peace Operations, "Policy: The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping", 1 November 2019, https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/poc_policy_2019_.pdf, p. 16.

22 UN Department of Peace Operations, 'The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping: Handbook', 2020, https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/dpo_poc_handbook_final_as_printed.pdf.

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3 Points of intersection:

The contribution of conventional arms control to POC mandates of United Nations peace operations

3. Points of intersection: The contribution of conventional arms control to POC mandates of United Nations peace operations

Conventional arms control and POC in the context of United Nations peace operations clearly share the goal of preventing and reducing threats of physical violence to civilians. However, neither one is a subcomponent of the other; rather, they are complementary approaches with certain elements of each intersecting with the other. They have occupied different Security Council agenda items, and in the mandates of United Nations peace operations the related tasks are usually listed under different subheadings or mission objectives.[23]

Conventional arms control has an arguably broader remit as it also has implications over the long term for human security, development and human rights, while POC tends to be more narrowly understood in terms of responding to physical threats of violence to civilians – whether through political dialogue, military and police operations, or other activities undertaken by civilian components in support of the establishment of a protective environment. This section futher unpacks the conceptual interlinkages between these two mandated tasks by reviewing the points of intersection and pinpointing common areas of practice – including political mediation and dialogue, military and police operations by peacekeepers, human rights monitoring and reporting, as well as arms control-related activities such as ceasefire monitoring and verification, arms embargoes and sanctions regimes, mine action, DDR, CVR, WAM, and SSR. Where possible, it draws on specific examples to highlight how conventional arms control has, and could, contribute more to the implementation of POC mandates.

3.1 Political mediation and dialogue

Support for political dialogue and mediation processes is a core task of many United Nations peace operations. In its POC Policy, DPO recognizes the "primacy of politics" and the importance of seeking political solutions to conflicts as the most effective and sustainable way of protecting civilians.[24] This approach is premised on the understanding that POC requires not only short-term interventions to protect civilians from immediate threats of physical violence, but also the resolution of the conflicts that give rise to those threats in the first place. By using their mediation and good offices function to advance POC objectives, United Nations peace operations seek to prioritize a preventive approach to protecting civilians. In fact, a growing number of United Nations peacekeeping missions – including the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the United Nations Stabilization Mission in

23 United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs, Aide Memoire: Options for Reflecting Weapons and Ammunition Management Decisions of the Security Council, 2nd edn., October 2020, https://front.un-arm.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/aide-memoire-2ed-1.pdf.

24 United Nations, Department of Peace Operations, "Policy: The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping", 1 November 2019, https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/poc_policy_2019_.pdf, p. 10.

the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) – have been supporting local mediation efforts as part of their POC mandates, including by contributing to early-warning mechanisms and promoting dialogue at the community level.[25] For SPMs, political dialogue and mediation are one of the primary means through which such missions protect civilians.[26]

Despite the growing awareness of the importance of aligning political and POC objectives, the relationship between these two key mission tasks also presents tensions.[27] In the absence of a clearly articulated political strategy, for instance, the prioritization of the implementation of POC mandates may lead to a greater reliance on militarized responses and distract missions from the pursuit of sustainable political solutions.[28] It is therefore vital that the implementation of POC mandates is driven by sound political strategies developed in support of political solutions that reinforce POC goals, especially when there is an ongoing mediation or peace process in place. During these processes, adequately accounting for arms-related risks and impacts at the early stages is not only key for ensuring that weapons do not become "peace spoilers" and exacerbate threats to civilians, but is also necessary for the implementation of peace agreements and the sustainability of political solutions in the long run. Similarly, arms control-related measures are much more likely to be adequately planned and, consequently, implemented if they are rooted in peace agreements.[29] The involvement of relevant mission components in such processes, including SSR, DDR, CVR and mine action, is therefore critical to ensuring long-term sustainable political gain and and helping connect POC goals with broader political solutions.

Indeed, while normally perceived as merely technical activities, most arms control-related activities have, in fact, important political dimensions and are relevant to missions' engagement and dialogue efforts, including on POC. Beyond their good office's and mediation function, the political engagement of missions on POC also includes bringing concerns about specific protection threats to the attention of host governments and other duty bearers. By providing concrete entry points and substance for dialogue and engagement activities, arms control can therefore be useful to missions' efforts to better protect civilians and prevent violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.[30] Focusing its advocacy on specific categories of weapons and how they are (mis)

25 A. Boutellis, D. Mechoulan and M.-J. Zahar, *Parallel Tracks* or Connected Pieces?: UN Peace Operations, Local Mediation, and Peace Processes', International Peace Institute, December 2020, https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/2012-UN-Peace-Operations-Local-Mediation-and-Peace-Processes.pdf.

26 Security Council, "Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict", Report of the Secretary-General, S/2020/366, 2020, https://undocs.org/S/2020/366, para. 49.

27 R. Mamiya, "Protecting Civilians and Political Strategies", International Peace Institute, 2018, https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/1805_POC-and-Political-Strategies.pdf.

28 Ibid.

29 C. Buchanan and M. Widmer, "Civilians, Guns and Peace Processes: Approaches And Possibilities", Briefing Paper no. 1, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2006, https://athenaconsortium-s3.studiocoucou.com/uploads/document/file/29/Civilians__guns_and_peace_processes_C._Buchanan_and_M._Widmer_Negotiating_Disarmament_Briefing_Paper_2006.pdf. See also J. Linke, "Provisions on SSR and DDR in Peace Agreements", Thematic Brief, DCAF, 2020, https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/EN_SSR_DDR_Peace_Agreements_2020.pdf.

30 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Guidance on Casualty Recording, 2019, https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/Guidance_on_Casualty_Recording.pdf

used by armed actors to cause harm to civilians, for instance, can allow for more targeted and effective protection action by relevant mission personnel. Such engagement is particularly important in contexts where there are armed actors who are not formally part of a peace agreement or when there is no viable peace process in place.

3.2 Military and police operations by peacekeepers

The physical protection role of United Nations peacekeepers, including the threat or use of force to prevent or deter violence towards civilians, is perhaps the most well-known POC task of missions. The military component performs a range of different activities such as patrolling and rapid deployments to project force, and have agreed a graduated series of tactical actions to confront threats to civilians. An 2014 evaluation by the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) concluded that "force is almost never used to protect civilians under attack" in United Nations peace operations with POC mandates.[31] In subsequent years, there have been several inquiries into incidents when United Nations peacekeepers have failed to react to attacks on civilians within their areas of operation and interpose themselves between belligerents. Instead, the positive impact that peacekeepers can have has been primarily viewed as deterring violence through their presence and patrols. However, despite this uneven practice, research and evidence suggest that robust peacekeeping operations improve the protection of civilians, although the understanding of missions' precise impact in this respect is limited.[32]

While addressing the use of specific categories of weapons by belligerents is rarely an explicitly mandated task of the military components of United Nations peacekeeping operations, they perform a number of arms control-related tasks as part of their POC role. In 2011, following disputed elections that led to widespread violence in Côte d'Ivoire, the Security Council strengthened the mandate of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) to "use all necessary means" to carry out its mandate to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence, within its capabilities and its areas of deployment, including to prevent the use of heavy weapons against the civilian population.[33] This was a rare instance in which the Security Council not only mandated the use of force against State security forces, but also to prevent their use of specific weapons that had caused harm to civilians. Other missions, such as MONUSCO, have also engaged in offensive operations to neutralize armed groups that have involved the removal of the groups' capability (including their weapons) to cause harm to the civilian population. Furthermore, as indicated in DPKO's guidelines on the use of force by military components, peacekeepers may also support the establishment and enforcement of arms control activities. These activities can include assisting in collecting and destroying weapons, munitions and explosive remnants; supporting DDR processes; border control measures; and the

31 General Assembly, A/68/787, 7 March 2014, https://undocs.org/A/68/787, paragraph 79.

32 A.J. Bellamy and C.T. Hunt, "Using Force to Protect Civilians in UN Peacekeeping", Survival, vol. 66, no. 3, 2021, pp. 143–70, https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2021.1930411.

33 Security Council, S/RES/1975, 2011, https://undocs.org/S/RES/1975(2011).

monitoring of ceasefires.[34] Indeed, military components play an important role supporting sections of the mission engaged in arms control-related activities such as DDR, SSR and mine action, providing force protection or logistical support, as well as co-locating or seconding military personnel to these units.

