



EPON 

Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network

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Mandate Renewal

**Risks and Opportunities in an
Uncertain Peace Process**

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UNMISS 2022 Mandate Renewal: Risks and Opportunities in an Uncertain Peace Process

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Executive Summary

Ahead of the March 2022 renewal of the mandate for the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), the Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON) conducted an assessment focused on two core mandate areas: protection of civilians (PoC) and support for the peace process. Based on the assessment to follow, the report lays out several strategic considerations for the new UNMISS mandate:

1. **Contingency planning and preparedness:** The Mission has made significant progress in building contingency plans and preparedness for a future rise in violence. Given the uncertainty around the peace process, continuing to augment the Mission's early warning and action capacities will be important.
2. **The benefits and limitations of mobility:** The Mission has developed a robust capacity to deploy quick reaction forces and temporary operating bases (TOBs) across much of South Sudan, which has enabled it to play an important role in mitigating violence in some situations. Useful, small, nimble constellations of forces are very unlikely to adequately address the kinds of violence sporadically committed by local militia groups or large-scale mobilisation of forces, as witnessed in 2013 and 2016. Nevertheless, maintaining the current troop levels may be important in allowing the Mission to position itself for a potential rise in tensions over 2022-23.
3. **A risk-based approach to the city and surrounding areas of Malakal:** The redesignation process has gone well so far, with no major incidents of violence related to the handover of the sites. The eventual redesignation of the PoC site at Malakal may prove the most difficult, given the elevated tension in the broader Malakal area. The Mission's current decision not to proceed with redesignation is helpful in this regard,

and future discussions should be guided by a broad-based understanding of the risks in Upper Nile State.

4. **Subnational conflict resolution:** Some of UNMISS' most effective engagements have been in addressing subnational conflict. The 2016 relapse into civil war demonstrated that localised forms of violence can spread quickly, contributing to much larger-scale fighting. Identifying ways to rapidly bolster the civilian presence in hotspot areas – potentially developing and resourcing temporary presences that allow for greater civilian accommodation – could have a beneficial impact.
5. **A resource and personnel increase around elections:** UNMISS is already positioned to support the national elections and could use the process to amplify its broader role in the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS). This will likely require an increase in resources and personnel in the 2022-23 period. In the lead up to the new mandate in 2022, the Security Council should be guided by the continuing assessment of the Mission leadership on the levels and kind of support that might be needed, including at national and subnational levels.
6. **A constitutional opening:** The R-ARCSS envisages a new constitution in place prior to elections. A new constitution could be a major step forward, opening the door to much-needed power-sharing arrangements, a framework to address national-level reconciliation, and a centre-periphery relationship that allows for a much more equitable distribution of wealth. This could be a real opportunity for the UN to play a constructive role (especially given the deep knowledge of constitutional processes of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), Nicholas Haysom).
7. **Responsibility for inclusiveness:** The success or failure of the constitutional and electoral processes will hinge largely on the extent to which the South Sudanese population views them as legitimate. Here, UNMISS' work at the subnational level can play a vital role in increasing support for the peace process, including for governors' forums and other local processes to facilitate ground-up engagement with the R-ARCSS. It would be useful for the Council to highlight this work and accompany it with a clear message to the R-ARCSS parties that they bear responsibility for implementing an inclusive approach to the constitution and elections.
8. **A return to state-building?** While no one is seriously considering a complete return to a state-building mandate as in 2011, there may be a push by some Member States to include more capacity-building and support to state institutions in the upcoming mandate. The EPON report recommends caution in such deliberations: despite progress on the peace agreement, the South Sudanese Government is viewed with strong suspicion by many communities, especially those that were targeted during the war. Any capacity-building mandate should be careful to avoid being seen as “putting a finger on the scales” of a delicate inter-ethnic balance.

9. **Order from regional chaos:** It is very unlikely that the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) will play a robust or well-organised role in driving the peace process. Indeed, if current trends continue, the organisation may have even less capacity or focus on the R-ARCSS, further orphaning South Sudan at a time when political and operational progress is sorely needed. The African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council and the UN Security Council may need to revisit the roles and responsibilities allocated to the key players in this context, possibly identifying new areas for more direct support by the AU and UN. The constitutional and electoral processes offer an opening for such a discussion, and for a re-evaluation of how the broader international community may need to step into the gaps that exist among the regional players.
10. **Climate security:** South Sudan is deeply affected by climate change, from the desertification that has driven herding communities further south over recent decades to increasingly erratic rainfall patterns that have led to the flooding of major rivers across the country. The 2021 UNMISS mandate recognises the role of climate change in driving risks. Far more resources and attention will be needed, if the UN is to play a meaningful role in meeting the climate security challenges.
11. **Humanitarian risks:** The risks to humanitarian actors in South Sudan are worth mentioning as an area of concern for the Security Council. There are reports of increased intimidation and even violence against humanitarian actors, risks which could increase in the lead up to elections. Given UNMISS' mandate to facilitate humanitarian delivery, calls for the Mission to protect humanitarian actors may well grow.
12. **Women and youth:** Continuing threats to women and children will require UNMISS to maintain and expand its protection work in these areas. Preliminary research also indicates a persistent threat of sexual violence against women, girls and boys, while young men are frequent targets of recruitment into violent groups. Greater consideration could be given to these dynamics in the upcoming Council deliberations, especially given UNMISS' role in promoting more inclusive approaches to the peace process.
13. **Space for innovation and flexibility:** One of the key lessons from the 2018 EPON report and today is that UNMISS is capable of significant innovation and flexibility within the mandates given to it thus far. A recurrent message from Mission leadership and experts consulted was not to impede UNMISS with overly prescriptive mandate language. Particularly at a potentially volatile period with uncertainty over the election process, allowing the Mission space to move resources where they are most needed will be very important.

Introduction

In March 2022, the UN Security Council will renew the mandate of UNMISS, marking the tenth renewal of the Mission’s mandate since it began in 2011. This year’s mandate deliberations will take place in a context of significant change in South Sudan. The 2018 Revitalized Peace Agreement resulted in a settlement on the formation of a transitional national government of unity that now must oversee a fragile set of processes to help the country out of cycles of violence, continuing humanitarian crises, and extremely unstable relations with South Sudan’s neighbours. Currently, however, key aspects of the peace agreement remain well behind schedule, including with regard to security arrangements, the constitutional process, and transitional justice (though there has been some recent progress on the latter two). Meanwhile, a significant economic downturn, competition among the various military factions, and subnational sources of tension have combined to place additional pressure on South Sudan, contributing to a real risk of escalation into widespread violence in the coming mandate period. With national elections anticipated (though not yet agreed upon) for 2023 and a faltering regional arrangement to advance the peace process, these dynamics will raise enormous challenges during the 18-month mandate period. At the same time, successful elections could pave the way for a period of sustained improvement in South Sudan, opening the door to significant progress on the broader peace process.

In this context, this report by EPON is focused on the March 2022 mandate renewal process for UNMISS. While broadly following the EPON approach of assessing the impact of the Mission, it is guided by the overarching question: “How can UNMISS’ mandate best evolve to meet the current risks and challenges facing South Sudan?” Here, the report focuses on two inter-related aspects of UNMISS’ mandate: (1) the Protection of Civilians (POC), in particular the gradual shift of resources from POC sites to more mobile activities and its role in subnational conflict

resolution; and (2) UNMISS' support for the peace process, including how the Mission works with regional partners to advance key provisions of the agreement. By examining the impact of the Mission and helping to identify good practice in both areas, this EPON report hopes to provide evidence and analysis to inform the March 2022 mandate renewal process by the Security Council.

