RESEARCH ARTICLE

Defining State Authority: UN Peace Operations Efforts to Extend State Authority in Mali and the Central African Republic

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In a state-based international order, the state is understood as the best actor to protect its population. With this in mind, UN peace operations often have mandates to extend state authority. However, by their very nature, peace operations deploy to states whose authority and legitimacy are contested. Without a clear definition of what that authority entails, peace operations and host states must constantly negotiate the content and approaches taken in extending state authority, sometimes resulting in tensions between state and mission. This article examines the process of extending state authority in two cases: the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). It finds that there are evolving and contesting understandings of state authority across and within peace operations, which can limit mission impact and stress key relationships between peace operations and their host state. The article concludes that there is a need for renewed conversations in the UN as to how state authority is understood and supported by UN peace operations.

Introduction

In a state-based international order, the state is considered the primary and best actor to protect its population. With this in mind, United Nations peace operations are often deployed with mandates to extend state authority. However, by their very nature, peace operations deploy to states that often lack both authority and legitimacy with their domestic populations and that may not have the capacity to earn them. Lacking a clear definition of what state authority entails and how it is earned, peace operations and host states must constantly negotiate the content and approaches taken in extending state authority. With the very nature of the state at stake, these negotiations can result in tensions between state and mission and impact the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping.

This article argues that UN peace operations with mandates to extend state authority have *a priori* expectations about the nature of the recipient states. First, that the state has legitimate authority with its population; and second, that the state will attempt to fulfil the requirements of 'positive sovereignty' as its capacity and authority increase. These expectations stem from the state-based nature of the UN itself and do not necessarily reflect the realities that

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peacekeepers address on the ground. Should these expectations not be met, peace operations that focus on extending state authority may actually undermine the liberal democratic ideals promoted by the UN.

The first section of this article outlines the evolution of state sovereignty within the UN, particularly how sovereignty has vacillated between authority-based Weberian and legitimacy-based Lockean variations. As conceptions of sovereignty change, so too do understandings of how legitimate state authority is to be achieved. This article then details the emergence of the extension of state authority as a mandated goal of peacekeeping and the challenges this poses for peacekeepers. Next, this article draws on two case studies, inclusive from their date of creation to the end of 2018: the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). These cases will illustrate how peace operations understand their mandates to extend state authority and attempt to negotiate implementation with the host-state government. This article concludes by noting key factors that influence how state authority is understood in particular contexts. It contributes to the literature by shedding light on a central question of external state building: what is the nature of the state being built (Richmond 2013: 2)?

State Sovereignty and Legitimacy

The UN has long negotiated the tensions between its realist state-based composition and the universal liberal norms enshrined in the UN Charter. As a result, peacekeeping vacillates between supporting different types of sovereignty, based either on realist military authority or liberal political legitimacy. These different conceptions of sovereignty and the subsequent sources of state legitimacy have a powerful impact on how state authority is understood and pursued by peace operations.

Prior to World War II, sovereignty was based on internal and external legitimacy. Internally, state legitimacy rested upon 'standards of civilization,' including culture, identity and religion (Gong 1984).[1] Implicit in these standards was an assumed level of internal social cohesion that fostered loyalty to the state and led citizens to accept the state's basic right to rule (Lemay-Hébert 2009; Holsti 1996: 84; Gilley 2006). Legitimacy was earned not just through effective governance and service provision but shared social goals and values built over time (Schmelzle and Stollenwerk 2018: 450). Legitimacy was maintained by the government's ability to provide political goods such as services and a minimal level of protection to the civilian population in its territory. While state institutions were still important, the degree of legitimacy achieved depended on how the government exercised authority. Once a state was seen as able to uphold international norms it was awarded external legitimacy, which should guarantee non-intervention into that state's territory or domestic affairs (Barnett 1995: 82). This combination of internal and external legitimacy constituted 'positive sovereignty' (Jackson 1990: 29).