The UN Police (UNPOL) components of peacekeeping missions can similarly contribute to POC through arms control-related activities. In 2017, DPKO adopted guidelines on the role of UNPOL in POC which outline its operational and capacity-building activities – including related to arms control – in connection with the three tiers of the POC operational concept.[35] In situations that do not include the "sustained use of firearms or military weaponry" – which would require the engagement of the military components – formed police units (FPUs) may interpose themselves as a buffer against threats to civilians. As part of such a role, UNPOL often become involved in efforts to maintain the civilian character of camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs), including by performing patrols and establishing weapons-free zones. For example, UNPOL was instrumental in maintaining order within the POC sites that were established adjacent to a UNMISS base in South Sudan in 2014 through regular patrols, random weapons searches and seizures, and community-oriented policing aimed at deterring violent criminal behaviour.[36] The technical advice and capacity-building support of UNPOL to local security forces also usually includes training on the safe and proper use of firearms.[37]

3.3 Civilian casualty recording and human rights reporting

Another mandated task of United Nations peace operations in which conventional arms control intersects with POC is the monitoring and reporting of human rights. The 2011 Policy on Human Rights in United Nations Peace Operations and Political Missions provides for the integration of human rights into peace operations and spells out the relevant human rights responsibilities.[38] There are several ways in which the human rights component can contribute to the implementation of the POC mandates of missions – human rights monitoring and reporting is one of the key examples. A core responsibility of human rights staff is the documentation of human rights violations, analysis of the key patterns and trends, reporting on the main concerns, and advocacy towards relevant duty bearers. They also work closely with the panels of experts established for sanctions regimes and

34 United Nations, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 'Guidelines: Use of Force by Military Components in Peacekeeping Operations', January 2017.

35 United Nations, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 'Guidelines: The Role of United Nations Police in Protection of Civilians', August 2017, https://police.un.org/sites/default/files/protection-of-civilians-unpol_guidelines_2017.pdf.

36 C.T. Hunt, 'Protection through Policing: The Protective Role of UN Police in Peace Operations', International Peace Institute, February 2020, https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/2002_Protection-through-Policing.pdf.

37 United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support (UN DPKO.DFS), "Policy on United Nations Police in Peacekeeping Operations and Special Political Missions", February 2014, https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/4._rule_of_law_-_5_policy_on_police_in_pkos_and_spms.pdf

38 United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Department of Political Affairs and Department of Field Support, "Policy: Human Rights in United Nations Peace Operations and Political Missions", 1 September 2011, http://repository.un.org/bitstream/handle/11176/387432/POLICY Human Rights in Peace Operations and Political Missions.pdf.

provide information to various accountability mechanisms as required and depending on the context.[39] An expanding responsibility of United Nations peace operations is the recording of civilian casualties, in order to track trends in the numbers of people killed and injured within conflict settings and the pattern of harm to civilians, although missions are at different stages of development in this regard.[40]

When reporting on human rights violations within the mission area, in addition to documenting the actions of alleged perpetrators, it is also necessary to provide an analysis of the weapons that were used and whether they are prohibited (e.g. landmines and cluster munitions) or have been used in a manner that is otherwise inconsistent with relevant rules and standards of international humanitarian and human rights law. For example, recognizing the importance of such activities, the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament requested United Nations peace operations to introduce casualty-recording mechanisms, including reporting on the types of arms used, and for missions to engage with parties to a conflict to reduce civilian harm.[41]

The civilian casualty monitoring system of UNAMA is perhaps the most well-developed among United Nations peace operations (see box 1). In most missions, however, the systems for recording deaths and injuries from armed conflict are not as sophisticated and the categories of weapons used by different actors is not systematically recorded and detailed, either because this information is not collected or due to a lack of the technical expertise needed to make such an analysis.[42] While a joint initiative by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) intends to help increase the capacity of missions' human rights components to collect and analyse arms-related data as part of casualty recording and human rights investigations, this is still a work in progress.[43]

39 Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Going Further Together: The Contribution of Human Rights Components to the Implementation of Mandates of United Nations Field Missions', 2020, http://dag.un.org/bitstream/handle/11176/401071/20201009_Going_Further_Together_advance_unedited_version%5b1%5d.pdf.

40 H. Salama, "A Missing Mandate? Casualty Recording in UN Peace Operations", Briefing Paper, Small Arms Survey, June 2020, https://smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/SANA-HSBA-BP-UN-casualties.pdf.

41 United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs, "Securing our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament", 2018, https://www.un.org/disarmament/sg-agenda/en/.

42 H. Salama, "A Missing Mandate? Casualty Recording in UN Peace Operations", Briefing Paper, Small Arms Survey, June 2020, https://smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/SANA-HSBA-BP-UN-casualties.pdf.

43 United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs, "Data-Driven Protection and Arms Control", 12 November 2018, https://www.un.org/disarmament/update/data-driven-protection-and-arms-control/.

BOX 1 **UNAMA's civilian casualty recording system**

Since 2009, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has published regular reports on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. These document the number of civilians killed and injured and provide an analysis of the harm caused to civilians, including the different weapons used in the incidents documented.[44]

The use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) has consistently been one of the leading causes of civilian causalities in Afghanistan and UNAMA has engaged with parties to the conflict to deter them from using these inherently indiscriminate weapons. An analysis of the specific weapons being used to commit such violations has been critical to these tactics-based advocacy efforts undertaken by UNAMA. For example, the mission singled out the use of pressure-plate IEDs as causing serious and consistent civilian harm. After engaging with armed groups, a decrease in their use was reported in early 2021.[45]

Within human rights monitoring more broadly, missions' documentation of violations usually includes an analysis of the types of weapons used, although this is not routine and varies from from mission to mission. There is far less emphasis on the specific weapons used in facilitating the commission of violations of international humanitarian or human rights law than in the analyses by, for instance, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, which have devoted greater efforts to this, including by having dedicated staff and divisions related to these issues.[46] With the exception of the fact-finding missions and commissions of inquiry instigated by the Human Rights Council, OHCHR does not routinely have weapons experts among its staff, including as part of missions' human rights components. This is a potential area for collaboration with those parts of United Nations peace operations that have this kind of expertise, such as the Joint Mission Analysis Centres (JMACs) and substative components such as SSR, DDR and CVR, and mine action.

3.4 Ceasefire monitoring and verification

United Nations peace operations have been mandated to perform a range of ceasefire monitoring and verification tasks to support peace processes. These tasks vary significantly depending on the context, and may contain elements of both arms control and

44 The reports are available on the UNAMA website at https://unama.unmissions.org/protection-of-civilians-reports.

45 United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, "Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: First Quarter Up-date: 1 January to 31 March 2021", https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unama_protection_of_civilians_in_armed_conflict_1st_quarter_2021_2_0.pdf.

46 Human Rights Watch Arms Division, https://www.hrw.org/topic/arms; Amnesty International, https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/arms-control/; and the ICRC has an Arms and Conduct of Hostilities Unit within its Legal Division, as well as a Weapon Contamination Unit, which provides the ICRC with operational expertise on landmines, explosive remnants of war, stockpiles and small arms, https://www.icrc.org/sites/default/files/topic/file_plus_list/4022-weapon_contamination.pdf

POC. Examples of ceasefire breaches include not only clashes between belligerents but also attacks on civilians and civilian objects, as well as the transfer of weapons and ammunition, especially when an United Nations arms embargo is in place. The use of certain weapons deemed to be indiscriminate or excessively injurious to civilians is also often proscribed within ceasefires. For example, the laying of mines and other explosive devices regularly included in ceasefire agreements since the early 1990s.[47] The 2020 Juba Agreement between the Transitional Government of Sudan and the Darfur parties to the peace process contains provisions prohibiting the laying of landmines and the use force and violence against civilians.[48] The inclusion of such arms-related provisions can have a direct impact on POC by helping reduce the risks posed to civilians by the use of certain weapons.

In several missions, the interlinkages between arms-related ceasefire monitoring and verification tasks and POC have come to the fore. For example, the United Nations Mission in Colombia was mandated in 2016 to verify the laying-down of arms by members of the former Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia–People's Army (FARC-EP) and, as part of a tripartite mechanism, monitor the definitive bilateral ceasefire and cessation of hostilities agreed to in the peace process between the Government of Colombia and FARC-EP.[49] The disarmament process also had implications for POC, including the removal of landmines and explosive ordinance and facilitating the return of IDPs to former conflict-affected areas. Most recently, the Security Council has mandated the United Nations to monitor ceasefires in Libya and Yemen through the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and the United Nations Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement (UNMHA), respectively. Such mandates demonstrate the synergies between ceasefire monitoring and verification tasks and efforts to reduce the civilian harm resulting from the use of certain weapons. The implementation of these mandates requires close collaboration between mission personnel working on arms control and those working on POC-related matters. They must agree on the types of incident that should be tracked and investigated during ceasefire monitoring and verification, potentially through joint field teams and reporting. Furthermore, there should be mechanisms for bringing up such incidents with conflict parties not only as it relates to ceasefire violations, but also potential violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.