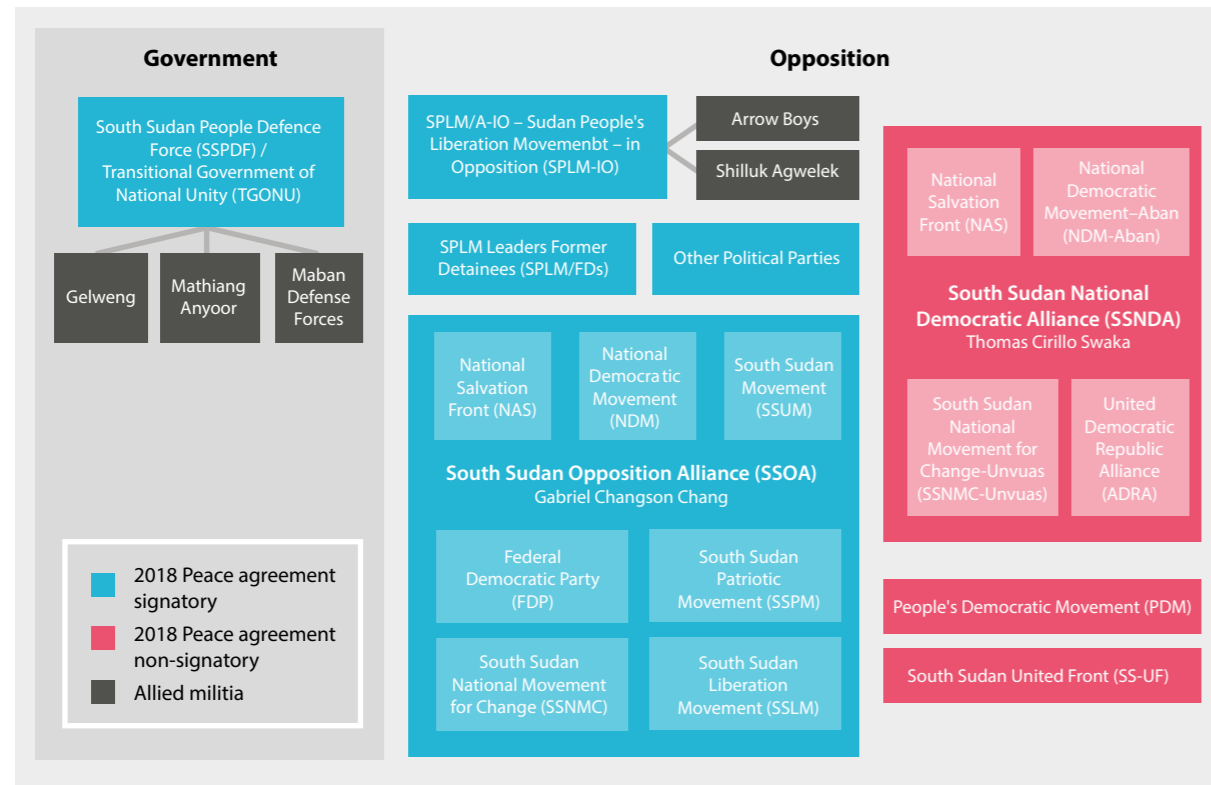
This report builds on the findings of the 2018 EPON study on South Sudan, which involved in-depth field research and hundreds of interviews with South Sudanese interlocutors.¹ Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, similar field research was not possible for this report, though the EPON team was able to conduct numerous field interviews remotely and consulted with UN Headquarters and other partners.

The report is organised into the following sections: (1) a brief overview of UNMISS' mandate and role since 2011, identifying the main findings of the 2018 EPON report and providing context for the upcoming mandate renewal; (2) an assessment of UNMISS' PoC impact since the 2018 EPON report, focusing on the transition from PoC sites to mobile forms of protection and its work on subnational conflict resolution; (3) an assessment of UNMISS' support for the peace process since 2018, in particular how the UN has partnered with regional actors to advance core provisions; and (4) conclusions and recommendations for the 2022-23 UNMISS mandate.

1. Context and Main Findings of the 2018 EPON Report

UNMISS was first deployed in July 2011, following a national referendum that saw South Sudan secede from Sudan. The Mission's initial mandate was overwhelmingly focused on state-building, increasing the capacities of the nascent South Sudanese State, helping prevent conflict, protecting civilians, and facilitating a transition out of decades of conflict. However, after only two years, South Sudan again descended into violent conflict following a political rupture between President Salva Kiir and then Vice-President Riek Machar. A brutal civil war quickly engulfed the country, leading to tens of thousands of people being killed, millions displaced, and roughly half the population in urgent need of humanitarian assistance.

¹ EPON, "Assessing the Effectiveness of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)", 2018, <<https://effectivepeaceops.net/publication/unmiss>>.

Figure 1: Conflict parties in the South Sudan Government and Opposition²

In early 2014, amid the ongoing civil war and massive risks to the civilian population, the Security Council radically changed UNMISS' mandate. Removing its state-building mandate, the Council instead recalibrated the Mission to focus on PoC, monitoring human rights violations, facilitating humanitarian delivery, and supporting new efforts to secure a peace agreement among the warring parties. The 2018 EPON report focused on UNMISS' impact across these four mandate areas, covering the period from 2014–2018.

1.1. Protection of civilians (PoC)

The 2018 EPON report found the most direct evidence of impact in PoC. Hosting more than 200 000 civilians at its PoC sites during several years of intense conflict, the Mission helped reduce the risk of harm to those under its direct protection. The report found that these sites likely helped keep deeply polarised communities apart during an especially volatile time in South Sudan, possibly preventing a further risk of escalation between 2013 and 2018. The creation of TOBs in a few locations also appeared to reduce the risk to civilians, while some forms of local conflict resolution were identified as quite effective.

The use of static PoC sites came at a price, however. Consuming a significant portion of the Mission's resources in some places, the PoC sites provided excellent protection for those within its perimeter but, according to the Mission, left scarce resources for more dynamic forms of protection. In Jonglei State, for example, the overwhelming majority of UNMISS military resources were used to protect the PoC site at Bor, while dozens of other communities in the state were facing acute protection risks. At the time of the 2018 EPON report, one of the key questions was whether UNMISS could begin to phase out the PoC sites, helping civilians either return to their homes or to areas where they might feel safe, while freeing up patrolling capacities to cover a greater area of South Sudan. The extent to which this transition in approach to PoC impacted the Mission's effectiveness is a crucial question considered in the current EPON report.