The post-World War II rush to decolonize and the Cold War saw the connection between internal and external legitimacy increasingly downplayed, including within the UN. Exercising their right for self-determination, decolonizing states pushed forward conceptions of legitimacy focused on territorial integrity and control (Spencer 1962: 381; Barnett 1995: 82). The resulting institutional approaches, based on Weberian conceptions[2] of the state as separate from the nation, argued that it was possible to extend state authority without engaging in the deeply contested socio-political realm of societal cohesion (Lemay-Hébert 2009: 26). The general result of such approaches was a 'negative sovereignty' where the state was awarded freedom from outside interference but lacked the capacity to provide political goods and services to its citizens (Jackson 1990: 27). This type of sovereignty does not

require the consent of the governed but is conferred by the international community (Jackson 1990).

Throughout the Cold War, peace operations primarily deployed between two previously warring states and only after a negotiated peace agreement. Therefore, the internal legitimacy of a state only mattered to the extent that it impacted the state's ability to uphold its obligations in the peace agreement. However, the end of the Cold War brought about several changes that made state legitimacy a major concern for peacekeepers. First, the state's ability to maintain order not only through coercion but also with a fair degree of consent, re-emerged as the standard for upholding the international order (Chandler 2017: chapter 4; Barnett 1995: 82; Jackson 1990). This consent could only be garnered through effective governance, which, in turn, fostered legitimacy (Schmelzle and Stollenwerk 2018: 450; Schmelzle 2011). Unfortunately, many weak states struggled to achieve effective levels of governance. Poor or mis-governance combined with an array of country-specific factors and a lack of Cold War- driven military support saw many states descend into civil war.

Post-Cold War, Peacekeepers found themselves increasingly deployed *within* states and mandated to extend state authority. Many of these states modelled Weberian sovereignty focused on the monopoly on the legitimate use of violence, yet the prevailing norms of the UN increasingly promoted sovereignty based on a social contract between a state and its peoples. What type of sovereignty then were peace operations expected to pursue?

Extension of State Authority

Post-Cold War shifts in peacebuilding strategy has resulted in new multidimensional peace operations 'frequently mandated as *statebuilders*, helping to create legitimate, functioning state structures in the aftermath of violent conflict' (Sherman and Tortolani 2009: 3). The 2008 UN Principles and guidelines for peacekeeping operations noted that peace operations could play a 'catalytic role' by supporting the 'activities of state institutions' (UN 2008: 26–27). Strengthening host-state authority is now an inherent part of the peacekeeping and peacebuilding system, and peace operation success is increasingly defined as a mission's ability to craft a viable and legitimate state (Cohen et al. 2006: 49; Karlsrud 2018: 148; Paris and Sisk 2009: 1–6; Sherman 2012; Piiparinen 2016). Despite its importance, the UN does not have a formal definition of what state authority entails or a clear list of tasks which constitute its extension.

Differing conceptions of state authority are evident in the evolving approaches of peace operations. Extending state authority appeared for the first time in the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) (United Nations Security Council [UNSC] 1999a). UNAMSIL took a realist approach to authority by supporting host-state security structures and emphasising military actions by peacekeepers to create space for the state to reassert itself (Sherman 2012: 13). This emphasis on security sector reform assumed and perpetuated a Weberian understanding of the state as the security provider, even when the state may not have ever filled this role (Abrahamsen 2016). The result of these actions was often the creation of a negative sovereignty based on territorial control and a monopoly on the use of force (Jackson 1990: 26–31). Subsequent early efforts to extend state authority followed similar templates to the one introduced in Sierra Leone (Gao et al. 2015).

Efforts to support and extend state authority began to evolve in an ad hoc manner, contingent on the mission mandates, host-state demands, and peace operations capabilities. A 2015 analysis of seven current UN operations revealed that state authority ranged from 'functioning administrative structures both at the national and local levels' in Liberia (UNSC 2003), to protecting civilians and rebuilding the security sector in Mali (UNSC 2014d), and reintegrating refugees in the Democratic Republic of Congo (UNSC 1999b) (Gao et al.