3.5 Arms embargoes and sanctions regimes

Support to the monitoring and implementation of arms embargo regimes – usually within the context of broader sanctions regimes – is an area where the nexus of conventional arms control and POC clearly comes together within the context of United Nations peace

47 Geneva International centre for Humanitarian Demining and Swisspeace, Mine Action and Peace Mediation, 2016, https://www.gichd.org/fileadmin/GICHD-resources/rec-documents/GICHD-Mine-Action-and-Peace-Mediation_web.pdf

48 Juba Agreement for Peace in Sudan between the Transitional Government of Sudan and the Parties to Peace Process, 3 October 2020, https://www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/2325.

49 United Nations, Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, "UN Verification Mission in Colombia", https://dppa.un.org/en/mission/verification-mission-colombia.

operations. The Security Council has adopted 30 sanctions regimes since 1966 with varying goals, including supporting peaceful transitions, preventing conflict and protecting human rights.[50] Nine of the 10 current conflict-related sanctions regimes include arms embargoes which prohibit the supply or transfer of arms, ammunition and related materiel to specific areas or actors.[51] United Nations sanctions regimes have also increasingly been used as a tool to protect civilians through the introduction of designation criteria related to violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. After first being introduced in the case of Côte d'Ivoire in 2004, they have become a more common feature in several sanctions regimes. Whereas these criteria initially included limited references to international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law, they now include specific references to violations against women and children, forced displacement, attacks against protected persons and objects, and obstruction of the delivery of humanitarian assistance.[52]

Currently, eight sanctions regimes include both an arms embargo and POC-related designation criteria: those on the Central Africa Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Libya, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Yemen. There is either a United Nations peacekeeping operation or an SPM deployed in each of these countries. In several contexts, the mission is explicitly mandated to support the implementation of the arms embargo through support and collaboration with the relevant panel or group of experts and the Security Council committee established to monitor and oversee compliance of the sanctions regime. These missions include MINUSCA (CAR), MINUSMA (Mali), MONUSCO (DRC), UNAMA (Afghanistan), UNITAMS (Sudan), UNMISS (South Sudan) and the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNSOM).[53] There is no single arrangement for how United Nations peace operations may best support the implementation of arms embargoes.[54] However, guidelines have been produced to help facilitate the cooperation and mutual support of United Nations peace operations and sanctions regimes.[55] An example of how such cooperation can be implemented in practice is the establishment by missions of dedicated mechanisms to support the monitoring of arms embargos, such as an Arms Embargo Cell (AEC). UNOCI, in Côte d'Ivoire, was the first United Nations peacekeeping operation to set up a AEC in 2006. Similar mechanisms were also established in the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in 2006 and later in MONUSCO (see box 2).[56]

50 For more details on the different United Nations sanction regimes in place see United Nations, Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, "Subsidiary Organs of the United Nations Security Council", Fact Sheet, 16 July 2021, https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sites/www.un.org.securitycouncil/files/subsidiary_organs_fact-sheets.pdf.

51 The countries targeted include Somalia, Iraq, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Libya, the Central African Republic, Yemen and South Sudan as well as the Taliban.

52 United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Building a Culture of Protection: 20 Years Engagement of the Security Council on the Protection of Civilians, May 2019, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Building a culture of protection.pdf.

53 Information provided by the Security Council Affairs Division (SCAD).

54 Some field missions are mandated to cooperate with sanctions committees and their respective expert panels by sharing relevant information and assisting host governments with exemption requests. Others have been mandated to carry out a more comprehensive set of tasks that may include monitoring compliance with the arms embargo and actively conducting inspections to enforce the arms embargo. See Security Council, "Small Arms and Light Weapons", Report of the Secretary-General, 6 December 2017, S/2017/1025, https://undocs.org/S/2017/1025.

55 Interview with UN official, 02/06/2021.

56 'Applying conventional arms control in the context of UN arms embargo', UNIDIR, 2018

BOX 2 MONUSCO's Arms Embargo Cell and Working Group

The United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) first established an Arms Embargo Working Group (AEWG) in 2013, then added a AEC in 2015, which became fully operational and staffed and was further reinforced in 2018. The AEWG and the AEC support MONUSCO's efforts to monitor the implementation of the arms embargo in the DRC in cooperation with the group of experts established by Security Council resolution 1533 (2004) by, among other things, observing and reporting on the flow of military personnel, arms and related materiel across the DRC's eastern border.[57] The DRC sanctions regimes include protection of civilians among its designation criteria and is one of the few countries where sanctions have been placed on individuals for these purposes.

While MONUSCO as a mission has strengthened its casualty recording, the AEC currently does not have the capacity to make linkages between breaches of the arms embargo and specific casualty-causing incidents. There is an acknowledgement of the potential to share some of the AEC's information more widely across the mission to reinforce both casualty and weapons documentation efforts, but this is still a work in progress.[58]

While arms embargoes are often imposed by the Security Council in conjunction with the deployment of United Nations peace operations, they have sometimes been criticized for having a limited impact on both reducing arms flows to the conflict parties and on influencing the behaviour of these parties to better protect civilians. For instance, if an embargoed State has inadequate national arms control regulations, this may undermine its implementation of the arms embargo. There are also limited consequences for States that violate an arms embargo, which raises questions about their enforceability.[59]

In addition, imposing travel and asset freezes on individuals and entities that have acted in breach of the designation criteria related to POC concerns may be viewed as a blunt tool for changing their behaviour and ensuring compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law. Since 2014, 39 individuals and entities have been sanctioned by the relevant Sanctions Committee for their actions in CAR, the DRC, Mali or South Sudan.[60] Nevertheless, such measures have a symbolic impact and are a first step towards other accountability measures, including by providing information that could be used as part of further investigations at a later stage.

57 S. Yazgi, H. Giezendanner and H. Shiotani, Addressing Conventional Arms Risks and Impacts to Prevent Conflict and Build Peace: What More Should the United Nations Do?, UNIDIR, 2020, https://unidir.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/Community of Practitioners - Workshop report.pdf.

58 H. Salama, "A Missing Mandate? Casualty Recording in UN Peace Operations", Briefing Paper, Small Arms Survey, June 2020, https://smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/SANA-HSBA-BP-UN-casualties.pdf.

59 J.A. Boutellis, "The changing role of conventional arms control in preventing and managing violent conflicts", UNIDIR, 2018, https://www.unidir.org/sites/default/files/publication/pdfs/-en-725.pdf.

60 Information provided by the United Nations Security Council Affairs Division (SCAD).

The mandates of United Nations peace operations often include cooperation – including information-sharing or exchange – by the mission with panels and groups of experts. However, the relationship between the panels and groups of experts and missions can be sensitive. As panels act independently of United Nations peace operations, their reports can sometimes run counter to the interests of the mission.[61] In some instances, peace operations may also seek to distance themselves from the work of such panels or groups in order to preserve their relationship with host governments, especially when an expert report accuses national governments or neighbouring countries of embargo violations.[62]

While the relationship between missions and panels will always depend on the context, support by the mission to the monitoring of an arms embargo regime is nonetheless an important way in which United Nations peace operations can contribute to POC efforts and an activity that deserves greater attention.

3.6 Mine action

As a key component of many United Nations peacekeeping missions and a few SPMs,[63] the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) undertakes several tasks that directly support the implementation of POC mandates as well as facilitate the provision of protection activities by other mission components, humanitarian agencies and national authorities. Given the significant risks that explosive hazards pose to civilians – who normally suffer the most from explosive violence[64] – mine action activities of United Nations peace operations align, and in many ways can be equated with, the POC objectives of the mission. In the light of its humanitarian nature, mine action is included in the humanitarian system coordination structures as an area of responsibility of the Global Protection Cluster chaired by UNMAS.[65]

The contribution of mine action activities to missions' POC objectives occurs across all three tiers of the DPO's POC operational concept. First, mine action can act as a confidence-building measure in political and mediation processes, and demining and other mine action activities are a common feature of ceasefire and peace agreements.[66] For instance, as part of UNSMIL in Libya, UNMAS provided technical and coordination support for the clearance of explosive remnants of war (ERW) along the coastal road between

61 For example, in Burundi, national authorities expelled United Nations staff from the country because of the contents of the panel of experts report which was viewed as originated from the mission.