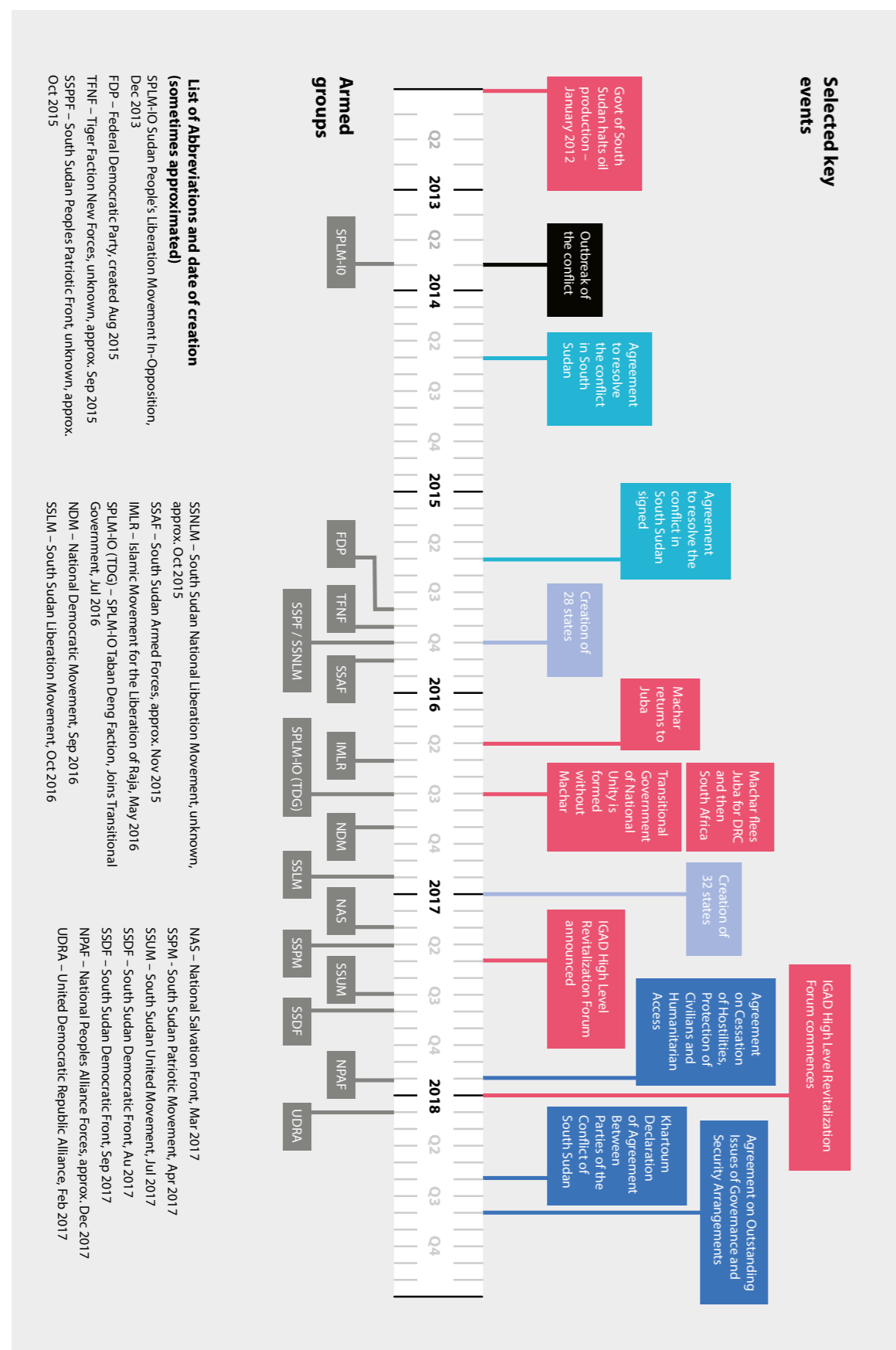
1.2. The peace process

In 2015, Salva Kiir and Riek Machar were pressured into signing a peace agreement that neither side appeared ready to implement. The Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS) was short-lived, as fighting broke out again almost immediately. After the presidential decree increasing the number of states from 10 to 28, Machar's forces and elements of the national army loyal to President Kiir engaged in conflict, and were later joined by a range of other armed groups that emerged from disenfranchised communities. Nevertheless, by 2018, the R-ARCSS was signed, forming the basis of the peace process today.

The 2018 EPON report found that UNMISS had played a small but important role in helping the parties reach the 2018 agreement. In particular, the Mission had strongly advocated for a more inclusive approach to the 2018 peace deal, working to rectify a major shortcoming of the 2015 agreement which had been signed exclusively by two parties. Much of the Mission's local work – from convening commanders to brokering agreements after a cycle of cattle raiding – was seen as supporting the peace process from below, building the kind of consensus in the R-ARCSS that had been missing in previous years. But at the highest level of the peace process, the 2018 EPON report noted that the UN had been somewhat marginalised in the peace process itself (though providing support to the central actors). The extent to which UNMISS may be able to shape the continuing peace process is a key question in this report.

² Adapted from The Conversation, "Why the Latest Peace Deal in South Sudan Won't Hold", 13 March 2019, <<https://theconversation.com/why-the-latest-peace-deal-in-south-sudan-wont-hold-113125>>. Note that this graph does not depict the full range of key actors. The graph should be considered illustrative only.

Figure 2: Timeline of political events in South Sudan, 2012-2018³



3 Ibid.

2. Protection of Civilians

While the security situation in South Sudan has improved significantly since the signing of the R-ARCSS, civilians remain at risk of subnational forms of violence. In the first three-quarters of 2021 alone, UNMISS reported 540 incidents of violence and/or human rights violations, with nearly 1 400 civilian casualties (among which 106 were women and 79 were children).⁴ More than half of the incidents involved so-called self-based militias, 45 were attributed to the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF), and 30 to the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-in-Opposition (SPLM/A-IO), forces loyal to Machar. Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) remains a significant concern, with nearly 200 cases documented in 2020 alone.⁵ Indeed, the spike in subnational violence that began in 2020 is linked to some of the efforts by major political actors to generate leverage in the context of the peace process.⁶ Experts consulted for this report suggested that these risks will increase in the coming 18 months, as preparations for national elections and other key moments in the peace process were likely to increase tensions across the country.

4 UN Security Council, Reports of the Secretary-General, S/2021/172, <https://unmiss.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/s_2021_172_e.pdf>; S/2021/566, <https://unmiss.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/sg_report_on_south_sudan_14_june_2021.pdf>; S/2021/784, <https://unmiss.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/s-2021-784_sg_report_on_south_sudan.pdf>.

5 UN, "Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Report of the United Nations Secretary-General", S/2021/312, 30 March 2021, <<https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/report/2020-report-of-the-secretary-general-on-crsv-english-2>>.

6 Interview, November 2021.

2.1. Transition from static to more mobile protection

In this context, the most significant shift in UNMISS' PoC approach since 2018 has been the closure of nearly all PoC sites under its control. In September 2020, UNMISS announced its intention to redesignate its PoC sites as locations for internally displaced persons (IDPs), transferring legal and de facto control of the sites to the South Sudan Government. As of September 2021, four of the five PoC sites (Bentiu, Bor, Juba, and Wau) have been redesignated. The PoC site in Malakal, still hosting roughly 34 000 civilians, remains under UNMISS' control, in large part due to the delicate security situation in Malakal and the continuing tensions among the resident Nuer, Dinka, and Shilluk populations.⁷

Several rationales have been advanced for redesignating the PoC sites.⁸ First, many within UNMISS have argued for years that the imminent threat to civilians that caused 200 000 people to seek shelter at the Mission sites in the 2013–2016 period had abated, and that continuing to provide protection in the form of a physical barrier was not warranted. Given the significant share of UNMISS military resources that were being used to provide static protection to less than one-tenth of the vulnerable population in South Sudan, the decision to redesignate was also based on a plan to free up assets for more mobile forms of protection: patrolling, TOBs, and rapid reaction capacities in the case of early warning threats.

As laid out in the 2018 EPON report, the redesignation plan also posed dilemmas for the Mission, in particular around the issue of voluntary returns, while it was not clear at the time whether more mobile forms of protection would necessarily be more effective. Indeed, members of the humanitarian community have at times argued that the redesignation process has not taken into account the efficiencies of serving a population at the PoC sites, and that the broader protection risks to these communities remain quite severe. In 2019, the well-respected civilian protection group at the Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC) suggested that instead of a “shift” to more mobile forms of protection (which would indicate a focus on redesignation of the PoC sites), UNMISS should focus more on the barriers to becoming more mobile.⁹ As described below, the increases in mobile forms of protection are at least a partial response to this kind of suggestion.

There is some emerging evidence that the shift to more mobile forms of protection has had some positive impact, particularly in terms of the Mission's ability to establish TOBs. Indeed, there has been no serious violent incident in the redesignation process, while several new

initiatives have proven quite effective. For example, in February 2021, a series of violent incidents in Koch County, Unity State, led to the displacement of 1 300 civilians and dozens of killings.¹⁰ Following the quick establishment of a temporary operating base in Koch County, UNMISS was able to conduct more frequent, regular patrols, work with local leaders to resolve tensions, and support a justice process, all of which appear to have contributed to a reduction in violence.¹¹ Similarly, UNMISS established 11 TOBs following a serious spike in violence in Jonglei state in 2020 in which hundreds of killings and abductions had taken place.¹² Using a “hub and spoke” approach to maximise coverage of the enormous terrain in Jonglei, UNMISS was able to provide a temporary physical presence in some of the most volatile areas, after which rates of violence reportedly dropped.¹³

It is worth noting here that the transition to more mobile forms of protection is not necessarily the direct result of redesignating the PoC sites. “It's not a zero-sum game,” one expert pointed out, “UNMISS didn't take soldiers off gate duty and deploy them on TOB missions.” In fact, some experts suggested that the closure of four PoC sites had a minimal (though positive) impact on the ability of UNMISS to adopt more mobile forms of protection. “UNMISS could manage the PoC sites and also do mobile patrolling,” another expert noted, arguing that UNMISS has always had the capacity to conduct mobile patrolling across more parts of the country. The extent to which redesignating the PoC sites may have freed up more assets for mobile forms of protection remains an open question.

Moreover, the use of TOBs is not a panacea, and there is no proven causal relationship between TOBs and a reduction in violence. For example, fighting in Tambura County, Western Equatoria, in June 2021 left 80 000 people displaced and hundreds dead. UNMISS' deployment of a TOB facilitated the delivery of humanitarian assistance and potentially reduced the risks to the remaining civilians, but as of December 2021, very few of the displaced residents have returned to the town. Experts interviewed about this situation suggested that the TOB did not provide a sufficient deterrent to future violence, meaning that the civilians of the area remained reluctant to return when the TOB might leave at any time.¹⁴ EPON was unable to verify these claims, but notes that the Tambura operation remains quite fluid and would benefit from continued

10 OCHA, “South Sudan Humanitarian Snapshot”, February 2021, <<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/info-graphic/south-sudan-humanitarian-snapshot-february-2021>>; Radio Tamazuj, “7 Killed in Loch County, Unity States”, February 2021, <<https://radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/7-killed-in-koch-county-unity-state>>.