2015). Combining these diverse approaches, the assessment concluded that state authority is now best understood as a state that is both effective and legitimate, with legitimacy stemming from the state's ability to provide essential services (Gao et al. 2015: 5). This broadening understanding of state authority reflects a more Lockean conception of sovereignty, which emphasises a state's function as providing positive political and economic goods to its inhabitants (Roberts 2008: 545–48). The political and welfare functions of the state are key variables in securing the consent of the governed peoples (Milliken and Krause 2002: 761; Laslett 1988).

Challenges to Extending State Authority

The UN, as a state-based organisation, is going to attempt to strengthen, rather than change, existing regimes (Jones, Gowan and Sherman 2009: 10). Therefore, UN missions are deliberately designed to extend state authority. However, peace operations, by their very nature, deploy where state authority is deeply contested (Chesterman, Ignatieff and Thakur 2005: 2). These states do not — and may never have had — legitimacy in the eyes of most of their citizens. Regardless, the UNSC must acknowledge the juridical sovereignty of incumbent governments, even if empirical, capacity-based sovereignty is lacking. These states are legitimate by the standards of the international system, are represented in international institutions such as the UN, and are the UN's first port of call when negotiating a peacekeeping mission's status agreement (Piccolino and Karlsrud 2011: 450).

This disconnect between what is expected of the state and the reality of the state illustrate a major criticism of post-conflict state building — its Western technocratic approaches (Chandler 2010; Richmond 2013; Pugh 2004). Giddens (1985: 17) argues that the Weberian concept of the state conceived by the UN and assumed by peace operations relies too heavily on the modern Western

state. There are great variations between how states were formed in Europe and the construction of post-colonial states (Herbst 2014: 36–37; Buzan and Wæver 2003: 226). While there may be superficial similarities in formal organization, the different and often abbreviated history of state formation and the cultural and structural context in which they operate have profound consequences for actors attempting to (re)build a state (Egnell and Haldén 2009: 36). Mandates to extend state authority are given without consideration of the current nature and internal legitimacy of the host-state government (Baranyi, Beaudet and Locher 2011). The inability to distinguish between non-European variations of the state means that context and history are overlooked.

Colonial governance structures, by design, were based on force and used to exploit the general population and leverage state resources to enrich the political elites. Many of these exploitative state structures remain as part of the existing state apparatus. Rather than providing a neoliberal basis in popular support, extending state authority in these cases may result in the perpetuation of predatory governments and coercive structures, foster illegitimate governmental control over state institutions, exacerbate ethnic and political divides, and increase the exclusion of already-marginalized communities (Chesterman 2007: 7; Richmond 2013: 16; de Coning 2015: 49).

Even when the UN may disagree with the actions, past and present, of the host state, its ability to put pressure on how a host government operates is curtailed by the importance of consent in peace operations.[3] Consent of the major parties to the conflict, along with non-use of force and impartiality, make up the three 'core principles' of peacekeeping. Peace operations cannot deploy without host-state consent and, should consent be withdrawn, deployed missions must withdraw — regardless of whether or not they have achieved their mandated objectives. The continued need for consent in these contexts

is a major challenge for current operations (Curran 2017: 72).

The more expansive the mission's mandate is, the more important host-state buy-in becomes (Johnstone 2011: 176). When consent is coerced or limited, states may see the UN presence as undermining their sovereign prerogatives (Piccolino and Karlsrud 2011: 448). Incumbent governments can impose restrictions on the margin of manoeuvre of a UN mission, as was the case in the Central African Republic (CAR) and Darfur (International Refugee Rights Initiative 2016: 18–20). Or, in extreme cases, the government can request the UN operation leave or be downsized, such as in Côte d'Ivoire, Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. To maintain a good relationship with the host state, peace operations may be forced to engage in 'peacekeeping bargains,' where they concede some of their objectives in order to be able to pursue others.

The next two sections of this article provide an overview of two UN operations with mandates to extend state authority: MINUSMA and MINUSCA. These missions have a remarkably similar genesis — beginning as an African Union (AU) operation, transitioning to a UN stabilisation operation, and working alongside French parallel forces. Despite their similarities, the missions in Mali and CAR understand and pursue the extension of state authority in disparate ways. The following two sections provide an overview of how actors in Mali and CAR have understood and pursued state authority.

The UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)

The most recent crisis in Mali was a combination of an insurgency and a coup in 2012. Existing rebel groups and Malian Tuareg fighters returning from Libya coalesced to form the National Movement for the Liberation for the Azawad (MNLA) (Lotze 2015). In January 2012, the MNLA engaged the Malian security forces and began to push them from northern Mali. Frustrated at a perceived lack of support from the Malian government, a small group of soldiers staged a mutiny, which unexpectedly overthrew President Amadou Toumani Touré in March 2012 (Luengo-Cabrera 2012: 13). Several Islamist groups that had been loosely aligned with the MNLA took advantage of the military coup and subsequent disorder to take control of vast areas of Mali's north (Pezard and Shurkin 2015).[4] As the relationship between the MNLA and the Islamist groups deteriorated, the latter pushed the former out of many sections of the north.

With negotiations under way, an AU mission was mandated to deploy in the autumn of 2013; however, the negotiations broke down and the Islamists began advancing south towards the capital of Bamako in January 2013. It quickly became clear that a more urgent intervention was needed. At the request of the transitional government, France deployed Operation Serval, an explicit counterterrorism mission with the objectives of stopping the jihadist advance, preventing jihadist groups from endangering Mali's stability, protecting European nationals, and restoring Mali's territorial integrity (UNSC 2012; UNSC 2013a: 24). Operation Serval's mandated tasks and practice of restoring Mali's territorial integrity embodied a Weberian understanding of state authority, emphasising the capacity of the state to maintain a monopoly on violence, deter spoilers, and ensure territorial integrity. Pursuing the extension of state authority from a counterinsurgency perspective, Serval followed a modified version of 'clear, hold and build,' where the French focused on clearing Mali's territory of terrorist and insurgent threats, then relied on UN peacekeepers to fulfil the broader tasks of 'hold' and 'build' in their wake (Owens 2015: 25; Boutellis 2015: 3).

In April of 2013, the struggling AU mission was replaced by MINUSMA (UNSC 2013b). MINUSMA had an unprecedented mandate

to use proactive force to support the extension of state authority into northern Mali. It was authorised to act: (i) in support of the transitional authorities of Mali, to stabilize the key population centres, especially in the north of Mali and, in this context, to deter threats and take active steps to prevent the return of armed elements to those areas; (ii) to support the transitional authorities of Mali to extend and re-establish state administration throughout the country; (iii) and to support national and international efforts towards rebuilding the Malian security sector (ibid.: 7).

Within the resolution creating MINUSMA, the Security Council assumed that the Malian state had a certain level of legitimacy and capacity. MINUSMA's mandate referred to supporting Mali's military authority and the political legitimacy (through the re-establishment of state administrations). Importantly, MINUSMA was instructed to undertake all of its tasks 'in support of the transitional authorities,' implying an inherent level of state capacity (UNSC 2013b). This is despite the fact that the capacity of the Malian state was limited, particularly in the north, and the legitimacy of the government had been contested in various ways since the country's independence in 1960 (Bøås and Torheim 2013). Intermittent conflicts resulted in peace agreements in 1991, 1992, and 2009, but none of these accords were fully implemented and governance in the region remained variable (Pezard and Shurkin 2015; Lecocq 2010). Systematic corruption, broken peace agreements, and increasingly hollow government institutions resulted in a state incapable of providing basic services beyond the capital region (Whitehouse 2012). While governance conditions improved with Mali's return to democracy in 1991, in large swaths of the north the government remained absent or had devolved power to non-state actors (Baldaro 2018). Where the government did exist, it was often represented by predatory security forces and customs officials (International Crisis Group 2016b; International Crisis Group 2016a).