62 N. Holger Anders, "Monitoring Illicit Arms Flows: The Role of UN Peacekeeping Operations",Briefing Paper, Small Arms Survey, June 2018, https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/resource/monitoring-illicit-arms-flows-role-un-peacekeeping-operations

63 Currently, UNMAS is an integrated component of all six peacekeeping operations mandated to protect civilians. See United Nations Mine Action Service, "Support to Peace Operations", https://www.unmas.org/en/support-to-peace-operations.

64 Action on Armed Violence (AOAV), Explosive Weapons Monitor 2020, 2021, https://aoav.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Explosive-Violence-Monitor-2020-V3-single-pages.pdf.

65 See the Global Protection Cluster website for more details, https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/themes/mine-action/.

66 S. Yazgi, H. Giezendanner and H. Shiotani, Addressing Conventional Arms Risks and Impacts to Prevent Conflict and Build Peace: What More Should the United Nations Do?, UNIDIR, 2020, https://unidir.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/Community of Practitioners – Workshop report.pdf.

the Abugrein and Sirte, allowing for the reopening of the road and facilitating the implementation of the ceasefire agreement signed in October 2020.[67] Second, mine clearance operations can significantly contribute to the physical protection of civilians by reducing the number of casualties resulting from landmines and other ERW incidents.[68] In Mali, for instance, mine clearance operations carried out by MINUSMA helped to reduce the number of civilian deaths attributed to ERW incidents from 52 in 2012 to 7 in 2017.[69] Such operations also allow for the mobility of peacekeepers, enabling them to perform a number of protective activities. Third, mine action also contributes to creating a safer environment for civilians, which facilitates a return to normalcy and allows them to carry out other aspects of everyday life. In South Sudan, the removal of explosive hazards from around POC sites adjacent to UNMISS bases played an important role in creating conditions for the safe and secure return of IDPs to their places of origin.[70] By raising awareness and educating civilians on the risks stemming from explosive ordnance, the delivery of mine risk education by missions can be a life-saving activity, especially for civilians living in, or returning to, contaminated areas.[71] Given the prominent role that mine action activities can play in support of POC, it is particularly important that mission personnel working on these two issues coordinate and share information on a regular basisis to ensure that interventions can be prioritized in areas where explosive hazards present the greatest risk to civilians.

3.7 Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

The support to national DDR processes is another mandated task of United Nations peace operations that illustrates the linkages and potential contributions of arms control activities to the implementation of POC mandates. By supporting members of armed forces and groups to lay down their weapons and return to civilian life, carefully designed and implemented DDR programmes can enhance missions' prospects for advancing and consolidating POC objectives.[72] Most United Nations peacekeeping operations with a POC mandate provide support to national DDR processes, and the task has also been included in the mandates of several SPMs.[73] While initially conceived and implemented as a post-conflict tool, the concept of DDR has evolved significantly over the past decades and is now considered applicable at the various stages of the transition from conflict

67 United Nations Mine Action Service, "Libya", https://www.unmas.org/en/programmes/libya.

68 Mine clearance operations are broadly understood to include surveys, mapping and marking of minefields, as well as the actual clearance of mines from the ground. See United Nations Mine Action Service, "5 Pillars of Mine Action", https://www.unmas.org/en/5-pillars-of-mine-action.

69 United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, "Mine Action", https://minusma.unmissions.org/en/mine-action.

70 Ibid.

71 United Nations Mine Action Service, UNMAS Annual Report 2020, https://unmas.org/sites/default/files/unmas_annual_report_2020.pdf.

72 United Nations DDR Resource Centre, Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS) Framework, "Module 2.10: The UN Approach to DDR", https://www.unddr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/IDDRS-2.10-The-UN-Approach-To-DDR.pdf.

73 United Nations DDR Resource Centre, "UN-Supported DDR Mission Settings", 2020, https://www.unddr.org/un-ddr/.

to peace through a range of adaptive DDR-related tools.[74] There are two possible arms control components of DDR processes: disarmament as part of a DDR programme;[75] and transitional WAM as a DDR-related tool that seeks to limit or control conflict actors' use of certain weapons without necessarily removing their access to them.[76] Both can contribute to addressing the illicit circulation and misuse of conventional arms as well as their impact on the civilian population.

DDR is explicitly referenced as a tier III activity under the DPO's POC operational concept, although its importance for POC is also recognized as part of tier I dialogue and engagement, especially in relation to activities with local communities and perpetrators of violence against civilians. Indeed, DDR mission personnel can play a critical role in missions' POC efforts as part of their engagement with non-State armed groups to dissuade them from armed violence against civilians and to enhance respect for international humanitarian and human rights law.[77] They are frequently among the mission personnel with the most expertise and understanding of non-State armed groups and the weapons at their disposal, and they can provide relevant analysis and advice to inform mission efforts to prevent and reduce the threats to civilians resulting from the misuse of weapons by these groups.[78] In addition, DDR practitioners can play a key role in support of mediation and peace processes through the provision of direct mediation assistance, capacity building and analysis.[79] In contexts where peace processes are underway, the negotiation and inclusion of relevant disarmament and arms control-related provisions in ceasefire and peace agreements is also critical for ensuring the adequate planning and implementation of these activities once the conflict has subsided. These carry important repercussions for the consolidation of POC objectives in the long run, especially as the United Nations reconfigures its presence in the country (see box 3).[80]

74 United Nations DDR Resource Centre, Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS) Framework, "Module 2.10: The UN Approach to DDR", https://www.unddr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/IDDRS-2.10-The-UN-Approach-To-DDR.pdf. DDR-related tools include: pre-DDR, transitional WAM, CVR, initiatives to prevent individuals from joining armed groups designated as terrorist organizations, DDR support to mediation, and DDR support to transitional security arrangements.

75 United Nations DDR Resource Centre, Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS) Framework, "Module 4.10: Disarmament", June 2020, https://www.unddr.org/modules/IDDRS-4.10-Disarmament.pdf. The disarmament component of DDR processes is defined by the United Nations as the collection, documentation, control and disposal of arms, ammunition and explosives voluntarily handed over by combatants, persons associated with armed forces and groups, and sometimes also the civilian population.

76 United Nations DDR Resource Centre, Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS) Framework, "Module 4.11: Transitional Weapons and Ammunition Management", June 2020, https://www.unddr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/IDDRS-4.11-Transitional-Weapons-and-Ammunition-Management.pdf.

77 United Nations, Department of Peace Operations, "Policy: The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping", 1 November 2019, https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/poc_policy_2019_.pdf.

78 R. Mamiya, "Engaging with Non-State Armed Groups to Protect Civilians: A Pragmatic Approach for UN Peace Operations", International Peace Institute, October 2018, https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/1810_Engaging_with_NSAGs.pdf.

79 United Nations, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, "DDR Support to Mediation Process", 2018, https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/ddr_support_to_mediation_process_2018.pdf. Notable support by DDR practitioners to mediation including the Doha process for Darfur, the Algiers process for Mali and the Bangui Forum for CAR.

80 For a comprehensive overview inventory of DDR clauses and DDR-related clauses in ceasefire and peace Agreements, see United Nations, Department of Peace Operations, DDR Section, "Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Clauses in Ceasefire/Peace Agreements", March 2021.?

BOX 3 **Sudan's national plan for POC and its provisions related to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration**

In anticipation of the drawdown of the United Nations–African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), the Sudanese authorities adopted a national plan for the protection of civilians to underline their responsibility to protect civilians as the peacekeeping mission departed.

The national plan has been highlighted as a potential good practice. It includes sections related to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of armed groups that had signed the peace agreement and the regulation and confiscation of small arms and light weapons in accordance with Sudan's 1986 Weapons and Ammunition Act.[81] The implementation of the plan is supported by the United Nations Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), the special political mission that succeeded UNAMID in 2020.

3.8 Community violence reduction

CVR refers to programmes implemented by United Nations peace operations that seek to prevent and reduce violence at the community level during an ongoing armed conflict or in post-conflict settings.[82] Since CVR was originally introduced by the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) in 2006, it has been progressively included in the mandates of several United Nations peace operations. CVR is currently mandated in most peacekeeping missions with a POC mandate, as well as in a number of SPMs.[83] CVR interventions use a bottom-up approach that emphasizes community engagement. They have thus also proven to be an effective tool in reducing the levels of armed violence within communities and contributing to POC efforts at the local level. This is particularly the case in complex operational settings where non-traditional armed groups and criminal gangs engage in armed violence that affects the civilian population, as demonstrated by MONUSCO (see box 4).

81 United Nations Security Council, "Letter Dated 21 May 2020 from the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council", UN Doc. S/2020/429, June 1, 2020, p. 2.