11 South Sudan NGO Forum, “Area-based programme in Koch county”, July 2021, <<https://comms.southsudanngoforum.org/uploads/shorturl/r9eGwJwPBZ2AFGoshu5VqQWmq15.pdf>>.

12 It is worth noting that UNMISS established these TOBs before the full closure of the four PoC sites, indicating that at least some of the shift towards mobility was possible while the PoC sites were open.

13 OHCHR, “Armed Violence Involving Community-Based Militias in Greater Jonglei, January – August 2020”, March 2021, <<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/SS/Jonglei-report.pdf>>. Several experts pointed out that UNMISS' response here came well after the height of the fighting, perhaps demonstrating a weakness in the link between early warning and action.

14 For more on Tambura, see OCHA, “South Sudan: Tambura Conflict”, Flash Update No. 1, 14 September 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ocha_tambura_conflict_flash_update_1.pdf>; UNMISS, “UNMISS Concerned About Suffering of Women and Children in Tambura, Appeals to Leaders to Intervene”, 10 September 2021, <<https://unmiss.unmissions.org/unmiss-concerned-about-suffering-women-and-children-tambura-appeals-leaders-intervene>>; Relief Web, “UNMISS, Partners Continue to Provide

7 CCM Cluster, “South Sudan: Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP): Key Figures”, 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2021_cccm_cluster_hrp_overview.pdf>.

8 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General, S/2019/722, <https://unmiss.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/secretary-general_report_on_unmis_s_2019_722_e.pdf>.

9 CIVIC, “Moving Toward Mobility: Providing Protection to Civilians Through Static Presence and Mobile Peacekeeping in South Sudan”, 2019, <<https://civiliansinconflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/MovingTowardMobility.pdf>>.

attention to identify whether the temporary presence might contribute to improvements in the medium term. “Think of the TOBs as a long, long-range patrol,” one senior UNMISS official noted, “We go there, we try to provide a deterrent presence for a while and help calm things down, but it’s not the same as establishing a real base there.” Other experts have highlighted that the TOBs can be hamstrung by longstanding problems in peacekeeping including: (1) caveats by troop-contributing countries that limit the ability to respond quickly and effectively; (2) limited air and ground assets to respond to difficult to reach areas; and (3) restrictions by the host government on accessing some affected areas.

The views within UNMISS and of some external experts were generally positive about the shift to more mobile forms of protection, which many saw as a direct result of phasing out the PoC sites. However, other experts noted that the core activities of mobile protection – TOBs, areas of responsibility (AOBs), and quick reaction forces – were already used by the Mission before the PoC sites were redesignated. However, the establishment of more TOBs in 2021 appears to have generated more flexible responses to early warning risks, and also more nimble deployment of assets.

Importantly, TOBs can enable the UN to bring South Sudanese and international diplomats into an area, helping to achieve reconciliation deals and decrease tension. For example, the creation of a TOBs in Tonj and Tambura have allowed UNMISS to facilitate the travel of South Sudanese political actors to the area, helping to broker agreements that have (at least temporarily) helped reduce the levels of violence. “TOBs let us get our civilian assets to an area,” one UN staff noted, “which increases our awareness, early warning, and response.” At any given time, having a dozen TOBs deployed to hotspot areas around the country was described by many interviewees as a significant improvement over the more static forms of protection afforded by the PoC sites. However, it should be noted that the shift away from PoC sites has not completely freed up those assets: roughly half of the military resources used to secure the PoC sites have stayed in place to provide ongoing physical protection in the areas where the UNMISS team sites remain.

Subnational conflict resolution – The importance of civic space

One of UNMISS’ most important innovations in recent years has been to reject the notion of “local” conflict (which tends to see violence in isolation) and to reframe it as “subnational” conflict. This recognises the deeply interconnected nature of conflicts in South Sudan, where even apparently highly localised disputes over cattle, land, and resources are intimately bound up with the broader ecosystem of social, economic and political interactions. Addressing subnational tensions is thus understood by UNMISS as crucial to advancing PoC priorities and in supporting the peace process as a whole.

Protection and Support to Displaced People in Tambura”, 28 July 2021, <<https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/unmiss-partners-continue-provide-protection-and-support-displaced-people-tambura>>.

A key element of UNMISS’ engagement in this regard is helping to open civic space for broad-based participation in peacebuilding, and securing a safe environment for civil society and political parties to address concerns with community and state government leaders. This work has included convening dialogues among key actors in conflict-prone settings, helping to bring women and youth leaders into conflict resolution processes, and transporting political leaders to remote areas to help reduce risks.

The national elections tentatively planned for 2023 will place an enormous strain on civic space in South Sudan, and there are already concerns among civil society groups that they may face an increasingly dangerous work environment. This will place a premium on UNMISS’ capacities to: (1) identify the shrinking of political space; (2) engage early and often to bring key actors together; and (3) help connect the national powerbrokers in a constructive manner to subnational settings. UNMISS has a clear role in promoting an inclusive approach to the R-ARCSS, and this will largely be expressed in how it is able to deal with subnational issues.

2.2. A mission-wide PoC strategy

In 2020, UNMISS adopted a new mission-wide PoC strategy, reflecting the need to involve all Mission components in its protection work.¹⁵ The strategy helpfully contains significant detail in terms of objectives, activities, and indicators, along with a PoC “coordination architecture” that allocates responsibilities across the Mission. In implementing this strategy, the Mission has taken several key steps that constitute good practice. Possible points to highlight and reinforce in the new mandate are:

1. **A geographical approach:** Across peacekeeping, there is a tendency to differentiate between “political” violence carried out by the protagonists in the conflict and “local” violence, which generally arises out of disputes over cattle, land or other similar issues. However, recognising the deeply interconnected nature of conflicts in South Sudan, the Mission has replaced the term “local” and introduced “subnational” conflict as a descriptor for violence occurring between communities. This helped to shift the Mission away from treating conflicts over cattle or land as “something for civil affairs to take care of,” and pushed UNMISS to think more of a consolidated effort across the Mission, the UN Country Team (UNCT) and others.
2. **PoC advisors:** The Mission now has dedicated protection advisors within its civilian, military, and police components, including Senior PoC Advisors, Women Protection Advisors, Child Protection Advisors, and dedicated SGBV experts as well. Not all of these are deployed in all field positions, and not all exist within the Force and Police components but have bolstered many field offices and HQ.
3. **Field Integrated Operations Centers (FIOCs)** are structures in the main field offices that consolidate information and feed it directly to Headquarters for review and action. FIOCs also play a key role in directing operational responses, potentially speeding up reaction time. However, some experts in South Sudan suggested that these structures

¹⁵ Online interviews, September 2021.

could be strengthened by a larger network of Community Liaison Assistants, which other peacekeeping missions have used effectively to generate early warning information.¹⁶

4. **Information-sharing:** Starting in 2021, the Mission instituted regular protection-related briefings, which include members of the UNCT and all relevant protection staff in UNMISS. This has helped address what is seen by some in the UN as insufficient information-sharing regarding protection risks. Several interviewees continued to express frustration at what they see as “siloes” or overly sanitised information flows.
5. **Contingency planning:** Learning from past periods when risks escalated rapidly, UNMISS continues to carry out scenario-based table-top exercises to prepare for new protection threats in different settings. Some of these scenarios include the possibility of a return to large-scale violence and massive displacement, including civilians moving back to the former PoC sites. This emphasis on contingency planning builds on useful language that has been incorporated into recent Security Council mandates and is seen as crucial for the Mission to be prepared for new protection threats. However, according to several experts consulted for this report, the Mission remains unprepared for the kind of large-scale violence that overwhelmed several sites in 2016, meaning that greater resources may be needed in the forthcoming period of the mandate.

These advances in UNMISS protection work complement and reinforce the shift to more mobile forms of protection. While it is difficult to ascertain the impact of the mission-wide approach, expert opinion and the evidence provided above seems to indicate that the Mission is better positioned to allocate its resources in response to evolving risks.