After the 2011 violence, rebel groups and the Malian government crafted a preliminary agreement to 'solve some imminent issues' (UN 2013). However, rebel groups were reluctant to commit to a new peace agreement and, once signed, the government struggled to implement the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, choosing instead to focus on bolstering their military authority (Boutellis 2015: 4). Fearing to legitimize non-state actors, the Malian government also limited MINUSMA's ability to re-establish any sort of basic services where the state was not present (ibid.: 6). MINUSMA supported the swift redeployment of Malian Defence and Security Forces (MDSF). However, rather than stopping violence against civilians, Malian forces sought revenge for their earlier defeat in the north, targeting potential rebel collaborators and civilians from northern ethnic groups (Razza 2018: 15; World Bank 2013). Arab and Tuareg populations were particularly at risk of human rights abuses (UNSC 2016b).

To clarify understandings of state authority between the UN, MINUSMA, and the Malian government, the UN called for the creation of 'shared visions for the way forward' in Mali (UNSC 2014a: para 70 (b)). Then Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Hervé Ladsous articulated a broad understanding of the role of the state when he argued that:

> Inter-community tensions and weak governance have created fertile ground for terrorism and transnational crime to develop. It is clear that if a lasting agreement is to be reached, those underlying causes must be dealt with. During the past 50 or 60 years the crisis in Mali has gone through various stages, including several negotiation phases, but none of them have really addressed the underlying causes… I think the difference between this stage of the crisis in Mali and the previous ones is that for the first time the international community, with the United

Nations as the forefront, is directly involved and actively engaged. We must try not to repeat past mistakes. (UNSC 2015b)

UN emphasis on broader state building did not sit particularly well with the new Malian government and tensions between the UN and the government as to the definition of state authority began to grow. For example, the UN Secretary-General warned the Malian government against branding non-signatories as spoilers to justify using military force against them. In response, the president of Mali accused MINUSMA of partiality, revealing 'substantial divergences with the host country on the process that should follow the signing' (International Crisis Group 2015).

The presence of a French counterterrorism mission in Mali only served to facilitate the divisions between MINUSMA and the Malian government's understandings of state authority. Operations Serval and its successor, Operation Barkhane, focused on military dominance over the Islamist threat. Their actions, though not connected to state building, supported the Malian government's view that military authority was the prime objective and political legitimacy was secondary. For example, during joint counterterrorism operations with French forces, the Malian army was accused of extrajudicial executions, forcible disappearances, and torture (Human Rights Watch 2017; UNSC 2016b: para 31–2). Such abuses only confirmed the local populations' sense of injustice and resentment against the state (Cold-Ravnkilde 2017).

MINUSMA's broad mandate and potentially long-term deployment required the operation to continually renegotiate how it understood and pursued state authority — particularly in response to pressures from the Malian transitional government and changing conditions on the ground. Faced with an increasingly hostile government and the continuation of violence in Mali, the Security Council found itself juggling understandings of state authority. While it did express concern about 'repeated allegations of violations of international human right law and international humanitarian law by MDSF in the conduct of counterterrorism operations,' it continued to affirm the importance of extending state authority through the redeployment of the MDSF (UNSC 2018b: para 43–44) and overlooked abuses by state security forces in its protection strategies (Razza 2018: 23). At the same time, in an important move that recognised that the Security Council's expectations for state behaviour were not being met, MINUSMA's continued support for the extension of state authority was made contingent on 'inclusive and consensual reform of the security sector and national reconciliation measures' (UNSC 2018b: para 25). Until then, the mission has been mandated to reprioritize its resources to focus on political tasks.

The complex and chaotic environment in Mali saw the UN and MINUSMA continually needing to redefine their understanding of state authority. Dire security conditions and the presence of a French counterterrorism mission prioritised an initial focus on Weberian state authority. However, once the Islamist and insurgent threat was addressed, the multiple actors in Mali struggled to find a shared understanding of state authority. The UN and MINUSMA increasingly promoted authority based on legitimate political backing and service provision by the state — including civilian protection. Waxing and waning violence in Mali has kept the embattled Malian government focused on physical security, though there have been increased efforts at national reconciliation, particularly since the election of the new prime minister, Soumeylou Boubèye Maïga. It is likely that how state authority is understood and enacted in Mali will continue to evolve in response to the ever-changing conditions on the ground.

The UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA)

The UN mission to CAR was launched roughly a year after MINUSMA. Even before the fresh outbreak of violence in 2013, the

government in CAR could, at best, have been described as a 'phantom state' (International Crisis Group 2007). Emerging from an exploitative, 'terror-based' French colonial regime, CAR has struggled to distinguish itself as a viable political entity (Smith 2015: 22). Since independence in 1958, the country has lurched from coup to coup, solidifying civil-political violence as a preferred method for political change (ibid.: 134). Previous CAR governments deliberately kept the population insecure and elites preyed on their own populations (Carayannis and Lombard 2015). State 'authority,' as it was understood, barely extended past the outskirts of the capital of Bangui (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2015).

In 2012, a rebel coalition of several pre-existing rebel groups in the north merged to form the Séléka (Sango for 'alliance').[5] This 'heterogeneous consortium of malcontents' were united by their rejection of the existing government, their frustration over unmet peace promises, and a desire for spoils (International Crisis Group 2013; Pezard and Shurkin 2015). The Séléka began to march south and the feeble CAR military forces folded before them. The rebels eventually took the capital in March 2013, forcing CAR president François Bozizé to flee (Vircoulon 2013). The cobbled-together transitional government was short-lived. The recently disbanded Séléka began to attack former government supporters and the Christian majority formed self-defence groups known as the anti-balaka. Violence between the two groups escalated and took on a sectarian tone, pitting Muslims against Christians. The impoverished CAR government collapsed, and the country plunged into a 'state of anarchy' (Vogt 2013).

Suffering from weak institutional capacity, dependency on international support, and infighting between its troop-contributing countries, the struggling AU mission to CAR transitioned to MINUSCA in April 2014 (International Crisis Group 2013; UNSC 2014c). French operation Sangaris, which had been deployed to assist the AU mission in implementing its mandate, shifted its support to the UN forces (UNSC 2013c). MINUSCA's first priority was to protect civilians. While MINUSCA's resolution acknowledged the sovereignty of CAR, no reference was made that the mission should work through or in support of the CAR authorities in order to undertake its mandated tasks — an implicit but important acknowledgement of the lack of state capacity. The mission's second-priority task included extending state authority but in relation to supporting the political transition and electoral process, addressing the root causes of the conflict, and supporting national dialogues (UNSC2014c: para 30 (a), (b)). This mandate anchored state authority in CAR on an inclusive political process first, before emphasis could or should be placed on redeploying CAR military forces. This consideration was likely influenced by the fact that *Forces armées centrafricaines* (FACA) had essentially ceased to exist. Therefore, redeploying CAR security forces to extend military authority was impossible.

MINUSCA interpreted extending state authority as 'enhanc[ing] state-society relations and social cohesion' (Karlsrud 2018: 149). Peacekeepers and Sangaris forces filled key protection tasks while the Transitional Council devoted its limited resources to providing service provision and fostering democratic legitimacy and administrative capacity (UNSC 2014e). MINUSCA also provided political support, good offices, and technical assistance to the Transitional Council's efforts (UNSC 2014b). For example, the mission mainstreamed civilian protection into its integrated electoral security plan to facilitate civilian participation in upcoming elections (UNSC 2016a: 23). The mission also supported government efforts to organise popular consultations, which eventually reached roughly 19,000 participants across CAR (Murray and Mangan 2017). Though far from perfect, the transitional government's efforts were the most inclusive peace efforts in CAR to date.

A strategic review of MINUSCA in 2016 articulated state authority as the state's

'effectiveness and responsiveness to local needs' rather than its monopoly on violence and control of territory (UNSC 2016c: para 37). MINUSCA worked closely with the newly elected president, Faustin-Archange Touadéra, creating a strategy for extending state authority that focused on developing a road map for providing services, and redeploying civil servants (UNSC 2016a: para 4). This included MINUSCA, alongside Operation Sangaris, engaging in targeted counterinsurgency clearing tactics to remove armed groups from government positions and facilities (UNSC 2015: para 10). MINUSCA also supported local consultation and dialogue with armed groups focused on addressing the underlying political, economic, and social issues that fomented the conflict (UNSC 2016a: para 86). In this way, the use of force for state authority was not avoided but rather used strategically to pursue broader objectives for capacity and legitimacy building.