82 United Nations, Department of Peace Operations, Community Violence Reduction: Creating a Space for Peace, 2018.

83 The Security Council has mandated MINUSMA to support CVR since 2014 (resolution 2164) and UN-MISS since 2019. CVR was first included in MINUSCA's mandate in 2014 (resolution 2149) and MONUSCO's mandate in 2017 (resolution 2348). The United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) was the first SPM mandated to support CVR.

BOX 4

MONUSCO: placing POC at the core of community violence reduction

MONUSCO has implemented several CVR projects in the framework of its POC activities, recognizing the changing operational context in the DRC, with increased levels of violence against civilians by non-traditional armed groups and criminal gangs operating at the subnational level. It has thus prioritized POC as part of its CVR strategy since 2017, focusing its interventions in areas where the threat to civilians was the most severe.[84] In line with its comprehensive approach to POC, the mission has also undertaken dialogue and engagement activities as part of CVR projects to respond to the increasing protection threats posed by armed groups to civilians, allowing for the return of internally displaced ethnic minorities to their homes in 2018.[85]

While arms control is not the primary focus of CVR and its inclusion is context-dependent,[86] such interventions can have a direct impact on the demand for and misuse of weapons within communities and the creation of a protective environment for civilians by tackling the drivers of armed violence and improving the perceptions of security within the local civilian population.[87] For instance, CVR projects implemented by UNAMID in coordination with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and national actors including the Sudanese DDR Commission (SDDRC) have played a critical role in advancing protection objectives in Darfur – a region marked by an acute proliferation of arms and high levels of violence against civilians.[88] Through a community-based labour-intensive project (CLIP) targeting at-risk youth in areas with a high concentration of former combatants, the project allowed for a reduction of the levels of intercommunal violence and further contributed to community stabilization efforts in the region.[89] These interventions underline the preventative nature of CVR programmes, which can help reduce the incentives for members of armed groups and communities to engage in armed violence that causes civilian harm.[90]

84 United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, "DDR/RR", https://monusco.unmissions.org/en/ddrrr.

85 Security Council, "United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo", Report of the Secretary-General, S/2018/655, July 2018, https://undocs.org/S/2018/655

86 Where CVR programmes have an explicit arms control and/or disarmament element, these may include measures aimed at limiting or controlling the circulation of weapons, ammunition and explosives through activities such as civilian weapons collection and management in communities affected by armed violence, as well as the sensitization of communities to national weapons ownership legislation. See United Nations DDR Resource Centre, Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS) Framework, "Module 2.30: Community Violence Reduction", https://www.unddr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/IDDRS-2.30-Community-Violence-Reduction.pdf.

87 United Nations DDR Resource Centre, Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS) Framework, "Module 2.30: Community Violence Reduction", https://www.unddr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/IDDRS-2.30-Community-Violence-Reduction.pdf.

88 Z. Elzarov, "Community Stabilization and Violence Reduction: Lessons from Darfur", Stability: International Journal of Security and Development, vol. 4, no. 1, 2015, article 7, http://doi.org/10.5334/sta.ex.

89 Ibid.

90 United Nations, Department of Peace Operations, "Policy: The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping", 1 November 2019, https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/poc_policy_2019_.pdf, p. 10., p. 33.

CVR programmes are also increasingly being implemented in support of local peace agreements and broader engagement and dialogue activities undertaken by missions, illustrating CVR's contributions to tier I protection activities. As reported by MINUSCA, the mission's DDR and CVR component has been focusing on violence reduction projects within communities, including by promoting capacity-building for local conflict resolution and violence prevention, protection of civilians and weapons collection.[91] The use of CVR programmes to promote protection and prevent threats to civilians as part of engagement with communities and armed groups is one important way in which missions can support POC efforts and help reduce the levels of violence within communities, including by addressing the drivers of demand for weapons.[92]

3.9 Weapons and ammunition management

WAM is a set of activities and processes that cover the oversight, accountability and governance of arms and ammunition throughout their management lifecycle in a comprehensive manner. As such, WAM has become a critical element of United Nations peace operations in recent years.[93] Currently, WAM support to the host government and national authorities is provided in several contexts, including by peacekeeping missions in CAR, the DRC and Mali.[94] Support to WAM has also been explicitly mandated to SPMs such as the the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH), while transitional WAM is part of the mandate of UNITAMS in Sudan.[95] In most of these contexts, WAM efforts also play an important role in supporting activities related to SSR, DDR and CVR, arms embargo monitoring and implementation, as well as SALW control.[96]

The importance of promoting effective WAM practices for addressing situations of armed conflict and violence, including protecting civilians, has been increasingly recognized in United Nations peace operation settings and is explicitly referenced as a tier III protection

91 Security Council, United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo", Report of the Secretary-General, S/2018/ 125, 15 February 2018, https://undocs.org/S/2018/125

92 United Nations, Department of Peace Operations, "Policy: The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping", 1 November 2019, https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/poc_policy_2019_.pdf, p. 30

93 WAM is defined as a set of activities and processes that cover the oversight, accountability and governance of arms and ammunition throughout their management cycle in a comprehensive manner, including the establishment of relevant national frameworks, processes and practices for the safe and secure production and acquisition of materiel, stockpiling, transfers, end-use control, tracing, and disposal. WAM's scope includes all conventional weapons – not limited to SALW – and their associated ammunition, parts and components.See United Nations DDR Resource Centre, Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS) Framework, "Module 4.10: Disarmament", June 2020, https://www.unddr.org/modules/IDDRS-4.10-Disarmament.pdf, and "Module 4.11: Transitional Weapons and Ammunition Management", June 2020, https://www.unddr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/IDDRS-4.11-Transitional-Weapons-and-Ammunition-Management.pdf. See also United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs, Aide Memoire: Options for Reflecting Weapons and Ammunition Management Decisions of the Security Council, 2nd edn., October 2020, https://front.un-arm.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/aide-memoire-2ed-1.pdf.

94 Ibid.

95 Security Council, S/RES/2476, 2019, http://undocs.org/S/RES/2476(2019); and Security Council, S/RES/2524, 2020, http://undocs.org/S/RES/2524(2020).

96 Security Council, "Small Arms and Light Weapons", Report of the Secretary-General, S/2019/1011, 30 December 2019, https://undocs.org/S/2019/1011; and United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs, Effective Weapons and Ammunition Management in a Changing Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Context, 2nd edn., https://front.un-arm.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/ddr-handbook-2ed-3.pdf.

activity under the DPO's POC operational concept.[97] By preventing and mitigating risks of diversion, including from national stockpiles, comprehensive WAM measures can disrupt one of the primary sources of supply of arms, ammunition and explosives to non-State armed groups, limiting their capacity to carry out attacks against civilians.[98] Effective WAM practices are also critical to ensure that stockpiles of manufactured explosives are denied to armed groups as a source of explosives for the production of IEDs, which can be used in attacks that intentionally target the civilian population. Furthermore, by strengthening the governance, oversight and accountability of arms and ammunition throughout their life cycle, an effective and holistic approach to WAM can help mitigate the risks that these weapons will be used by members of the State security forces to facilitate abuses against the civilian population in contexts where host governments may pose a threat to civilians (see section 2.10).[99]

A growing number of missions – including MINUSCA, MINUSMA and MONUSCO – have been providing training and building the capacity of national authorities on WAM. This focuses primarily on the safe and secure management of stockpiles of weapons and ammunition, including through the building and rehabilitation of storage facilities. In addition to reducing the risks of diversion from national stockpiles, strengthening States' WAM capacity is also critical for mitigating the risks of unplanned or deliberate explosions in ammunition and explosives storage sites. As past incidents have shown, such explosions can have devastating impacts on the civilian population and infrastructure and are particularly common in low-capacity environments, where United Nations peace operations are typically deployed.[100]

97 United Nations, Office for Disarmament Affairs, Aide Memoire: Options for Reflecting Weapons and Ammunition Management Decisions of the Security Council, 2nd edn., October 2020, https://front.un-arm.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/aide-memoire-2ed-1.pdf; and Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on small arms and light weapons", S/2019/1011, 2019, https://undocs.org/en/S/2019/1011.

98 S. de Tessieres, "The Role of Weapon and Ammunition Management in Preventing Conflict and Supporting Security Transitions", UNIDIR, 2019, https://unidir.org/files/publications/pdfs/the-role-of-weapon-and-ammunition-management-in-preventing-conflict-and-supporting-security-transitions-en-773.pdf.

99 Ibid.

100 UNIDIR and UN SaferGuard, Utilizing the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines in Conflict-Affected and Low-Capacity Environments, 2019, https://www.unidir.org/files/publications/pdfs/utilizing-the-international-ammunition-technical-guidelines-in-conflict-affected-and-low-capacity-environments-en-749.pdf.