2.3. Lack of transformation in the security services: A “gaping hole” in PoC

While these advances in UNMISS PoC work have helped strengthen its internal information flows and responses to violent conflict, there is what one UN expert called a “gaping hole” in the UN protection work in South Sudan: without a major transformation, the South Sudanese security services (military and police) will continue to pose one of the principal threats to civilians. As the 2020 Independent Strategic Review of UNMISS noted, the absence of security sector reform (SSR) and large-scale demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) processes have meant that professionalisation of the military has been “largely unsuccessful,” leaving many communities at serious risk of predatory and dangerous state security forces.¹⁷ Given that the South Sudanese State has the primary duty to protect civilians, this lack of progress means the

¹⁶ For a good review of this issue, see CIVIC, 2019.

¹⁷ UN Security Council, “Letter Dated 15 December 2020 from the Secretary-General Addressed to the President of the Security Council”, S/2020/1224, <<https://undocs.org/en/S/2020/1224>>.

UN faces enormous protection challenges. Poor rule-of-law institutions also mean that violent actors can perpetrate attacks with few concerns about accountability, often leading to cycles of violence that go unchecked by formal justice systems. Moreover, recent statements by the Revitalised Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGoNU) encouraging returns to “areas of origin” rather than to civilians’ former residences are another worrying sign that deep divisions affecting the future of displaced communities around the country remain.¹⁸ These risks are of particular concern as most of the PoC sites have been redesignated and placed under R-TGoNU control (though near UNMISS team sites with rapid reaction forces), and as the peace process may be entering a delicate phase in the lead up to elections. “The elections could be a trigger for another wave of violence,” one expert noted, “and as of now, the South Sudanese army could very easily be drawn into ethnically-driven violence.” This risk is particularly acute given the lack of a National Unified Force.

In sum, UNMISS appears to have learnt important lessons from past protection failures and has also built on its impactful protection work to develop a more holistic, responsive, and flexible approach. The consistent view across the Mission and from several experts is that protection capacities are improving, contingency planning exercises and more mobile forms of protection are “headed in the right direction,” and that the redesignation process has not resulted in some of the more dangerous potential outcomes. However, as one interviewee pointed out, “if violence escalates again in the way it did during the 2013 civil war, UNMISS will only be able to protect a small fraction of people in harm’s way.” Being ready for such a return to violence and using all available resources to limit the risk of escalation should be the key priorities for the coming mandate period.

¹⁸ ACAPS, “Movement Patterns and Humanitarian Needs in South Sudan: Scenarios”, June 2021, <https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/20201218_acaps_scenarios_on_south_sudan_january-june_2021.pdf>.

3. UNMISS' Support for the Peace Process

UNMISS is mandated to support the R-ARCSS, a deal brokered by the IGAD in September 2018. However, the UN is not a guarantor of the agreement (it is only listed as a witness on the document) and has a relatively circumscribed role laid out in the text itself. In fact, the only specific role provided to UNMISS in the R-ARCSS is to support the AU in implementing certain provisions of the transitional justice chapter, notably the creation of a hybrid court. Following the signing of the R-ARCSS, the AU Peace and Security Council requested that UNMISS provide technical support for the AU role in transitional justice. Subsequently, in March 2018, the Security Council called on UNMISS to monitor and report on human rights violations in support of the AU commission of inquiry, and broadly in support of the transitional justice elements of the peace agreement. As such, UNMISS' support for the peace process can largely be thought of as technical and political assistance provided to the principal actors in the agreement: the parties, IGAD, and the AU (in that order).

These arrangements provided the context for the Security Council's most recent resolution of March 2021, in which it renewed UNMISS' mandate to provide the following support to the R-ARCSS:

1. Providing good offices to support the implementation of the R-ARCSS, including through advice, technical support, and coordination with regional actors;
2. Assisting the parties to implement the R-ARCSS in an inclusive manner;

3. Participating in the structures set up under the R-ARCSS, including the Revitalized Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC) and the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (CTSAMVM); and
4. Providing technical support for the peace agreement.

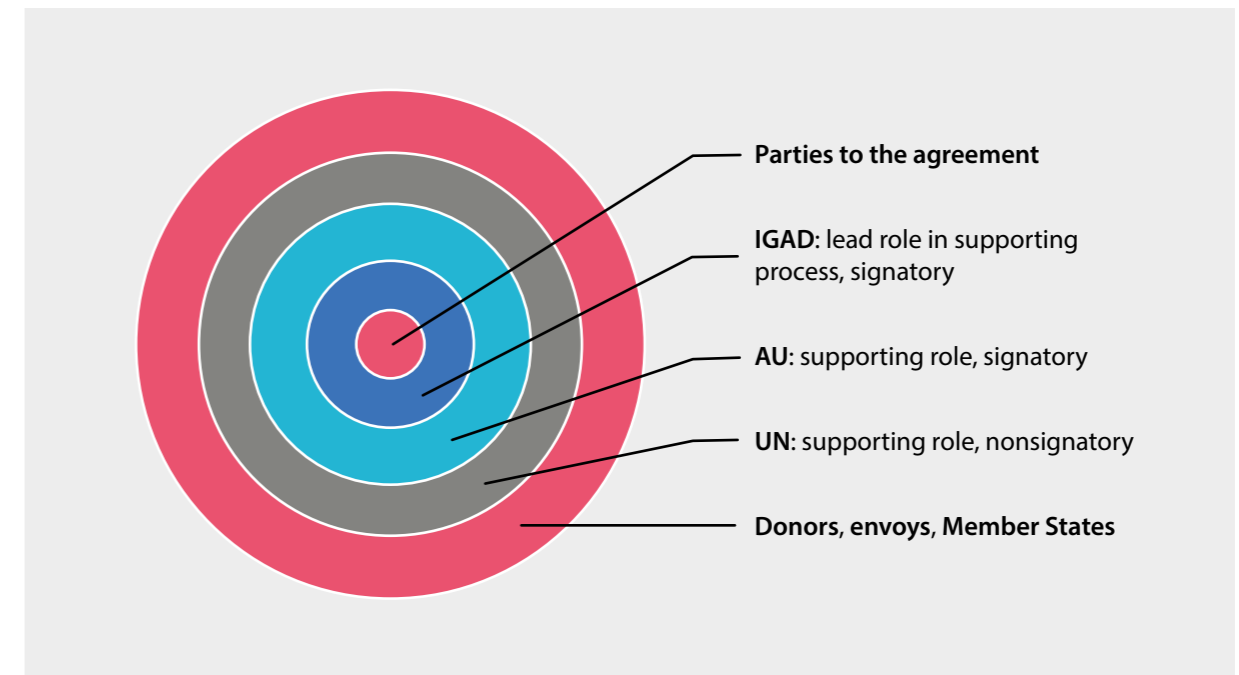
It is extraordinarily difficult to assess the extent to which these activities, alongside the broader work of UNMISS, may be impacting the peace process. This is in part because many of the provisions in the R-ARCSS that require UNMISS to play the most direct role – notably transitional justice – have advanced very little since 2018. The hybrid court, which was to be a major AU/UN contribution to the R-ARCSS, has largely had little input, support and direction from the R-TGoNU and has not gained much traction with the regional actors, including the AU. However, some experts pointed to UNMISS' role in documenting and reporting publicly on human rights violations as important in laying the groundwork for eventual transitional justice processes in South Sudan. “The hybrid court is dead, for now,” one expert noted, “but having a continuing process of documenting and building confidence that the justice process is ongoing is really important for the R-ARCSS' success.”

After several years of support, there is still confusion over what the different parties contributing to transitional justice in South Sudan should do. This has allowed the R-TGoNU, in particular, to avoid having to move forward on what it sees as an unwelcome aspect of the peace process. According to one respondent, “The approach of the R-TGoNU was, and still is, to stall the process by merging the issues with the broader peace process, thus delaying the start of the hybrid court,” and leading to ongoing significant delays.¹⁹ Reflecting on the R-ARCSS, another senior official at the AU stated, “At the time, we were not privy to the fact that the government might merge the two issues to delay the process altogether.” That said, the July 2021 meetings of the Technical Committee for the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing (CTRH) indicate some progress on the transitional justice file.