Even when renewed violence broke out at the end of 2016 and MINUSCA was forced to adjust to a more offensive posture, the mission worked with the International Organization for Migration to facilitate several 'peace caravans.' These caravans brought high-level government officials out to affected areas to engage in direct talks with the local population and officials (UNSC 2017: para 38).

With support from the UN and MINUSCA, the CAR government was able to adapt a National Defence Plan, a National Security Policy, and a National Security Sector Reform Strategy in 2017. These provided a political framework within which MINUSCA was able to engage with the reformed FACA (Henry 2018). Operating with a clear function and under an elected government, the FACA was redeployed and focused on civilian protection and stabilisation. The reformed forces 'demonstrated an encouraging degree of discipline, transparency and cooperation with MINUSCA' (UNSC 2018a: para 26). However, the FACA remains deeply distrusted by many Central Africans as they are not representative of the CAR population and those who perpetrated violence during the 2012–2013 fighting have yet to be held accountable (International Peace Institute 2018).

MINUSCA's prioritization of civilian protection resulted in the pursuit of state authority based on society-state relations. The mission actively supported the CAR Transitional Council's efforts to build legitimacy with CAR's population. This initially placed the bulk of protection on the peace operation but allowed for the most inclusive political process in CAR to date, the election of a new government that is focused on legitimacy through responsiveness to local needs, and the creation of the necessary political frameworks needed to re-deploy a reformed FACA focused on serving the CAR population. Though the CAR government remains critically weak, it models the characteristics of a legitimate sovereign state that sees civilian protection as both a priority and sovereign duty.

Discussion

The above assessment of the UN peace operations in Mali and CAR has shown that extension of state authority remains a variable concept contested between UN operations and host states. This ambiguity provides space for peace operations to accommodate conflict context, varying levels of host-state capacity, legitimacy and consent, and mandate prioritisation. These factors can either limit or facilitate mission flexibility in acknowledging and addressing assumptions about host-state legitimacy.

Conflict Context and Mandate Priorities

The nature of the conflict strongly impacts international responses. In Mali, the threat posed by the creation of what the then French Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian called a 'terrorist state at the doorstep of France and Europe' (Dixon 2013) triggered a strong international response. France deployed a counterterrorism operation and self-interested external intervenors pushed

for a peacekeeping mandate focused on Malian security capacity and territorial control as a way to ensure their own security (Olsen 2014: 302; Chandler 2006; UNSC 2013a: 24). To prevent state overthrow and the creation of a possible terrorist haven, MINUSMA's mandate prioritized territorial integrity and military authority. Even when MINUSMA recognised the need for a more legitimacy-focused approach to state authority, these efforts were hindered by the continued need for physical security and the prioritisation of military-based authority by the Malian government. As Egnell and Haldén (2009) argue, exclusively military approaches to extending state authority are unlikely to create states that are both stable and democratic.

Unlike Mali, CAR's rebellion turned into an intercommunal conflict, which — while highly destabilizing for neighbouring countries — posed little threat to distant international actors. The subsequent intervention was therefore primarily motivated by a desire to protect civilians from violence, indicating a prioritisation of broader sovereign responsibilities. MINUSCA and Operation Sangaris had civilian protection as their first priority, with state authority a subsequent task. As such, the missions understood state authority as premised on civilian protection. The intercommunal nature of the conflict in CAR also necessitated addressing the deep fault lines between ethnic and religious groups. This required a state with enough legitimacy to bring both sides together and provide safe spaces for dialogue. This helped justify MINUSCA's robust actions to protect civilians, despite acknowledging the primary responsibility of the CAR government for providing protection. It also emphasised to the transitional CAR government that support from the UN mission would be focused on legitimacy-based efforts to extend state authority.