BOX 5 Strengthening missions' policies and practices on weapons and ammunition management

Over recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the need for missions to strengthen their own policies and practices on weapons and ammunition management (WAM). This is necessary to mitigate the risk that weapons and ammunition owned by the peacekeeping contingent or seized and recovered by the mission are diverted. The importance of this has been highlighted by the significant number of incidents resulting in losses or diversion of arms and ammunitions from peace operations' own stockpiles in recent years.[101]

In 2019, a United Nations inter-agency initiative developed the first WAM policy and associated standard operating procedures (SOPs) for troop- and police-contributing countries in the context of peace operations.[102] Proper WAM practices are also critical for enabling missions to carry out several POC-related tasks that entail the confiscation, seizure or collection of weapons. These include the removal and disposal (including destruction) of weapons from POC sites or IDP camps as well as weapons collection or disarmament operations carried out in the context of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and community violence reduction programmes (see sections 2.7 and 2.8).

Developing the capacity of armed actors in the handling and storing of weapons and ammunition can also contribute to decreasing civilian casualties and the potential harm caused by poorly managed weapons and ammunition to essential civilian infrastructure during conflicts.[103] Under certain specific conditions and following a clear set of guidelines and procedures, missions may also consider engaging with non-State armed groups to support their WAM capacity in specific areas to reduce the immediate risks that weak and inadequate practices pose to the safety and security of civilians.[104] In SPM contexts such as Libya and Yemen, the proactive use of WAM measures (e.g. weapons cantonment or the withdrawal to a certain distance from the front lines of highly lethal weaponry that causes the greatest harm to civilians) have been explored as part of transitional confidence-building measures or as part of ceasefire agreements.[105] Along with other targeted

101 See, for instance, E. G. Berman, M. Racovita and M. Schroeder, "Making a Tough Job More Difficult: Loss of Arms and Ammunition in Peace Operations, Small Arms Survey, October 2017, https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/SAS-MPOME-Report-2.pdf ;. The Small Arms Survey Peace Operations Data Set (PODS), https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/database/peace-operations-data-set-pods, documents attacks on peacekeepers and other incidents resulting in loss of arms and ammunition in peace operation settings.

102 The SOPs were developed in line with applicable international standards and guidelines such as the Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium (MOSAIC), the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG) and relevant good practices.

103 United Nations, Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions, "Preventive Role of DDR/CVR", Thematic Paper for the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review, https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/pb_review_thematic_paper_orolsi_ddrs_-_preventative_role_of_ddr_and_cvr-final.pdf.

104 United Nations DDR Resource Centre, Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS) Framework, "Module 4.11: Transitional Weapons and Ammunition Management", June 2020, https://www.unddr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/IDDRS-4.11-Transitional-Weapons-and-Ammunition-Management.pdf.

105 United Nations, Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions, "Preventive Role of DDR/CVR", Thematic

transitional WAM interventions, these measures can contribute to limiting the collateral impact of weapons to civilians during ongoing hostilities. As such, WAM should be further explored as an option for better leveraging existing arms control tools for the protection of civilians in complex operational settings.

3.10 Security sector reform

Support to national SSR efforts has been central to the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations and SPMs since first introduced to the United Nations Mission to the DRC (MONUC) in 2004.[106] Currently, support to SSR is provided to the host government by the majority of peacekeeping missions with a POC mandate as well as by certain SPMs.[107] Among these, UNSMIL (in Libya), the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen and UNSOM (in Somalia) are undertaking SSR activities in support of peace mediation efforts.[108] Increasingly, missions' SSR mandates have also included provisions related to WAM and SALW control, recognizing the importance of integrating arms control elements into comprehensive and effective SSR programmes.[109]

The building of an accountable, professional and effective security sector that better protects civilians is a key concern of the United Nations in peace operation contexts.[110] In the DPO's POC operational concept, support to national SSR efforts is framed as a tier III protection activity. As the concept outlines, core POC tasks of mission SSR personnel include identifying threats to civilians derived from the weaknesses of the national security governance system and security institutions, as well as reducing the risks of civilian harm posed by national security forces themselves.[111] In fact, the majority of weapons used to facilitate the commission of violence against civilians in peacekeeping settings appear to be State-owned. They may not be adequately managed by national actors and end up in the hands of armed groups that use them to target civilians (see section 2.9), or may in some cases be misused by the State security forces themselves in contexts where they engage in violations against civilians.[112] As one of the most significant POC challenges

Paper for the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review, https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/pb_review_thematic_paper_orolsi_ddrs_-_preventative_role_of_ddr_and_cvr-final.pdf.

106 F. Chappuis and A. Gorur, "Reconciling Security Sector Reform and the Protection of Civilians in Peacekeeping Contexts", Civilians in Conflict Issue Brief no.3, DCAF and Stimson Center, January 2015, https://www.stimson.org/2015/reconciling-security-sector-reform-and-protection-civilians-peacekeeping-contexts-0/.

107 United Nations, Department of Peace Operations, "Security Sector Reform", https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/security-sector-reform.

108 F. Chappuis and A. Gorur, "Conflicting Means, Converging Goals: Civilian Protection and SSR", in A. Ebo and H. Hänggi (eds.), "The United Nations and Security Sector Reform: Policy and Practice, DCAF, 2020, https://www.stimson.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/11_Chappuis_civilian-protection.pdf.

109 See, for instance, Security Council, S/RES/2399, 2018, https://undocs.org/S/RES/2399(2018), operative para.3. On small arms control in the context of SSR more generally, see Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium (MOSAIC), "Module 02.20: Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Context of Security Sector Reform", September 2020, https://front.un-arm.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/MOSAIC-02.20EV1.0.pdf.

110 Security Council, S/RES/2553, 2020, https://undocs.org/S/RES/2553(2020).

111 United Nations, Department of Peace Operations, "Policy: The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping", 1 November 2019, https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/poc_policy_2019_.pdf.

112 In many contexts of internationalized civil wars, for instance – where many SPMs are deployed – weapons are often supplied by external actors.

faced by missions, addressing the threats posed by elements of the State security forces to civilians requires coordination between the efforts of mission personnel working on POC and arms control-related activities. This is particularly necessary to ensure that risks arising from the mismanagement or misuse of weapons by such actors is dealt with in a comprehensive and integrated manner. Effectively integrating arms control elements into missions' SSR priorities and support to host States' national SSR strategies – especially as it relates to proper procedures for the governance, accountability and oversight of weapons and ammunition – is therefore crucial for tackling these challenges and operationalizing the linkages between a mission's support to SSR and its POC efforts.

BOX 6

The Human Rights Due Diligence Policy: bridging POC and security sector reform

The Human Rights Due Diligence Policy on United Nations Support to Non-United Nations Security Forces (HRDDP), adopted in 2011, links POC and security sector reform (SSR) activities. It sets out principles and measures related to the support provided by entities to non-United Nations security forces, while maintaining human rights standards and protecting civilians.[113] To act in accordance with the HRDDP, United Nations peace operations are required to conduct a risk assessment and take appropriate mitigating measures before such support is provided. These measures can include background checks of individuals and units, strategic and policy advice on SSR, capacity building of host State security forces, joint planning of operations and after-action reviews.

When the provision of support to host State security forces involves arms control-related activities, it is important that the HRDDP is applied. Doing so will help prevent and mitigate the risks that weapons are used to commit abuses against the civilian population. These considerations must also be included in the risk assessment undertaken prior to the provision of such support.

113 General Assembly and Security Council, "Human Rights Due Diligence Policy on United Nations Support to Non-United Nations Security Forces!", A/67/775–S/2013/110, 5 March 2013, https://undocs.org/S/2013/110.

Photo credit: UN Photo/Ilya Medvedev

4 Challenges to integrating conventional arms control in POC

4. Challenges to integrating conventional arms control in POC

As set out above, there are many ways in which conventional arms control and related activities within United Nations peace operations are already contributing to implementing POC mandates, with multiple points of intersection. The research for this Brief has underscored how conventional arms control is often not considered a significant element of missions' POC strategies and operational plans, although it was acknowledged by those interviewed that this is an area that deserves greater attention. While there is indeed scope to further enhance the synergies between the two areas, there is a tendency for respective components and sections in missions to work in a siloed way, despite the push for integrated planning and mission-wide approaches to POC. This section outlines some of the challenges to consider for advancing this agenda and promoting a more effective use of arms control tools and related activities in support of POC.