Perhaps the most complex set of issues arises in how UNMISS collaborates with and supports the continental and regional actors engaged in the peace process. As a range of experts pointed out, it was the regional powers that brought Kiir and Machar to the table in 2018, and IGAD remains the leading external source of pressure in keeping the R-ARCSS moving forward. However, since the death of Meles Zenawi in 2012, IGAD has become a less influential regional organisation and more a loose constellation of states, some of which may have benefitted from instability in South Sudan. In fact, some experts suggested that it was IGAD's leading role in the R-ARCSS process that had left it with little momentum over the past three years. “The peace agreement's main constraint is that IGAD is in the lead with the UN in support,” one expert noted. Indeed, following the 2021 coup in Sudan (which is chipping IGAD) and in the context of the large-scale violence in Ethiopia, IGAD's membership has not appeared able to set South Sudan as a priority. In sum, IGAD members are too

preoccupied with internal dynamics and competition among themselves to make a concerted effort in support of the peace process.

Figure 3: Stakeholder Onion Diagram, South Sudan



IGAD's incapacity to move the peace process forward effectively has both a political and a technical impact. IGAD chairs the RJMEC, which plays a core function in monitoring the parties' progress across the entire peace agreement. IGAD is also responsible for appointing the leadership of the influential CTSAMVM, which oversees many of the most crucial security arrangements in the peace process. Over the past three years, IGAD has been unable to appoint JMEC leadership and generally unable to advance much of the crucial work on the ground, a weakness which the South Sudanese parties have taken advantage of to instigate their own delays. Particularly regarding the security arrangement provisions of the peace process – which would see the eventual merger of Riek Machar's forces into a single national army overseen by a unity government – progress has been extraordinarily slow, with little momentum provided by the CTSAMVM or the JMEC. The deep divisions in IGAD mean that it is more challenging to hold its members accountable than if individual states had signed the agreement.²⁰

In principle, IGAD's lack of attention to South Sudan should open the door to greater AU involvement. In some respects, this has been the case: AU leadership has visited South Sudan several times to push the peace process at key moments; the AU continues to play an important role in leading the Commission of Inquiry into human rights violations during the civil war; and the AU leads much of the political process for Abyei and post-coup Sudan. With former

¹⁹ Interview, 002- Former SPLA.

²⁰ International Crisis Group, “Salvaging South Sudan's Fragile Peace Deal”, Africa Report No. 270, 2019, <[https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/270-salvaging-south-sudans-fragile-peace-deal%20\(1\).pdf](https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/270-salvaging-south-sudans-fragile-peace-deal%20(1).pdf)>.

President Thabo Mbeki still at the head of the AU High-Level Implementation Panel, conditions for a more forceful and direct AU role appear ripe. However, many interviewees noted that the AU had not prioritised South Sudan in recent years. “With the Sahel, and Libya, and Somalia, and the coup in Sudan, and now Ethiopia, South Sudan is on a long list of issues for the AU,” one expert noted. Furthermore, Khartoum played a major role in supporting the peace talks up to the August 2021 coup, at which point its role in the R-ARCSS became very unclear.

The result is what several experts within and outside the UN have described as a “chaotic” approach to the South Sudanese peace process. “We have Obasanjo [AU special envoy for the Horn of Africa], Feltman [US Horn envoy] and Mbeki all running around on other files, and meanwhile Kiir and Machar have no intention of doing anything right now,” according to an expert. Another suggested that the UN was being asked to support “hollowed out” organisations like IGAD, which have very little leverage on the parties.

Several observers suggested that the flow of support was largely from the AU towards the UN in terms of political engagement in the peace process. One expert stated, “The AU, drawing on AU mechanisms, brings actors together in support of UNMISS and its mandate, not the other way around.” At the same time, the UN provides logistical and technical support that the AU tends to have in shorter supply. One example of this is the joint AU-UN work to airlift 140 military-style tanks from an AU logistics base in Cameroon to support the security arrangements for the Juba peace talks. Many suggested that a more strategic, well-coordinated UN-AU approach could help drive the process in the absence of a coherent IGAD behind the R-ARCSS.

Finally, interviewees reported that the peace process remains top-heavy, with insufficient focus on connecting the national and subnational levels of work (despite the concerted effort by UNMISS on this front, as described above). A constraint here is the one-year planning and budgeting cycles, which inhibit the ability to generate longer-term thinking that might envisage deeper connections between subnational dynamics and broader national trends. Experts suggested that the success of the peace process rested largely on the ability of the parties and partners to generate widespread popular support and buy-in for the peace process, something that will require dedicated effort and likely greater resources at local levels. Significant efforts by UNMISS are currently focused on how to link political engagement to the resources of a multi-donor trust fund, which could make a major difference in the future.

3.1. Support for elections

Perhaps the most important moment in the peace process is the national election currently expected to take place in 2023. Elections could mark a positive turning point for South Sudan, building public confidence in a government of national unity and paving the way for a more inclusive, less divisive political atmosphere that could, in turn, unlock other key aspects of the

R-ARCSS. As a UN-led electoral needs assessment mission noted in July 2021, however, the challenges are enormous. South Sudan’s poor infrastructure and difficult terrain pose significant obstacles to accessing the population, while high rates of illiteracy, difficulties in proving citizenship, and the large displaced population will create a complicated logistical process. Politically too, deep divisions and a zero-sum approach to power-sharing is almost certain to lead to a contentious and potentially violent elections run-up.

Given the importance of national elections to South Sudan’s broader stability, the July 2021 UN needs assessment proposed a two-phased approach for UN support. Phase one would see technical and advisory support provided to the parties as they develop a framework for elections, agree on the necessary constitutional provisions, and put into place the structures needed for broad-based participation. This phase would also involve the UN establishing an early warning mechanism for election-related violence, working with IGAD, the AU and the Troika to build public confidence in the vote, and helping the parties identify the full set of resources needed for the overall process. The second phase would see the UN working with the AU to support the newly formed electoral commission with a range of technical, advisory, and communications support. This kind of support would largely replicate the UN’s support provided during South Sudan’s earlier elections.

If UNMISS took on these roles, its position in support of the R-ARCSS would be much more visible during the 2022-23 period. Playing a central role in the elections could give the Mission greater leverage on the ground, even greater access to key players, and potentially a more influential position in pushing other aspects of the R-ARCSS. Given the relatively minor role spelt out for the UN in the agreement – and in light of the position of IGAD currently – this could be a positive development and help to address what has been seen as an absence in international leadership supporting South Sudan. Certainly, having a globally recognised constitutional expert as the SRSG of UNMISS, Nicholas Haysom, could position the Mission well to step into this more active role. Furthermore, while recognising the significant differences between the 2010-2011 referendum period and current circumstances, the success of the referendum is clear evidence that the UN can provide logistical support for a national ballot, even under difficult circumstances.

While recognising these opportunities, it will also be important to be cognisant of the potential downsides of becoming more directly involved in the elections. It is highly likely that the process will be further delayed, mired in political manoeuvring among the parties, and possibly a flashpoint for renewed violence. The more the UN is directly and visibly involved in supporting the technical and logistical aspects of the process – or indeed if it were brought into a more ambitious observation role – the more likely it will be blamed for failures and delays, even if they are caused by the parties.²¹ Moreover, if the South Sudanese electoral commission is not accepted by the public as an impartial arbiter of the process, UNMISS’ support for the commission could be seen as the UN taking sides. In this context, UNMISS should be especially careful

21 UNDP/PPA, “Elections: Types of Assistance”, n.d., <<https://dppa.un.org/en/elections/#Types%20of%20Assistance>>.

not to be seen as the judge of the credibility of the elections, which is a constant risk in settings where the UN is supporting the process with technical and advisory assistance.

In conclusion, the question is not whether UNMISS should support the elections, which it is already bound to in some respects.²² Rather, the focus should be on how the UN can best position itself as an impartial actor and structure its support to take the most advantage of the opportunity, help advance the R-ARCSS, and avoid the pitfalls described above. In this context, UNMISS' support for the constitutional process between now and the elections may be the most influential entry point for the UN in advancing the R-ARCSS.

4. Implications for the 2022 Mandate Renewal

The 2022-23 period is set to be a volatile one for South Sudan. While President Kiir has largely consolidated power and shored up support in some constituencies, the key conditions for a peaceful run-up to the elections are far from secure. Most crucially, there has been essentially no progress on DDR or SSR through a Unified National Force. Riek Machar's troops remain fragmented and physically separated from the national army, posing a continuing risk of escalation if the political process does not go smoothly. Similarly, the national security services – themselves responsible for a large number of the atrocities during the civil war – have undergone essentially none of the transformations needed to transition into a professional army and trusted source of protection. The economic situation in the region is likely to worsen as a result of COVID-19, ongoing conflicts in Ethiopia, the tenuous situation in Sudan, and dropping oil prices, potentially combining to see South Sudan's economy plummet. As happened in 2012 when South Sudan temporarily shut off its oil production, a serious economic shock could quickly lead to widespread violence.