MINUSCA's broader approach to extending state authority allowed the mission to acknowledge and address the fact that the CAR government lacked both political legitimacy and military authority. This placed a heavy protection burden on intervening actors but also created valuable political space for state actors to pursue legitimacy through non-military means and begin building the much-needed social contract between itself and its citizens. Admittedly, the situation in CAR is unique in that the existing governance structures had virtually disappeared, transitional and previous governments agreed not to contest elections, and there was limited self-interest by major powers, factors that would complicate many other efforts at politically building state authority (Vircoulon and Lesueur 2014). However, the fact that the CAR government started with such a low level of capacity and was able to craft relationships with its people and foster a nascent military force that withstood subsequent violence indicates that this approach has great potential for extending legitimate state authority.

Host-State Military Capacity

The viability of particular approaches to extending state authority depended, to some extent, on the basic capacity of the host state. On the one hand, Mali possessed a fairly developed military, despite its failure to stop the jihadist advance. This fostered the perception that state authority both existed and could be restored by redeploying military forces. After additional atrocities were committed by Malian forces, the Security Council began to emphasise not only military capacity but also expectations for security sector reform.

On the other hand, the severe limitations of the CAR government made it clear that the redeployment of CAR forces would do little to restore security. Instead, international intervenors took on the bulk of protection duties. There was the expectation that the transitional CAR government would take on its sovereignty duties eventually, but the time pressures that were present in Mali to push forward security sector deployment were removed, and emphasis was instead

placed on crafting a legitimate political basis from which to govern these forces.

Unified Visions for State Authority

Perhaps the most important takeaway from the cases of MINUSMA and MINUSCA is the importance of a collaborative relationship between the UN and the host-state government. The initial disconnect between how MINUSMA and the Malian transitional government understood the nature and role of the state hindered the peace operation's ability to fulfil its mandate. The subsequent failure of the UN and the Malian government to craft a shared vision for mission support to the state has seen MINUSMA's support to extending Mali's state authority limited to good offices and has likely slowed progress towards implementing the 2015 peace agreement.

Conversely, MINUSCA has met with a surprising level of success, due in no small part to its ability to work closely with the new CAR government. MINUSCA initially supported the government in consultations and holding inclusive elections. It then worked closely with the elected government to craft several national plans, which provided the political frameworks necessary for the UN operation to fulfil key aspects of its mandate. Several factors had to come together in order for MINUSCA to have such a constructive relationship with a host-state government, but the positive outcomes of such relationships are clear. To ensure a collaborate relationship, an acceptable set of common goals and a vision for crafting state authority should be agreed upon between the UN and the host-state government prior to peace operation deployment.

Conclusion

The UN needs to acknowledge the sometimes dual mission of peace operations where they are mandated to assist the host country in establishing or maintaining stability while simultaneously encouraging and facilitating the rise of democratic practices to promote consent of the governed and related internal legitimacy. It is likely that peace operations will continue to receive extension of state authority mandates. There needs to be renewed conversations in the UN as to how state authority is understood and supported by UN peace operations. This includes addressing the *a priori* expectations around the capacity and legitimacy of host states. The UN and the Security Council must politically engage with host states to ensure a shared vision for the roles and responsibilities of the state the UN peace operations will be helping to build. Without such a shared vision, peace operations have the potential to operate at odds with the host state and their impact will be limited.

Notes

[1] There were undoubtedly racial connotations to this conception of 'civilization,' which was premised on white, masculine, European conceptions of civilization.

[2] Max Weber (1946) famously defines the state 'as a human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory.'

[3] For a full investigation of the importance of host-state consent for peace operations, see Sebastián and Gorur (2018).

[4] This group included al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which had been present in Mali for several years; the Tuareg Islamist organization Ansar Eddine, which was a splinter of the MNLA based off of Salafi-jihadi ideology; and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO).

[5] The Séléka includes fighters from the Convention of patriots for Justice and Peace (CPJP), the Patriotic Convention for Saving the Country (CPSK), the Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (UDFR), the Democratic Front of the Central African People (FDPC), and the new *Alliance pour la refondation*. (A2R).

Competing Interests

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