4.1 Political sensitivities in engaging State authorities

Conventional arms control is a topic that host State authorities can be reluctant to address in their relations with United Nations peace operations. Some Member States might take issue with the very notion that weapons are a threat to civilians as, in the right hands, weapons are also used to protect civilians. While States may have signed up to international treaties and other instruments that commit them to regulate and control the use of specific weapons, they might consider it their sovereign responsibility to decide how to implement the required measures. As an inherently politically sensitive area, senior mission leadership may be reluctant to address arms control and related issues in their dialogue with national partners to preserve the consent of the host State.[114]

Political engagement on POC concerns presents similar challenges. The State has the primary responsibility for protecting its population and, as outlined in the DPO's POC Policy, the role of United Nations peace operations is without prejudice to this. However, while peacekeeping operations support host States in fulfilling this responsibility, they may also act independently to protect civilians when the host State is deemed unable or unwilling to do so, including when government forces themselves pose a threat to civilians.[115] In view of this arrangement, missions have a delicate relationship with host State authorities in relation to POC, and maintaining strategic consent can be challenging, especially when it is State security forces that are the threat to civilians.[116]

114 S. Yazgi, H. Giezendanner and H. Shiotani, Addressing Conventional Arms Risks and Impacts to Prevent Conflict and Build Peace: What More Should the United Nations Do?, UNIDIR, 2020, https://unidir.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/Community of Practitioners - Workshop report.pdf.

115 United Nations, Department of Peace Operations, "Policy: The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping", 1 November 2019, https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/poc_policy_2019_.pdf.

116 For an analysis of these challenges, see P.I. Labuda, "With or Against the State? Reconciling the Protection of Civilians and Host-State Support in UN Peacekeeping", International Peace Institute, May 2020, https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/2005_Reconciling-POC-and-Host-State-Support.pdf.

The extent of the political sensitivities in combining conventional arms control and POC within political dialogue with host authorities often results in these issues becoming sidelined. Overcoming these political challenges is therefore vital for devising targeted responses that address how the illicit proliferation and misuse of weapons cause harm to civilians.

4.2 Arms control as a technical and not a political issue

Arms control tends to be viewed as a technical issue dealt with by specialists, who are expected to engage with national authorities through the provision of capacity building, technical support and training as well as the introduction of laws, policies and systems that are implemented through long-term programmes and actions plans.[117] Conversely, the POC efforts of missions tend to focus on political engagement of senior mission leadership with national authorities and the operational response of relevant military, police and civilian components to address threats to civilians as they arise.

While activities with an arms control component such as DDR and CVR, SSR or mine action, might be technical in many respects, they also have strong political dimensions and often require the support of senior mission leadership and close political engagement with host authorities before they can be implemented.[118] As shown in sections 2.6–2.10, they can also be profoundly political undertakings and play a prominent role in support of mediation and peace processes, which are key to achieving long-term protection goals. Relegating them to a purely technical position – often for reasons of political convenience – may hinder such efforts as well as the identification of synergies with POC work. It may also lead missions to prioritize interventions focused solely on capacity building and training-related support, as opposed to those focused on strengthening national capacities for the governance, oversight and accountability of weapons and ammunition. This would result in missed opportunities for these activities to contribute to POC efforts.

4.3 Sequencing and prioritization of mandated tasks

Whereas POC is more closely associated with the conflict management and stabilization efforts of United Nations peace operations, arms control is typically viewed as a post-conflict activity that can promote recovery and support peacebuilding efforts. Hence, despite the recognized need to anchor POC within missions' political strategies and activities that support the establishment of a protective environment, POC efforts are sometimes viewed as short-term measures aimed at ensuring the security of civilians from physical violence. This contrasts with the perception of arms control-related

117 Ibid.

118 See, for example, S. Yazgi, H. Giezendanner and H. Shiotani, Addressing Conventional Arms Risks and Impacts to Prevent Conflict and Build Peace: What More Should the United Nations Do?, UNIDIR, 2020, https://unidir.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/Community of Practitioners - Workshop report.pdf; and A. Day et al., The Political Practice of Peacekeeing: How Strategies for Peace Operations are Developed and Implemented, United Nations University, 2020, https://collections.unu.edu/eserv/UNU:7791/FullReport-PoliticalPracticeof-Peacekeeping.pdf.

activities as a long-term agenda to promote institutional change.

As a result, arms control and POC do not tend to occupy the same implementation space of mission mandates. The different sequencing of these two mandated tasks means that there is often no significant day-to-day collaboration, despite the obvious common areas of interest and overlapping objectives.

4.4 Siloed approach and limited coordination among relevant mission personnel

Despite the push for integrated planning in mission settings, approaches to POC and arms control tend to be siloed. There is limited engagement of relevant personnel on a contiuous basis even though the synergies of working more closely could be exploited far more. These challenges are further compounded by poor coordination and uneven information-gathering and -sharing practices within and across missions. While there is normally some technical expertise on arms-related issues, including in a mission's mine action, DDR and CVR, and SSR components, they are not deployed uniformly across different United Nations peace operations. Moreover, there are significant differences in the levels of information gathered on arms-related risks and impacts, with no standardized coordination mechanism within a mission context.[119]

POC advisors who report to senior mission leadership are responsible for coordinating the different aspects of POC across the mission, including through dedicated working groups, but they have many competing priorities. Unless greater efforts are devoted to streamlining arms control-related activities within POC coordinating mechanisms and working groups, these issues are unlikely to be prioritized as part of POC efforts and will continue to be left to personal relationships rather than agreed-upon structures.

119 UNIDIR, "Conventional Arms Control and Conflict Prevention Survey: Summary of Preliminary Findings", 2021.

Photo credit: UN Photo/Albert Gonzalez Farran

5 Entry points for better integrating conventional arms control into POC

5. Entry points for better integrating conventional arms control into POC

As outlined above, there are challenges to integrating arms control more fully within the POC efforts of United Nations peace operations. However, many of these challenges stem from a mischaracterization of arms control efforts by missions and underplay the contribution that they make to POC, which may not be as directly visible as other interventions conducted by the military, police and other civilian components. Within missions' POC efforts, arms control is an unexplored area that could be brought further into the mainstream of what missions do to protect civilians. This section provides specific entry points that could be considered by relevant United Nations personnel to strengthen the contribution of conventional arms-control and related activities to the POC efforts of missions.

5.1 Protection risk assessments

The development of a mission-wide POC strategy requires an analysis of the protection threats and risks faced by the civilian population. United Nations peace operations have a range of tools for conducting a protection risk assessment, which is the result of combined efforts of several parts of the mission. Arms-related risks and impacts, however, are usually not well integrated into such assessments. The United Nations often treats weapons as a by-product of conflict as opposed to an enabler of violence towards civilians.[120] There is a focus on the capabilities, capacities and motivations of different armed actors and the specific threats that they might pose to civilians, but not necessarily on why and how certain weapons might exacerbate protection risks. It might be that particular weapons, such as IEDs, cause such indiscriminate harm to civilians that they feature in POC-related analyses, but otherwise the proliferation and misuse of weapons is often considered a background factor and not a front-and-centre cause of why civilians are being attacked.

Mission personnel working on arms-related issues – whether it be in a JMAC or as part of substantive units such as SSR, DDR and CVR, or mine action – often have solid intelligence and analysis of the threats posed to civilians by various armed actors and their use of different weapons. Nevertheless, the role of arms-related information in support of POC efforts, including as part of an early-warning system and response planning, remains underexplored.[121] This information is not only critical to building a better understanding of existing and evolving threats to the civilian population as part of threat assessments and risk analyses, but also to devising more effective and targeted responses to these threats. In addition to support from senior personnel in field missions and at headquarters, this requires integrated efforts to improve missions' capacities to systematically collect, analyse and use arms-related information in support of POC activities, as well as strengthening intra- and inter-mission systems and mechanisms for cooperation and information-sharing.

120 S. Yazgi, "Good Offices and Guns: Arms Control and Conflict Prevention", Commentary, UNIDIR, 2020, https://unidir.org/commentary/good-offices-and-guns.

121 S. Yazgi and E. Mumford, "The Arms-Related Risk Analysis Toolkit: Practical guidance for integrating conventional arms-related risks intoconflict analysis and prevention", UNIDIR, 2021. https://www.unidir.org/publication/arms-related-risk-analysis-toolkit

5.2 POC strategies and working groups

As noted above, all United Nations peacekeeping operations mandated to protect civilians are required to develop POC strategies that spell out the core responsibilities of different mission components in the implementation of POC mandates.[122] These strategies are where the mission collectively comes together to devise a common set of activities to address the POC threats in its area of operation. While the development of such strategies is not a requirement for SPMs, consideration of POC is incorporated in other mission planning documents. Arms control and related activities of United Nations peace operations are planned separately but are often reflected in mission POC strategies in recognition of the interlinked nature of the two areas. These strategies provide an opportunity to define common activities where conventional arms control can contribute to the POC efforts of the mission.