²² See UN Security Council, "Statement by the President of the Security Council", S/PRST/2021/20, <<https://undocs.org/s/prst/2021/20>>.

4.1. Strategic Considerations

In this context, and drawing on the above assessment, the new mandate for UNMISS should be calibrated around the following strategic considerations:

1. **Contingency planning and preparedness:** The Mission will need to be prepared for another scenario in which large numbers of civilians seek protection from fighting factions, potentially (but not necessarily) requiring a return to some version of the PoC sites first established in 2013. Continuing to augment the Mission's early-warning capacity and building on the useful language already in UNMISS' mandate regarding contingency planning will be crucial.
2. **The benefits and limitations of mobility:** The Mission has developed a robust capacity to deploy quick reaction forces and TOBs across much of South Sudan. The above analysis suggests this can play an important role in mitigating violence in some situations. However, small, nimble constellations of forces are very unlikely to adequately address the kinds of large-scale mobilisation of forces witnessed in 2013 and 2016, when both the national army and the opposition were able to overrun even well-protected UN compounds. A key question to guide the upcoming mandate discussion is: "How can UNMISS maintain its mobile capacities given its current capabilities, while also being ready for more concentrated and/or widespread periods of violence in a scenario of escalation?"
3. **A risk-based approach to the city and surrounding areas of Malakal:** The final redesignation of the Malakal PoC site may prove the most difficult, given the elevated tension among the Dinka, Nuer, and Shilluk communities in the broader Malakal area. This area has long had highly contentious political processes, including past electoral processes that became violent, and recent reports of gerrymandering could be a precursor to another tense election period. While closing this PoC site might send a positive signal in the lead up to the elections, the delicate balance of power in this area could make it a flashpoint. Certainly, continuing risk analysis is needed to inform decision-making around this site. Key questions here include: (a) How will land and property rights be dealt with among the displaced population? (b) What role will the Government and the UN play in facilitating safe, voluntary returns? (c) What kind of early warning and action mechanisms would be needed to identify risks in time for an effective response in the case of escalation?
4. **A resource and personnel increase around elections:** UNMISS is already positioned to support the national elections in 2023 and could use the process to amplify its broader role in the R-ARCSS. This will likely require an increase in resources and personnel in the 2022-23 period. The resource requirements could be a fairly modest increase in technical and advisory staff or a far more ambitious package of logistical and financial support. The July 2021 electoral needs assessment mission suggests that the challenges

facing South Sudan might require a larger boost from the UN and its partners than in some other settings, especially as the credibility of the process will largely depend on accessing remote, isolated populations. In the lead up to the new mandate in 2022, the Security Council should be guided by the continuing assessment of the Mission leadership on the levels and kind of support that might be needed, including at national and subnational levels Civic education around the political process could well be an area where the UN could play a major role over the coming mandate period.

5. **Subnational conflict resolution:** As described above, some of UNMISS' most effective engagements have been in addressing subnational conflict. The 2016 relapse into civil war demonstrated that localised forms of violence can quickly spread, contributing to much larger-scale and politically motivated fighting (indeed, the distinction between "political" and "local" has rightly been discarded by the Mission).²³ Identifying ways to bolster the civilian presence rapidly in hotspot areas – potentially developing and resourcing TOB presences that allow for greater civilian accommodations – could have a beneficial impact.
6. **A constitutional opening?** The R-ARCSS envisages a new constitution in place prior to elections in 2023. On the one hand, a new constitution could be a major step forward, opening the door to much-needed power-sharing arrangements, a framework to address national-level reconciliation, and a centre-periphery relationship that allows for a much more equitable distribution of wealth. On the other hand, a constitutional process during the fragile aftermath of civil war, at a time when other crucial processes related to R-ARCSS are well behind schedule, could be deeply destabilising. As one South Sudanese interlocutor noted, "In South Sudan, political needs are communicated with violence." Nothing raises these political needs higher than a constitutional process, but it could be a real opportunity for the UN to play a constructive role, especially given SRSG Haysom's deep knowledge of constitutional processes. This might mean increasing the UN capacity and budget to support this area, with an additional focus on civic education.
7. **A return to state-building?** As laid out in Annex 1, there is a strong tendency for large peacekeeping missions to focus on building and extending state authority outward towards volatile peripheries. The original mandate for UNMISS in 2011 was overwhelmingly focused on state-building, a mandate that was abandoned in 2014 following the outbreak of civil war. While no one is seriously considering a complete return to this type of state-building mandate, there may be a push by some Member States to include more capacity-building and support for state institutions in the upcoming mandate. Based on the analysis above and the previous EPON report on South Sudan, we recommend caution in such deliberations. Despite progress on the peace agreement, the South Sudanese Government is viewed with strong suspicion by many communities, especially those that were targeted during the war. Any capacity-building mandate should be careful to avoid

²³ Andrew E. Yaw Tchier, "Rethinking South Sudan's Path to Democracy", *Conflict Trends* 2, 2021.

being seen as “putting a finger on the scales”²⁴ of a delicate inter-ethnic balance at a time when tensions may well be growing. The comparison with other peacekeeping missions in Annex 1 suggests that capacity development could be tailored to support specific provisions and aspects of the R-ARCSS directly, potentially avoiding some of the pitfalls of earlier mandates.

8. **Order from regional chaos:** It is very unlikely that IGAD will play a robust or well-organised role in driving the peace process. If current trends continue, the organisation may have even less capacity or focus on the R-ARCSS, further orphaning South Sudan at a time when political and operational progress is sorely needed. The AU Peace and Security Council and the UN Security Council may need to revisit the roles and responsibilities allocated to the key players in this context, possibly identifying new areas for the AU and UN to provide more direct support.
9. **Climate security:** South Sudan is deeply affected by climate change, from the desertification that has driven herding communities further south over recent decades to increasingly erratic rainfall patterns that have led to the flooding of major rivers across the country.²⁵ In 2021, South Sudan witnessed the worst flooding in at least 60 years, affecting roughly 800 000 people and creating massive changes in the livelihoods of cattle-herding communities. The 2021 UNMISS mandate recognises the role of climate change in driving risks and has allowed the Mission to bring on some limited donor-funded climate expertise to advise on future planning. Far more resources and attention will be needed if the UN is to play a meaningful role in meeting the climate security challenges facing South Sudan in the coming mandate period.²⁶
10. **Humanitarian risks:** Though beyond the focus of this report, the risks to humanitarian actors in South Sudan are worth mentioning as an area of concern for the Security Council. There are reports of increased intimidation and even violence against humanitarian actors, risks which could increase in the lead up to elections. Given UNMISS’ mandate to facilitate humanitarian delivery, calls for the Mission to protect humanitarian actors may well grow.
11. **Women and youth:** Continuing threats to women and children will require UNMISS to maintain and expand its protection work in these areas. Preliminary research also indicates a persistent threat of sexual violence against men and boys, while young men are frequent targets of recruitment into violent groups.²⁷ Greater consideration could

be given to these dynamics in the upcoming Council deliberations, especially given UNMISS’ role in promoting more inclusive approaches to the peace process.

12. **Space for innovation and flexibility:** One of the key lessons from the 2018 EPON report and today is that UNMISS is capable of significant innovation and flexibility within the mandates given to it thus far. A recurrent message from Mission leadership and experts consulted was not to impede UNMISS with overly prescriptive mandate language. Particularly at a potentially volatile period with uncertainty over the elections process, allowing the Mission space to move resources where they are most needed will be very important.

4.2. Specific recommendations to the Security Council

The above strategic considerations should guide the Council’s deliberations around the 2022-23 mandate for UNMISS. Building on these, we here offer some specific language and options for inclusion in the upcoming mandate:

1. **Troop ceiling:** In the 2021 mandate, the Council maintained the Mission’s troop ceiling at 17 000, with 2 100 police. Given the uncertainty around the peace process and the upcoming elections, we propose that this ceiling is not modified for the 2022-23 mandate. In fact, a modest increase in troop levels could be considered, depending on a risk assessment by the UN and partners in early 2022. It might be worth considering how the East African Standby Force could play a role here, though such a deployment seems quite unlikely at this time.
2. **Contingency planning:** Para. 3(iii) of resolution 2567 (2021) helpfully links contingency planning with the ability of UNMISS to “scale up” in former PoC site areas if risks escalate. This emphasis on scenario-based contingency planning is helpful and should be continued in the next mandate. Especially as elections may create new and unanticipated hotspots, greater resources around contingency planning and response may well be needed.
3. **Redesignation of PoC sites:** Para. 18(d) of resolution 2567 (2021) provides helpful guidance on how UNMISS should approach the redesignation of PoC sites, requiring the Mission to conduct comprehensive risk assessments. As of today, that process is nearly complete, with only Malakal outstanding. As such, the language remains relevant to Malakal and should continue to guide UNMISS’ approach in Upper Nile State. (EPON understands that, as of late December 2021, the Mission indicated that it was unlikely to push for a redesignation of Malakal in the forthcoming mandate period.)

²⁴ EPON, 2018.

²⁵ Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) and Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), *Climate, Peace and Security Fact Sheet South Sudan* (Oslo: NUPI & SIPRI, 2021).

²⁶ Andrew E. Yaw Tchie and Kheira Tarif, *Climate, peace and security: The case of South Sudan* (Durban, SA: ACCORD, 2021).

²⁷ Ligia Kiss, Meaghen Quinlan-Davidson, Laura Pasquero et al., “Male and LGBT Survivors of Sexual Violence in Conflict Situations: A Realist Review of Health Interventions in Low-and Middle-Income Countries”, *Conflict and Health* 14(11), 2020, <<https://conflictandhealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13031-020-0254-5>>.

4. **Support for elections:** Clearly, the most important new provisions for the 2022-23 period will be around the Mission's support for national elections. Our assessment above does not provide sufficient information to propose specific language, though it should be noted that the 2021 needs assessment has provided a comprehensive programme in support of the R-ARCSS parties. Certainly, minimum support would include advisory and technical support, though the logistical challenges across South Sudan are also immense.
5. **Responsibility for inclusiveness:** The success or failure of the constitutional and electoral processes will hinge largely on the extent to which the South Sudanese population views them as legitimate. Indeed, the collapse of the 2015 peace agreement was due in large part to its failure to include communities beyond the Dinka and Nuer who were directly represented by Machar and Kiir. Here, UNMISS' work at the subnational level can play a vital role in increasing support for the peace process, including its support for governors' forums and other processes to build ground-up engagement with the R-ARCSS. It would be useful for the Council to highlight this work, and accompany it with a clear message to the R-ARCSS parties that they bear responsibility for implementing an inclusive approach to the constitution and elections.
6. **Relationship with IGAD and the AU:** One of the greatest risks identified in our study is that South Sudan is receiving insufficient regional and international support during this crucial period. Indeed, the lack of robust IGAD engagement – despite their role as the main guarantors of the R-ARCSS – has left South Sudan without a dedicated regional organisation backing the country. We believe now is a time to revisit the ways the UN, AU, and IGAD can better work together in support of South Sudan. Improved coordination is needed between the UN, AU, and IGAD (and possibly a more supportive role for African States like South Africa, and the EU and Troika Members), and there is a need for forward-thinking strategic planning included as part of the Mission's support for the parties involved. The constitutional and electoral processes offer an opening for such a discussion and for a re-evaluation of how the broader international community may need to fill the gaps between existing players. To be clear, we are not advocating a withdrawal from the important relationships with IGAD and the AU, but an acknowledgement of the need for greater integrated and coordinated support across these relationships over the forthcoming mandate period.
7. **Climate security:** The climate security risks to South Sudan are growing more acute, but remain poorly understood and there is a lack of evidence to inform concrete action. Building on its own growing engagement on this issue, the Security Council should: (a) recognise the links between changing environmental dynamics (e.g., flooding) and risks to the South Sudanese peace process; (b) mandate the UN to work with the South Sudanese Government, the AU, and regional organisations to develop an early warning and analysis capacity that integrates data from a range of sources; and (c) request updates on climate security in the regular reporting of the Secretary-General.

In conclusion, this report has identified a rapidly evolving set of risks in South Sudan, both related to PoC and the broader political process. The Security Council has an opportunity at present to help frame UNMISS' mandate so as to better prepare for these risks, work more constructively with partners to advance the R-ARCSS, and continue much of the innovative, impactful work the Mission is already doing on the ground.

5. Annex 1 – UNMISS' State-building Mandate

UNMISS had to scale back its ambitions drastically from consolidating the State to alleviating and containing a multi-dimensional crisis in 2013.²⁸ As state-building is re-entering the conversation around UNMISS' mandate, it is worth looking at how other UN peacekeeping missions on the continent incorporate it into their mandate. The table below shows that state-building is often connected to other strategic objectives, such as PoC and progress on the political process or reform more generally. Importantly, the example of MINUSCA suggests that state-building and capacity development more generally can be tied to key elements of a peace agreement/process directly, something that could be considered during the upcoming UNMISS mandate discussion.

28 Stefan Bakumenko, "The United Nations in Africa: South Sudan's Quest for Stability", Rise to Peace, 2021, Available at: <<https://www.risetopeace.org/2021/08/18/the-united-nations-in-africa-south-sudans-quest-for-stability/sbakumenkog-wmail-gwu-edu>>; World Peace Foundation, "UNMISS Short Mission Brief", 2017, <<https://sites.tufts.edu/wpf/files/2017/07/South-Sudan-brief.pdf>>.

Table 1: Comparison of MINUSMA, MINUSCA and MONUSCO mandates

MINUSMA	MINUSCA	MONUSCO
<p>Relating state-building to PoC²⁹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of MINUSMA's priority tasks is to support the stabilisation and restoration of State authority in the Centre. • Another task is to support the implementation of the political and institutional reforms provided by the Agreement. • MINUSMA also seeks to ensure strengthened coordination between the civilian and military components of the Mission, and with local and regional communities, groups and military and civilian authorities. 	<p>Relating state-building to progress on the political process³⁰</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of MINUSCA's activities beyond its four priority tasks is support for the extension of State authority, the deployment of security forces, and the preservation of territorial integrity. • The second task is to support the authorities in implementing relevant provisions of the Peace Agreement. • MINUSCA promotes and supports the deployment of national security forces in priority areas. • The Mission also provides enhanced planning, technical assistance and limited logistical support for the progressive redeployment of a limited number of Armed Forces units engaged in joint operations with MINUSCA. 	<p>Relating state-building to reforms³¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MONUSCO supports the stabilisation and strengthening of public institutions and major governance and security reforms. • Stabilisation: Supporting the main reforms in the governance and security sectors, with a view to endowing the State with functional security and justice institutions. • SSR: Supporting the development of a common strategy as well as a clear and comprehensive reform plan with well-defined indicators and deadlines. • DDR: Act to support DDR, in particular reintegration into civilian life, in coordination with civil society, donors and government officials, including local and provincial leaders.

²⁹ UN Security Council, "Resolution 2548 adopted by the Security Council at the 8809th meeting", 29 June 2021, S/RES/2548.

³⁰ UN Security Council, "Resolution 2605 adopted by the Security Council at the 8902nd meeting", 12 November 2021, S/RES/2605.

³¹ UN Security Council, "Resolution 2556 adopted by the Security Council", 18 December 2020, S/RES/2556.

Peace operations are among the most important international mechanisms for contemporary conflict management. However, their effectiveness remains the subject of confusion and debate in both the policy and academic communities. Various international organisations conducting peace operations, including the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), and the European Union (EU), have come under increasing pressure to justify their effectiveness and impact. Although various initiatives are underway to improve the ability to assess the performance of peace operations, there remains a distinct lack of independent, research-based information about the effectiveness of such operations.

To address this gap, the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), together with over 40 partners from across the globe, have established an international network to jointly undertake research into the effectiveness of peace operations. This network has developed a shared methodology to enable the members to undertake research on this topic. This will ensure coherence across cases and facilitate comparative research. The network produce a series of reports that are shared with stakeholders including the UN, AU, and EU, interested national government representatives, researchers, and the general public. All the EPON reports are available via <https://effectivepeaceops.net>. The network is coordinated by NUPI. Many of the partners fund their own participation. NUPI has also received funding from the Norwegian Research Council and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to support the Network and its research, including via the UN Peace Operations (UNPO) project and the Training for Peace (TfP) programme.



Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network

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