Given the cross-cutting nature of POC, which requires a whole-of-mission approach, coordination is critical. Most missions have established POC working groups that bring together all relevant components to oversee the implementation of their POC strategies and operational plans.[123] It is important that mission personnel working on arms-related issues are actively involved in these coordination mechanisms and contribute to both the development and implementation of POC strategies. For example, they can contribute to informing operational responses to protection threats as well as political engagement and dialogue activities on POC concerns, in addition to helping devise long-term interventions that seek to establish a protective environment and help to prevent threats against civilians.

5.3 Joint programming with United Nations Country Teams

Addressing arms control and POC concerns requires long-term interventions and programmes that tackle the structural causes of armed violence. Their lifespans are likely to extend beyond the mandate of a United Nations peace operation. There are many United Nations agencies, funds and programmes that are involved in such efforts, including UNDP and other specialized entities and humanitarian actors. As a United Nations peace operation plans its transition and eventual exit strategy, these long-term challenges relating to the root causes of armed conflict and violence are likely to come to the fore.[124] In response, missions are increasingly engaging in joint programming with members of the United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) by making their assessed budgets available

122 United Nations, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Framework for Drafting Comprehensive Protection of Civilians (POC): Strategies in UN Peacekeeping Operations, 2011, https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/523998464.pdf; and United Nations, Department of Peace Operations, The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping: Handbook, 2020, https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/dpo_poc_handbook_final_as_printed.pdf.

123 A. Debarre and N. Di Razza, "Pursuing Coordination and Integration for the Protection of Civilians", Issue Brief, International Peace Institute, February 2019, https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/1902_Pursuing-Coordination.pdf.

124 D. Lilly, "Considering the Protection of Civilians during UN Peacekeeping Transitions", International Peace Institute, January 2021, https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/2101_POC-and-Transitions.pdf.

to other United Nations entities. This provides significant opportunities for formulating and supporting interventions that make better use of arms control activities and tools to address POC concerns. Ensuring the effective integration of conventional arms control into POC work can be critical for better leveraging civilian components to influence protection outcomes, while also bulding national ownership of these issues.

Arms control and POC also have humanitarian and development dimensions and are fertile ground for applying the so-called "triple nexus" approach. This promotes the need for greater collaboration among humanitarian, development and peace actors through the development of of 'collective outcomes' to common challenges within the context of protracted crises.[125]

5.4 Pre- and post-deployment training of peace operation personnel

In recent years, in order to better equip United Nations peace operations to protect civilians, significant investments have been made in the development of pre- and post-deployment POC-related training of peacekeeping and other mission personnel. Arms control-related issues should be integrated more fully into these trainings so that relevant mission personnel are not only less reluctant to address them as part of their POC interventions but are also better equipped to do so once deployed.

This starts with senior mission leadership, so that they are empowered to prioritize conventional arms control efforts and ensure that they are leveraged in the implementation of POC mandates, especially in relation to political dialogue and engagement activities.[126] In addition, training should cascade down through mission personnel, with calibrated learning objectives for different components and sections. Specialized guidance and training in the area of weapons and ammunition management, for instance, is key to supporting peacekeepers when operating in such circumstances.[127] Human rights personnel should also be trained on how to properly collect and analyse arms-related information as part of casualty recording, as well as how to identify the use of different weapons during human rights investigations.[128]

125 This point follows the recommendations of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) and is in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

126 J.A. Boutellis, "The changing role of conventional arms control in preventing and managing violent conflicts", UNIDIR, 2018, https://www.unidir.org/sites/default/files/publication/pdfs/-en-725.pdf.

127 Security Council, "Small Arms and Light Weapons", Report of the Secretary-General, S/2019/1011, 30 December 2019, https://undocs.org/S/2019/1011.

128 Tech 4 Tracing is an organization that has developed training and tools for peacekeepers and other personnel to conduct weapons analysis when they are not experts themselves. See https://tech4tracing.org/.

Photo credit: UN Photo/Harandane Dicko

6 CONCLUSION

Conclusion

Given the humanitarian goal of conventional arms control to reduce the harm caused by these weapons to civilians, such activities should better feature within the POC strategies and operational plans of United Nations peace operations. This Brief has shed light on a neglected and underappreciated part of the POC efforts of United Nations peace operations – the potential contribution of conventional arms control and related activities. It has underlined the close conceptual interlinkages of these two mandated tasks and the many points of convergence between them at strategic, operational and tactical levels. Conventional arms control and related activities are arguably being underutilised as a tool in the panoply of POC interventions. It is frequently assumed that such activities are concerned with long-term, technically focused interventions to be sequenced or implemented once a situation of armed conflict or violence has subsided. However, this Brief has revealed that they can equally be political in nature and of operational value in response to the threats faced by civilians in United Nations peace operation settings, contributing to both short- and long-term POC objectives. While further exploration and research is required, the Brief has highlighted specific areas that merit closer attention by missions. In particular, the following non-exhaustive measures could be considered by United Nations peace operations to better leverage conventional arms control and related activities in support of POC efforts:

1. Ensure that personnel with arms control expertise are involved in devising **political strategies** of missions to support peace processes as well as advocacy efforts to address the civilian harm caused by specific categories of weapons.

2. Ensure that POC tasks of **military and police personnel** effectively integrate arms control measures and that reference to these are included in their operational plans.

3. Develop guidance on arms-related issues as part of **civilian casualty recording and human rights monitoring** and ensure that weapons experts are deployed within missions to provide the necessary technical support in this area.

4. Ensure that the interlinkages between arms-related risks and POC are addressed in **ceasefire monitoring and verification** tasks.

5. Provide specific guidance on how United Nations peace operations can support panels and groups of experts on **arms embargos as part of sanctions regimes** and ensure that POC concerns are addressed.

6. Ensure that **mine action** activities are fully included in missions' POC strategies and operational plans and that these activities are prioritized in areas where explosive hazards pose the greatest threat to civilians.

7. Ensure that **DDR** personnel are involved in efforts to address POC threats posed by the use of specific of weapons by non-State armed groups, including through dialogue and engagement activities.

8. Strengthen the use of **CVR** programmes as a measure to address POC threats resulting from intercommunal violence and the availability of weapons and ammunition within communities.

9. Leverage mission support to national **WAM** efforts as a tool to address the risks posed by poorly managed weapons and ammunition to the civilian population and infrastructure.

10. Ensure that **SSR** activities of missions include relevant arms control elements and support efforts to enhance respect of international humanitarian and human rights law by the host State security forces, including through the effective implementation of the United Nations **HRDDP**.

More broadly, this Brief has also identified entry points for further actions that relevant United Nations personnel could undertake to strengthen the contribution of conventional arms control to the POC efforts of missions. These include:

11. Ensure greater integration of information on arms-related risks and impacts within **protection risk assessments**, with particular emphasis placed on the types of weapons, their risks and the potential threats posed to civilians.

12. Promote greater cooperation between personnel working on POC and arms-related issues within missions and ensure that arms control activities are appropriately reflected in **POC strategies and operational plans**, including by mainstreaming such activities within **POC working groups** and other POC coordinating mechanisms.

13. Enhance **joint programming** between missions and United Nations Country Teams to devise collective responses that address the risks posed by weapons to civilians and the root causes of armed conflict and violence.

14. Ensure greater integration of arms control-related issues into POC policies, guidance and training materials, including as part of **pre-and post-deployment training** of peacekeepers and other relevant United Nations peace operation personnel.

Enhancing the Protection of Civilians through Conventional Arms Control

Challenges and Opportunities for United Nations Peace Operations

Conventional arms control and disarmament efforts have historically been framed as a humanitarian cause to limit human suffering. However, activities with an arms control component have only featured to a limited extent within the protection of civilians (POC) mandates of United Nations peace operations. Both issues feature on the agenda of the United Nations Security Council which mandates missions, but the linkages between the two have not been well explored at policy, strategic and operational levels. This paper provides an analysis of the actual, and potential, contribution of conventional arms control and related activities to POC within the context of United Nations peace operations – both peacekeeping operations and special political missions (SPM). There has been limited research conducted on this topic and it has been addressed in only a cursory manner in relevant policies, guidelines, and strategies. The Brief therefore attempts to demonstrate the existing linkages between these two mandated tasks, as well as to pinpoint some of the barriers and challenges to why conventional arms control has not featured more fully within the POC efforts of missions. It then identifies the relevant entry points based on concrete examples of how arms control-related activities can be better leveraged to ensure a more effective protection of civilians.

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